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In This Issue:

MEDITATION

Rev. James D. Slopsema

Forgiving One Another 50

EDITORIAL

Prof. David J. Engelsma

"He Shines in All That's Fair" (10) 52

LETTERS

54

FEATURE ARTICLE

Prof. Herman C. Hanko

Calvin on Eldership and Discipline (2) 55

ALL THY WORKS SHALL PRAISE THEE

Mr. Gary Lanning

IVF: Petri-dish Children 57

ANNUAL REPORT — RFPA

Mr. Calvin Kalsbeek

Abounding in the Work of the Lord 58

ADDRESS AT ANNUAL RFPA MEETING

Prof. Herman C. Hanko

The Publication of Van Zonde en Genade (1) 60

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

Rev. Martin VanderWal

Like the Publicans or Like God 63

THINGS WHICH MUST SHORTLY COME TO PASS

Prof. David J. Engelsma

The End of All Things 66

IN HIS FEAR

Rev. Daniel Kleyn

Delighting in the Sabbath Day 68

BOOK REVIEWS

70

REPORT OF CLASSIS EAST

70

NEWS FROM OUR CHURCHES

Mr. Benjamin Wigger

71

VOLUME 79 • NUMBER 3

Forgiving One Another

Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

Ephesians 4:31-32

Bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, evil speaking, malice!

How common these things are in our homes, the church, and our Christian schools.

God calls us to put all these things away and instead be kind one to another, tenderhearted, and forgiving.

What joy and peace are found in the home, church, and school when God's people take this calling seriously.

The main thought here is that we must forgive one another. And we must do that even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven us. This means that God's forgiving us is the pattern for us to follow in forgiving each other. In turn, God's

Rev. Slopsema is pastor of First Protestant Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

forgiving us in Christ is the only possibility for us to forgive one another.



What a sordid list of sinful passions and actions! Bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, evil speaking, malice!

Sad to say, these vices are found not just in the world but also in the church, among the saints.

And they usually are found together. In fact, the one develops from the other, so that one who is bitter against another often ends up being malicious to him.

Let's look at these vices and see how each builds on the previous.

First, there is bitterness. We all know what a bitter taste in our mouth is. There are some things in life other than food that are also bitter to us. It may be that someone has sinned against us and hurt us. It may be that someone is inconsiderate. Someone may have used us. Someone may disagree with us and everyone agrees with him. Or it may be that someone may succeed where we failed. How easily we become bitter. This bitterness implies resentment. In some cases it even involves hatred and envy.

Next there is wrath. Wrath is angry heat. There are times when we or others are "burned up" about something. We talk about someone fuming inside. That's what is being described here. It is an inner agitation or rage. And it develops out of bitterness.

Next there is anger. If wrath describes an inner agitation that builds up inside a person, anger is the outward expression of that inner rage. One who is fuming inside will often show this in his body language. He may have a red face or contorted facial expressions. He may be sulky. He may walk around sulking or have a scowl. He is angry.

Out of that anger often comes clamor. Clamor is an outcry, a loud outburst of words. Those who are angry will often vent their anger with screaming and shouting.

And then there is evil speaking. Evil speech is speech that tears someone down or belittles him or slanders him. Sometimes this is done to a person's face; more often it is done behind his back. Sometimes this is done in the heat of anger, with shouting and screaming, other times it is done in cool calculation. But it is the result of bitterness, wrath, and anger.

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Finally, there is malice. Malice is the desire to hurt, punish, and avenge. In this context, malice refers not to the inner desire to hurt and avenge but to outward actions that are calculated to destroy. In addition to evil speaking, this malice includes inflicting bodily harm, blocking someone's promotion, ruining someone financially, taking away someone's freedom, and a host of other things. An example of this is Joseph. How bitter his brothers were when their father Jacob favored him. They were fuming inside. What evil speech came out of their mouth. They mocked him as the "dreamer." And finally, in malice, they sold him into slavery.

Let all these things be put away from you.

To put something away means to remove it, to pick it up and carry it away. It suggests a room full of trash or garbage. To put away means to make a clean sweep, picking up the trash and dumping it elsewhere.

This is what we must do with our bitterness, wrath, anger, etc. These emotions and actions are as so much trash that easily clutters our lives and relationships, severely compromising our ability to serve the Lord. We must pick these evil things up and carry them away. We must make a clean sweep of all these evils in our lives. We must do this in our marriages, in our homes, in our church, and in the Christian school. And although this is not the focus, we must do that also with respect to our unbelieving neighbor.

Notice, that *all* these vices must be removed. It won't do to carry away only some, e.g., the outward expressions of our bitterness and wrath, but allow bitterness and wrath to remain. Nor may we put these vices away in our dealings only with some people, but allow them to remain in our relationships with others. No! Let *all* bitterness, wrath, anger, malice be put away from you.



And be kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another.

We are told here what we must be. Actually the idea is that of becoming. We must become kind, tenderhearted, and forgiving. This suggests that we have not arrived. There is much room for growth. How true!

Also these three virtues that must grace our lives are all related. The one builds on the other. One who is kind will also be tenderhearted. And the tenderhearted will be forgiving. Or you can look at it the other way. To be forgiving, one must be tenderhearted. And to be tenderhearted one must be kind.

We are to be kind one to another. Kindness includes many things. To be kind is to be helpful, useful, seeking the welfare of others in a spirit of selflessness. To be kind is also to be sensitive to the needs and feelings of others, to be understanding. And to be kind also is to be gentle, not harsh or abrasive. This is what we must be in our marriages, in our families, in our church, in our schools, in every part of our life. And we must be kind to all, even to those who are selfish, who are inconsiderate of us, and who may even hurt us by their sin.

Then we must also be tenderhearted. Tenderhearted describes one who is deeply affected by the plight of someone else. It includes pity and compassion to those who are in need. It moves one to seek as much as possible to help the needy and deliver them from their misery. This we must more and more become. We must be this even to those who have brought trouble and sorrow upon themselves through their own sin and folly. In fact, we must be tenderhearted even to a troubled soul who has hurt and offended us. This virtue arises out of kindness. One who is kind will also be ten-

derhearted when disaster comes upon others.

And we must forgive one another. This is the culmination of being kind and tenderhearted. To forgive another is to put away the offense of his sin so that it no longer stands between you. Forgiveness is not always easy. In fact, sometimes we *say* we have forgiven, and even *think* we have forgiven someone, but in actual fact we have not. The test is whether we are still filled with bitterness, wrath, and anger. When these are put away, forgiveness is accomplished.



Even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven you!

God is not a bitter God, filled with wrath and anger towards His people. Nor does He speak evil of His people. And He certainly is not malicious to them. This is true even when His people sin against Him and bring shame to His name.

God is a forgiving God. Freely and graciously He forgives all the sins of His people. He forgives us our sins because He is kind and tenderhearted. There is none kinder than the Lord. Always He seeks the welfare of His people. How understanding He is of our weaknesses and human frailties. And although He can be firm with us, He is always as gentle as He can be. And the Lord is tenderhearted. How great are the pity and compassion of God for His people. Read Psalm 103 to discover the depths of His mercy. How deeply affected is He by misery. And so God is also a forgiving God. Freely He forgives all our sins. And when we are impenitent, as we sometimes are, God in His kindness and tenderheartedness will even pursue us and brings us to our knees in repentance so that He can forgive us.

God is all this in Jesus Christ. In His kindness and tenderheartedness God gave us His Son, Jesus Christ, to be our Savior. Through

the work of Jesus Christ we taste the many blessings of God's kindness and tenderheartedness. And it is only through Jesus Christ that God forgives our sins. In Christ God has paid for all our sins. This explains Jesus' death on the cross. On the basis of that payment God freely, graciously forgives the sins of His people.

We are to be kind, tenderhearted, and forgiving, even as God in Christ has been to us. In our dealings with each other we can either follow the pattern God has set in His dealings with us in Jesus Christ, or we can follow the pattern of the world around us. The ways of the world are learned from the TV, the news, and the songs the world produces. Theirs is the way of bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, evil speaking, and mal-

ice. We must rather emulate God, as He deals with us in Jesus Christ. In our dealings with each other we must consider the kindness of God to us and then show that same kindness to each other. The tenderheartedness of God must be reflected by us as we deal with those in need. And we must forgive those who have sinned against us as freely and graciously as God has forgiven us in Jesus Christ.




But how is this possible?

It is not our natural inclination to be kind, tenderhearted, and forgiving. We are prone rather to bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, evil speaking, and malice. This is how the fall left us.

We can be kind, tenderhearted,

and forgiving to one another only when we have tasted the kindness, tender heart, and forgiveness of God. God's kindness to us makes us kind to each other. God's tender heart to us inclines us to be tenderhearted with each other. And surely the forgiveness of God results in our forgiving one another. One can show these marvelous virtues to others only when he has tasted them first from God.

This means, in turn, that one who is not kind, has no tender heart, and cannot forgive others shows that he has never tasted these blessings from the Lord.

Let us then in Jesus Christ seek the kindness, tenderheartedness, and forgiveness of God, that we may also be kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another! 

Editorial

"He Shines in All That's Fair" (and Curses All That's Foul) (10)

Infra- versus Supra-

In a surprising chapter of his book defending and developing the doctrine of a common grace of God, *He Shines in All That's Fair: Culture and Common Grace* (Eerdmans, 2001), Fuller Seminary theologian Richard J. Mouw raises the old Reformed debate over supra- and infralapsarianism. This chapter must have sent Mouw's non-Reformed readers scurrying to their theological dictionaries. Upon turning to the chapter titled, "'Infra-' versus 'Supra,'" many a Reformed reader must have wondered what this difficult and now largely forgotten controversy could

possibly have to do with common grace.

The debate among Reformed theologians over infralapsarianism and supralapsarianism concerned the order of the decrees of God with regard to predestination. Specifically, the question was whether God's decree of election and reprobation preceded or followed His decree of creation and the fall. Supralapsarianism (literally, above, or before, the fall) holds that the decree of predestination precedes the decree of creation and the decree of the fall. Infralapsarianism (literally, below, or after, the fall) thinks that predestination follows the decrees of creation and the fall.

Infra- and Common Grace

In raising this issue in connection with his defense of common grace, Dr. Mouw shows himself an astute Reformed theologian. First, he sees the necessity of grounding common grace in God's eternal counsel. Many defenders of common grace are woefully weak here. They make much of a common grace of God in history that has no source in God's eternal plan and no goal in God's everlasting purpose. Their common grace comes out of the blue on the day that Adam sinned and returns to the blue on the day that Christ comes again. It is not part of the plot of history. God's common grace ap-

appears unexpectedly after the fall of Adam as a contrived solution to the problem of sin—a *deus ex machina*. Mouw intends to correct this serious weakness of common grace theory.

Second, in the infralapsarian understanding of the order of the decrees Mouw finds the basis for his contention that God has two distinct purposes with history. For those who defend common grace, the redemption of the elect church by special grace is not the only purpose of God in the world. God also purposes that the ungodly develop a good, God-glorifying culture. This purpose God realizes by means of common grace.

Mouw is convinced that the “underlying issue at stake in the longstanding intra-Calvinist debates between ‘infralapsarians’ and ‘supralapsarians’” is that of “multiple divine purposes” of God with history (p. 51). Supralapsarianism makes the redemption of the elect church the one purpose of God with history inasmuch as it has the decree of creation and the fall after the decree of election. Thus, every creature and all of history are subordinated to God’s one purpose of redeeming and glorifying the church. Supralapsarianism has no place for another purpose of God alongside the redemption of the church. This rules out the theory of common grace.

But infralapsarianism, on Mouw’s reading, although recognizing that one of God’s purposes is the redemption of the church, allows for another purpose of God with history, distinct from redemption. Inasmuch as infralapsarianism puts the decree to create before the decree to elect, it suggests, if it does not require, an original purpose of God with creation that has nothing to do with redemption. This purpose, according to the defender of common grace, is the development of good culture. God carries out this purpose in history by the cultural works of the ungodly alongside His activity of re-

deeming the church. After the fall of Adam, He carries out this original purpose by means of common grace.

Mouw contends that by virtue of His infralapsarian decrees God “is committed both to the election of individuals to eternal life and to a distinguishable program of providential dealings with the broader creation” (p. 68). This explains why “an infralapsarian [can] view God as taking delight in a display of athletic prowess because of ultimate purposes that stand along side of, rather than being subservient to, the goal of bringing about election and reprobation” (p. 62). Infralapsarianism means that God rejoices in the putting prowess of a Tiger Woods, if not as much as He rejoices in the redemption of the church, then certainly independently of the redemption of the church.

Mouw’s discovery in the infralapsarian arrangement of the decrees of the basis for common grace’s teaching that God has two distinct purposes with history is a masterstroke on the part of the Fuller theologian. If Dr. Mouw’s explanation of infralapsarianism is valid, it gives strong support to the theory of common grace.

Infra- and Two Purposes of God

That God has two distinct, independent purposes with history is basic to the theory of common grace. The very reason for common grace is to empower the ungodly world’s development of good culture as a purpose of God alongside His purpose of saving the church. The theory of common grace is senseless, if God does not, in Mouw’s words, “pursue separate decretal programs” (p. 68).

In his groundbreaking work on common grace, Abraham Kuyper proposed the notion of God’s two purposes in the history of the world.

Therefore every view that would confine God’s work to the small

sector we might label “church life” must be set aside. There is beside the great work of God in *special* grace also that totally other work of God in the realm of *common* grace. That work encompasses the whole life of the world.

God takes “delight in that high human development” in the world of the ungodly. In the course of history, common grace will

achieve a purpose of its own. It will not only serve to bring about the emergence of the human race, to bring to birth the full number of the elect, and to arm us increasingly and more effectively against human suffering, but also independently to bring about in all its dimensions and in defiance of Satanic opposition and human sin the full emergence of what God had in mind when he planted those nuclei of higher development in our race.... The fundamental creation ordinance given before the fall, that humans would achieve dominion over all of nature thanks to “common grace,” is still realized *after* the fall (Abraham Kuyper, “Common Grace,” in James D. Bratt, ed., *Abraham Kuyper: A Centennial Reader*, Eerdmans, 1998, pp. 176-179).

But the basis in God’s counsel for the theory of two purposes has been lacking. This lack, Dr. Mouw claims to have supplied in a right understanding of the infralapsarian order of the decrees. In doing so, he has, in fact, acted on the suggestion of the Dutch Reformed theologian Herman Bavinck. Writing on the issue of supra- and infralapsarianism, Bavinck urged that “in the doctrine of God’s decree common grace should receive a much more detailed discussion than was formerly the case, and should be recognized in its own rights” (*The Doctrine of God*, Eerdmans, 1951, p. 394).

So far is it from being true, therefore, as one superficial reviewer has recently suggested, that the chapter in *He Shines in All*

That's Fair on infra- and supralapsarianism should be relegated to an appendix, that on the contrary this is the most important chapter in the book.

Regardless of the truth or falsity of Mouw's use of the issue of supra- and infralapsarianism, it is significant that that knotty doctrinal debate, regarded even by many Reformed theologians as akin to the medieval discussion of how many angels can dance on the point of a needle, is today revived as important for the lively, practical matter of the Christian's view of culture and life in the world. There is something about the issue of supra- versus infra- that is of great importance for the gospel and the Christian life. The Reformed fathers were not fools when they studied and debated this issue.

Weighty Objections

Weighty objections to Mouw's analysis of infralapsarianism come to mind at once. For one thing, Abraham Kuyper, father of the theory of a culture-forming common grace, was himself a supralapsarian. Whereas, according to Mouw, Kuyper ought to have taken the position that God has one purpose with history—the redemption of the church—in fact he taught that God has two, independent purposes.

For another thing, the Reformed confessions, which are infralapsarian, know absolutely nothing of two purposes of God with history. As comes out espe-

cially in their treatment of providence, the only purpose of God with history that the confessions know is the redemption of the church, including the perfect security of the individual believer. According to Question 27 of the Heidelberg Catechism, the one purpose of God's government of the world in history is that all things work together for the welfare of elect believers. Article 37 of the Belgic Confession teaches that the one goal of God with history is the gathering of the elect church. "When ... the number of the elect [is] complete," Christ will come again from heaven.

Yet another objection to Dr. Mouw's use of infralapsarianism is that, historically, the Reformed debate over supra- and infralapsarianism had nothing whatever to do with any independent cultural purpose of God with history. At the time of Dordt and for hundreds of years thereafter, the debate concerned the relation of the fall of man into sin to the counsel of God and the relation, in the counsel, of predestination to the fall of man. The infralapsarians had no intention of, or even interest in, establishing a cultural purpose of God with history alongside the purpose of redeeming the elect church. Both infralapsarians and supralapsarians were agreed that the one purpose of God with history, to which all creatures and the history of the world are subordinate, is His own glory in the redemption of the elect church by Jesus Christ.

Bavinck's tentative proposal around the turn of the twentieth century that the infralapsarian arrangement of the decrees be interpreted as giving independent meaning and value to the development of the creation in history was novel. And Bavinck's motivation, as he himself indicates, was to promote the theory of common grace, of which he was as enamored as Kuyper.

The discovery in infralapsarianism of a purpose of God with history distinct from, and alongside of, God's purpose with Jesus Christ as head of the elect church is not necessarily the result of new insight into the longstanding debate over the order of the decrees. It may well be the imposition of the false doctrine of common grace upon the counsel of God itself, to the diffusing and confusing of the grand purpose of God with all things, as God has revealed this purpose in His Word. Like an aggressive cancer, common grace, by this time pervasive in the history of both the world and the church, now extends the malignancy into the eternal counsel of God.

That this is indeed the case will be evident when we take note of the weightiest, indeed decisive, objection against Richard Mouw's contention, on behalf of common grace, that God has two separate purposes with history. And this will require that we clearly see the deepest intention of the issue of supra- versus infra- in the light of Scripture.

— DJE 

Letters

■ Lost without the SB

I have just now read with great interest your editorial in the August 2002 issue of the *Standard Bearer*, which was very late in arriving ("He Shines in All That's Fair," #6).

It reminded me of comments I have heard recently from friends,

the worst one being in print by a local woman columnist (Susan Lane) in the *Times-News* of 09.14.02 regarding 9/11.

I thought you might like to see what she wrote: "Where was God on Sept. 11? I believe he was right there where he was the day his own Son was murdered, and where

he is every other day of our lives. Standing right there beside us, a knot in his stomach, hands tied behind his back. Weeping."

I am grateful for the Scriptures you quoted. I am better prepared to answer my friends when they speak of a "god" who is "broken-hearted" and who "weeps."

Thank you so very much for your editorial. I would truly be *lost* without the *SB*. Where have you been for the 80 years of my life before you came to my attention? The magazine has changed my life.

I appreciated also your answer to the letter from Mr. Rick Bell on the Jewish question.

Jean E. Chastain
Hendersonville, NC

■ Helpful Series on Common Grace

I am thrilled to read your present series of editorials in the *Standard Bearer* on Richard Mouw and common grace ("He Shines in All That's Fair' [and Curses All That's Foul]"). Your reflections on separation (in the world, but not of it) need to be widely heard. My only disappointment is that you give no counsel on further reading on this subject. Do you recommend reading Mouw or your own book on a different aspect of grace?

Anthony Sistrom
Eureka, CA

Response:

The Reformed Free Publishing Association (RFPA) has published a number of books setting forth the

truth of particular grace. A catalog is available. The mailing address is: 4949 Ivanrest Ave. SW, Grandville, MI 49418. The e-mail address is: mail@rfpa.org. The RFPA website is: www.rfpa.org.

Various evangelism committees in the Protestant Reformed Churches have published and produced helpful pamphlets, booklets, and tapes on the subject of the grace of God. I suggest that you get in contact with the Evangelism Committee of the South Holland Protestant Reformed Church, 16511 South Park Ave., South Holland, IL 60473. An evangelism committee in California that would be happy to help you with the materials you desire is: The Reformed Witness, 1307 E. Brockton Ave., Redlands, CA 92374. Its e-mail address is: thereformedwitness@hopeprc.org.

— Ed.


■ Mysterious? Yes! Extra-Confessional? No!

The letter "Saddened by a Synodical Decision" in the September 15, 2002 *Standard Bearer* seems to state that matters such as creationism, covenant theology, and eschatology are extra-confessional. I heartily disagree! Are these mat-

ters "mysterious"? Most emphatically, yes! Are they "extra-confessional"? Most emphatically, no!

One needs to page through the confessions for only a few minutes to find numerous articles on these very issues. I'm sure there are many more, but I list some here. Lord's Day 9 of the Heidelberg Catechism and Article 12 of the Belgic Confession deal explicitly with creation. Canons III/IV, Article 12 deals somewhat more indirectly with creation in its treatment of our recreation in Christ. Eschatology is dealt with in the Belgic Confession, Article 37, and Lord's Day 19 of the Heidelberg Catechism. Covenant theology is addressed in Canons I, Articles 6-8 and more extensively in our own "Declaration of Principles" (a binding document in the Protestant Reformed Churches).

Of course there is room for disagreement among brothers and sisters in the Lord, but *only* on matters of indifference. True unity in the catholic church of Christ is possible only if its members humble themselves before God's Word and confess that Word clearly, boldly, and in opposition to the lie (Eph. 4).

Karen VanBaren
Lansing, IL 

Feature Article

Prof. Herman Hanko

Calvin on Eldership and Discipline (2)

The Elders and Discipline

The primary calling of the elders is discipline. Their work is to keep the church, insofar as that is possible here on earth, pure. It would do the churches well, especially those of

the Reformed tradition, to study Calvin's teachings on this all-important matter.

Schaff says that:

Discipline is so important an element in Calvin's Church polity, that it ... was the cause of his expulsion from Geneva, the basis of his flourishing French congregation at Strassburg, the chief reason for his recall [to Geneva], the condition of his acceptance, the

struggle and triumph of his life, and the secret of his moral influence to this day. His rigorous discipline, based on his rigorous creed, educated the heroic French, Dutch, English, Scotch, and American Puritans. It fortified them for their trials and persecutions, and made them promoters of civil and religious liberty.¹

1. Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1953), 484.

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

Duffield writes:

To Calvin discipline was essential because it was taught in the Word of God. This is the secret of all Reformed ecclesiology. Discipline was desirable, not because men thought the church should be so organised in view of its task, but because these same men declared that the Word of God was explicit regarding this institution. "The church, in its visible form, is not an institution which can be organised just as we like; but already in this matter, the Lord indicates that the Church is His, by laying out the way in which it must be arranged" (J. Courvoisier, *Le Sens de la discipline ecclésiastique dans la Genève de Calvin*, 1946, p. 22). The Reformation itself was brought about by the Word, not by the Reformers' insight, and in this Word discipline was ordained as part of the power of the keys (*Inst.* IV, xi, 1). For these men that was enough.

Calvin, in one place, states quite bluntly that whoever opposes the establishment of ecclesiastical discipline is an enemy of the Christian faith. Discipline was not invented by men, but was given as an inviolable rule by the Lord to His followers. We may not dispense with it, for by instituting it in His church, the Lord declares that He wishes it to remain to the end of the world. The abolition of discipline would mean the entire dissolution of the church.²

Calvin himself wrote:

No society, no house can be preserved in proper condition without discipline. The Church ought to be the most orderly society of all. As the saving doctrine of Christ is the soul of the Church, so discipline forms the nerves and ligaments which connect the members and keep each in its proper place. It serves as a bridle to curb and restrain the refractory who resist the doctrine of Christ; or as a spur to stimulate the inactive; and sometimes as a father's rod to chastise, in mercy and with gentleness of the spirit of Christ, those who have grievously fallen away.

It is the only remedy against a dreadful desolation in the Church.³

Calvin pointedly speaks of the dreadful desolation that comes on the church which does not exercise the keys of the kingdom. Churches today, confronted by apostasy and gross sin within its ranks, ought not to be surprised that such has happened, for the keys of the kingdom hang unused and rusty on a hook in the back of the closet of the consistory room.

While the purpose, Calvin insists, is to apply discipline gently and in the mercy of Christ, nevertheless, it must be rigorous and uncompromising, for the welfare of the church depends upon getting rid of rotten members. Duffield sums it up with quotes from Calvin.

In ... [the] corrections [of discipline] the church has three ends in view. The first is that they who lead a filthy and infamous life may not be called Christians, to the dishonor of God, as if his holy church (Eph. 5:25-26) were a conspiracy of wicked and abandoned men. For since the church itself is the body of Christ (Col. 1:24), it cannot be corrupted by such foul and decaying members without some disgrace falling upon its Head....

The second purpose is that the good be not corrupted by the constant company of the wicked, as commonly happens. For (such is our tendency to wander from the way) there is nothing easier than for us to be led away by bad examples from right living.....

The third purpose is that those overcome by shame for their baseness begin to repent. They who under gentler treatment would have become more stubborn so profit by the chastisement of their own evil as to be awakened when they felt the rod....⁴

That emphasis on the glory of the Head of the church which is

alone important moves a faithful church to exercise with rigor the discipline entrusted to it. When sin goes unpunished in the church, the enemies blaspheme and Christ is dishonored.

Conclusion

Calvin laid down various details as well concerning how discipline had to be exercised. He insisted that it had to be the work of the church, not the magistrate. He

laid the keys of the kingdom of heaven on the table of the elders and gave that responsibility to them in his teachings because Christ assigned this very task to the elders. He told the elders they had to exer-

cise such discipline over the congregation, over the ministers of the Word, and over themselves. He insisted that discipline included excommunication, and he laid down the scriptural rules which had to be followed – and which Reformed churches, faithful in discipline, follow today. He gave the congregation as a whole a role in the exercise of such discipline and taught, correctly, that the entire congregation is responsible for the purity of the church.

Calvin's discipline in Geneva, as exercised by the elders, was indeed rigorous. But the harsh penalties for "minor" sins (such as fines, imprisonment, putting in the stocks, for card playing, dancing, publicly taking God's name in vain) mocked by the church today, were penalties imposed by the civil magistrate, not by the consistory. Calvin was not directly responsible for these civil penalties.


Nevertheless, sin was taken seriously and sharply rebuked. In this way Geneva became, to borrow a phrase from John Knox the Scottish reformer, the most perfect school of discipleship to Christ to be found in the world. If the church today looks for a reason for

If the church today looks for a reason for its sad demise, it ought to look at the neglect of discipline.

its sad demise, it ought to look at the neglect of discipline. Elders do not discipline ministers who fail to preach the Word and introduce strange heresies. Elders do not discipline aberrations from and corruptions of the worship of God. Elders do not discipline immoral and ungodly behavior in the church.

Rather, elders piously join in a commendation of the great evils of divorce and remarriage. Elders turn the other way to Sabbath desecration. Elders close their ears to heresies openly promoted in the congregation. Elders do not rule.

Can such a church long sur-

vive? Calvin says not. So does the Word of God. 

2. G. E. Duffield, ed., *John Calvin: A Collection of Essays* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1966), 210, 211.

3. *Institutes*, IV, xii, 1.

4. *Institutes*, IV, xii, 5.

All Thy Works Shall Praise Thee

Mr. Gary Lanning

IVF: Petri-dish Children

We are living in an era of technological change that is occurring at an alarming rate. Before we have time to decide if God's Word permits us to use a new technique, the technique has already been replaced with a new method that presents even more questions. Nowhere is this more prevalent than in the realm of genetics and reproductive technologies. While these two are not exactly the same, there is much overlap in the moral questions that must be answered in order to participate in the new technologies developed in these areas. At the heart of the new genetics (gene splicing to produce genetically modified plants and animals) and reproductive technologies, especially *in vitro* fertilization (IVF), lies the question of what exactly is life and to what extent ought we manipulate it. These two realms of biotechnology join forces in the truly mind-boggling realm of reproductive and therapeutic cloning, an area in which we or our children will surely have to reach

some conclusions as to the moral validity of the techniques these technologies have to offer. For the most part, however, much of this technology lies at least a short way off into the future. Gene splicing, therapeutic cloning, and the like are not readily available at the present time. Reproductive technologies, however, are here now and are being used regularly by the world and the church alike.

I find it a bit troubling that even though these technologies strike at the heart of procreation and even of life itself, I do not recall any discussion in the PRC of the spiritual validity of these procedures. This seems to be the case in the church world at large. Even though there were signs on the horizon already in the 1960s as to what was about to happen, it seems that the church world (at least that part of it with which I am familiar) chose to ignore the signs. Could it be that we in the church assumed these techniques would never enter the church? Surely the events about to unfold were worthy of discussion.

I have before me a June 13, 1969 issue of *Life* magazine. This issue introduces some of these technologies that were just then peeking above the horizon. Many of

the ethical questions surrounding these new methods of reproduction were asked in this issue. Perhaps not surprisingly today, more than 30 years later, these same questions are still being asked. Yet the technology has proceeded full steam ahead. Even in the church world (this includes the PRC) these techniques with their unanswered questions from 30 years ago are commonplace.

Whether these techniques are legitimate for the child of God to use or not is a question with which we ought all to be concerned. I have found through speaking to members of my own and other congregations in the PRC that there is much ignorance concerning these matters. It is therefore my intent to try to enlighten our readers concerning just one of the above mentioned technologies, the area of *in vitro* fertilization.

Whenever I teach about this topic I do so very carefully, for two reasons. One, my wife and I have never been in the position of experiencing infertility. Thus, we have not experienced the great desire spoken of in Proverbs 30:15, where the barren womb is compared, among other things, to a fire which continues to consume fuel and never stops by itself. Nor, then,

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have we been able to pray the fervent prayer of Hannah recorded in I Samuel 1. I do not pretend to have experienced the feelings of those couples who find that they are unable to conceive children. Second, the technology involved in assisted reproductive techniques (ARTs), of which IVF is only one method, is rapidly changing. For this reason I have been very careful to make sure my information is up-to-date and accurate. This information has been derived from textbooks, magazine articles, and interviews with the directors of several IVF clinics in the Grand Rapids area, as well as professors of genetics and bioethics at Grand Valley State University and Michigan State University.




First, a brief explanation of *in vitro* fertilization may be helpful. Fertilization refers to the joining of a female egg with a male sperm. Scripture does not use the term fertilization, but rather the term conception, to describe this event. *In vitro* literally means "in glass."

Thus, *in vitro* fertilization refers to conception in a glass vessel. For some reason, from the beginning, children conceived in this manner have been referred to as "test tube babies," even though, to the best of my knowledge, test tubes have never been the glassware used. Rather petri dishes are the lab ware of choice. If you can find a July 1972 issue of *Life* magazine, you will find the cover carries a poignant picture of the first U.S. baby to result from IVF. This picture shows one year old Elizabeth Jordan Carr sitting on the lab top on which she was conceived, in front of the microscope under which she was conceived, and holding the petri dish in which she was conceived.

This picture surely makes one pause to consider God's plan for conception. This picture, more than any other, portrays the tension a couple must feel when contemplating the use of IVF. On the one hand we see a beautiful child given to parents who presumably could otherwise not have children.

Yet, we also see that the conception of this child was wholly separated from the normal means described in Scripture. This child was conceived in a dish, by a team of technicians, rather than through the conjugal love of a husband and wife. This, of course, does not make the child any less of a person. Nor does it make the love of a husband for his wife and the wife for her husband any less godly. If the reader is hoping that I am going to make clear what the Scripture says about this dilemma, I am afraid he or she will be disappointed. At this point I am unable to come to any crystal clear conclusion on this issue. My hope is that the raising of this issue will lead to study by and input from others, that will help all of us to come to a clear knowledge of God's will in this matter. What I do hope to accomplish is to explain some of the techniques used, and in the process show what I believe to be methods that Christians (or anyone else, for that matter) may never use.

... to be continued. 

Abounding in the Work of the Lord

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.

I Corinthians 15:58



We have chosen "Abounding in the Work of the Lord" as our theme for this year's report to our esteemed association members and friends. This theme expresses what your Board views as critical

to the fulfillment of our stated purpose of "witnessing to the Reformed truth." Without the faithful labor of love of so many we simply would not be doing this work of the Lord to the extent that we currently are.

In recognition of this faithful labor, the Board decided to demonstrate its appreciation to all those who labored on behalf of the RFPA this year, by inviting them and their spouses to a dinner. Those invited included employees, the

Mr. Kalsbeek is a member of Hope Protestant Reformed Church in Walker, Michigan and retired secretary of the RFPA.

Editorial Committee of the *Standard Bearer*, writers of books and *SB* articles, volunteer workers, RFPA agents in the churches, and members of the Board. The dinner, to which 136 couples were invited (about half of whom were able to attend), was held just prior to our meeting tonight. Thanks to the generosity of three PRC business owners, no expense was incurred by the Association.

Abounding in the Work of the Lord through the *Standard Bearer*

Due to the tremendous financial support for the *SB* by means of collections taken in the Protestant Reformed churches and gifts from countless subscribers, we have an abundance of cash on hand for the work of publishing and promoting our magazine. At times your Board has wondered, "How does the Lord desire that we should use this money?" While we are committed to exercising good stewardship with respect to these monies, their existence has made it possible for the Board to do some promotional things that could not have been considered ten or fifteen years ago. Following are three ways we have promoted the *SB* during this past year:

1. All regular subscribers were given opportunity to give vouchers worth a six-month subscription to the *SB* to the person or persons of their choice. This promotion resulted in 162 subscriptions given and 15 renewals.
2. Consistories of the PRC continue to enroll newly wedded couples and new members from outside the PRC in our free one-year subscription program. This past year we have sent out exactly 22 *SB* subscriptions as a result.
3. Just recently our offer of a free six-month subscription to the *SB* has been aired by the Reformed Witness Hour. It is too early to report on the results of this promotion.

Your board reports a total of 2713 *Standard Bearer* subscribers at

present, which is an increase of 85 since one year ago.

The Board is also working on a few other projects which we believe will advance the cause of the *SB*. Our *SB* booklet project will soon publish its first fruits. The idea is to publish in booklet form some of the series articles that have been published in our *Standard Bearer* and make these available for distribution by our subscribers and the Evangelism Committees of the PRC. Also our Special Introductory Issue of the *SB* is nearing completion. This issue is designed to present in one special issue some of the key biblical distinctives which we hold dear. Our hope is that this issue will be a helpful means to promote the *SB* to those interested in the Reformed faith.

The success of these promotions of the *Standard Bearer*, however, is dependent largely on you, our trusted subscribers. A recent evaluation by our Business Manager, Mr. Don Doezeema, shows clearly that we gain most of our *new* subscribers because "*old*" subscribers promote our magazine. We encourage you to continue to abound in this aspect of the spread of the truth.

Abounding in the Work of the Lord Through Our Books

This past year has been another busy and productive one on the book-side of the RFPA's witness. Especially in connection with this work we find our volunteers invaluable. We have proofreaders, those who process book orders, others who do mass mailings of the "Update" and catalogs, as well as agents who help promote and distribute our publications in the individual congregations.

Since our last annual meeting, these volunteers have assisted in the work involved in two new books, namely *Unfolding Covenant History*, volume 2, by Prof. Homer Hoeksema and edited by Mr. Mark Hoeksema, and *Righteous by Faith Alone*, by Rev. Herman Hoeksema and edited by Prof. David

Engelsma. Also, *Voice of Our Fathers*, A commentary on the Canons of Dordt by Prof. Homer Hoeksema; *Leaving Father and Mother*, by Rev. C. Hanko; and *Saved by Grace*, by Revs. R. Cammenga and R. Hanko have been processed as reprints.

Your Board has advertised some of these and other of our books during this past year in *World*, *Christian Observer*, the *Grand Rapids Press*, and *Christian Renewal*. Also, we can report that our books have been reviewed in numerous other periodicals.

Last year we reported that the RFPA had joined the Christian Bookseller's Association. This year we have been working hard to get our books on the shelves of the member stores; and that with some success. This year we have distributed books to a total of 62 wholesale distributors, about ten of which are new customers. Approximately 2,800 books have been sold to these distributors this year. Much of this has resulted from the mailing of 3000 catalogs to CBA member outlets.

That's the upside! The downside is that, for us to be serious about promoting RFPA materials in this market, it is necessary to do what the rest of the industry does, namely, send out updated catalogs of our publications on a regular basis. Consequently your Board has decided to update and distribute our catalog once a year. This is expensive! Nevertheless the Board believes it will pay future dividends in a wider distribution of the Reformed truth by means of our publications.

Speaking of dividends, the Internet is increasingly providing them as more and more individuals are coming into contact with our web site and purchasing our publications by means of it. This year we have sold about 1200 volumes by means of our web site. Incidentally, nearly 300 new *SB* and book customers have ordered our materials in this manner. Also, 26 of our titles are now available on

Amazon.com. Although we have just recently begun this program, we have already sold 111 volumes through Amazon.


Much more could be said, but we will save it for the next "Update," which we plan to distribute this coming November.

Finally, we inform the Association of one additional valued volunteer, Mr. Jonathan Engelsma. Let us explain. Last spring, board

member Mr. Robert Vermeer informed the Board that he would need to resign due to the fact that he was moving to Illinois to teach at the Heritage Christian High School. Since the constitution gives the board the authority to fill vacancies of this sort, Jon was asked to serve, and graciously consented, even though he had retired from the Board less than a year before.

As an expression of our gratitude, we promptly appointed him chairman of the Book and Publications Committee.

It is our prayer that the Lord will continue to use our feeble efforts to promote His noble cause. We have been privileged, indeed, to serve the Association and our Lord in this work for another year.

For the Board of the RFPA
Cal Kalsbeek, Secy. 

Address at Annual RFPA Meeting

Prof. Herman Hanko

The Publication of Van Zonde en Genade (1)

Introduction

An important book in the history of the Protestant Reformed Churches is being readied for publication. It is a book authored by Revs. Henry Danhof and Herman Hoeksema. It was written in 1923, somewhat more than one year before these two ministers were expelled from the Christian Reformed Church. The book was written in the Dutch under the title *Van Zonde en Genade*. It has now been translated and should, the Lord willing, be available to the reading public within the next eight to ten months. It will be published under the title "Sin and Grace."

It is, in my estimation, so important a book that the history of our churches can hardly be properly understood without reading this volume. I look forward, therefore, to its publication. This article

is intended to be an introduction to that book.

The History of its Publication

This book has long been out of print, and, as the number of people able to read the Dutch steadily declined, there seemed to be no need for reprinting it.

It must have been about ten to fifteen years ago that my father, long retired from the active ministry, was looking for something to do that would be of benefit to the churches. He asked me what I thought about a project he had in mind: the translation of *Van Zonde en Genade*. Because he was fluent in Dutch and because he needed work to keep him occupied, I readily agreed that the book, one of the most important of the books written in the early history of our churches, should be translated. I was a bit skeptical whether he would be able to do it. He was, after all, in his eighties, very nearly blind, and weary with the burdens of many years in the ministry. But if it could be done, it would be well worth it.

We got out his copy of *Van*

Dale's Woordenboek, the authoritative dictionary of the Dutch language, set up a word processor, installed a program that would enlarge the text on the screen of the monitor, and encouraged him to do what he could.

It was not long after all this, a couple of years at most, that a typed manuscript was handed to me. It was a relatively large manuscript, numbering nearly 300 pages. Although I had originally read the book in the Dutch, I read it once again in the translation. It impressed me even more than it had when first I read it. Although it was difficult to know what to do with the manuscript, I thought it important enough to prepare a couple of sections for publication in the *Protestant Reformed Theological Journal*. These articles in the *Journal* were read by a couple of men who were on the book publication committee of the RFPA. They asked to read the MS. I was hesitant to give it to them because it had sections missing; it had serious mistakes due to misreading; and the translation was a very literal translation of literary Dutch,

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which is almost unreadable by today's readers.

Nevertheless, these men saw the value of the book and insisted that it had to be published. Their arguments were convincing and unanswerable. They appealed to the fact that it was part of our heritage and that this newest generation had to read it if they were to understand the issues which brought about the Protestant Reformed Churches.

The editing is now finished and the edited manuscript is in the hands of the RFPA Publishing Committee. It is presently undergoing the final work that needs to be done in preparation for publication.

The Early History of the Writing of the Book

It is significant that the book was written in 1923, at least one year before the Synod of Kalamazoo adopted the three points of common grace. Both Revs. Danhof and Hoeksema were ministers in good standing in the CRC. Rev. Danhof was pastor of First CRC of Kalamazoo and Rev. Hoeksema was pastor of Eastern Ave. CRC. Although this was over a year prior to the adoption of the three points, the common grace controversy was raging in the church. The book was written within the context of that controversy.

That common grace should be a bone of contention in the Christian Reformed Church is due to the history of the doctrine. To understand this history of the doctrine, we must go back a century before 1924 and describe a bit of church history.

The roots of the controversy lie in the history of the Reformed churches in the Netherlands. From the time of the Reformation of the sixteenth century, the Reformed Church in the Netherlands had been a state church. A state church was a church in which the government exercised

a great deal of influence. The Reformed Church was the only church officially approved by the government. The government, in its approval of the Church, subsidized it to a considerable extent: it supported the entire educational system; it helped with the payment of ministerial salaries and the care of the poor; it supported retired ministers who were no longer able to work in the churches.

But an important element of the entire concept of a state church was the fact that all the citizens of the Netherlands were technically members of it. They were baptized by the church, married in the church, and buried under church supervision in church cemeteries. The local parish was responsible for the spiritual welfare of every citizen within its borders.

This State Church, however, became apostate. The apostasy set in early, as early as the last part of the seventeenth century. It continued and became worse, until the people of God were unable to worship God anymore in their local churches because worldliness had destroyed piety, and false doctrine had ruined the preaching.

In 1834 God brought reformation to the church. Under the leadership of Hendrik DeCock (and a few other ministers) a new denomination was formed, faithful to the truths of God's sovereign grace as taught in Scripture and outlined in the confessions of the Reformed churches.

This reformation attracted mainly the lower class of people, the ordinary day laborers, the poor and uneducated, but pious and godly people, who were starving for the pure preaching of the Word. The movement soon faced many troubles, among them disagreement over the question of common grace. There were some among the leaders who held to this doctrine, although Hendrik De Cock did not.

The common grace to which some in the church held was a com-

mon grace which included two elements: a general attitude of favor which God has towards all men, and a general well-meant gospel offer in which God expresses His desire to save all who hear the gospel.

When the members of the churches of the Secession of 1834 came to America, those committed to this version of common grace took their view with them. They were the immigrants who, settling in what became Holland, Michigan, became the originators of the Christian Reformed Church. Their version of common grace was soon taught within the new denomination.

I say "version," because another version of common grace soon began to be taught. It was introduced in the church by Dr. Abraham Kuyper. He, after his conversion from modernism, also led a reformatory movement from the State Church. This was in 1886. This is the Kuyper of *Particular Grace*, the book in which he defended vigorously and cogently the doctrine that God's grace is sovereign and for the elect alone.

That Kuyper should turn his attention to common grace is understandable only in terms of the situation in the Netherlands. It was common belief in the glory days of the Netherlands that the Dutch were a chosen people of God to whom had been given great favors and blessings. Accompanying these special favors of God was the calling to be the source and fountain of a worldwide influence, flowing from this small republic on the shores of the North Sea, exerting a Reformed influence upon all nations so that the Reformed faith could become global.

This vision of Kuyper was the explanation, at least in part, of several aspects of his life. It explains why Kuyper resigned his position as minister of the church in Amsterdam to organize a political party, run for the "Second House" in Parliament, and aspire

to the office of prime minister. It also explains why Kuyper was originally not in favor of the union between the churches of the Secession of 1834 and the churches which followed his leadership out of the apostate State Church. He was especially critical of the Secession Churches, because they had repudiated all official relationships with the state, established congregations and a denomination free from state control and support, and had insisted on a "Free Church" rather than a "National Church."

Kuyper thought this was a serious mistake on the part of the Secession churches. His churches, he believed, should never do this. In the Reformed Church of Amsterdam, of which Kuyper was a pastor until he resigned, the entire citizenry of Amsterdam were on the membership rolls, even many years after Kuyper's reformatory movement. He called his movement *Doleantie* or "Aggrieved." By that term he expressed his conviction that he and those who followed him were still members of the State Church, but "grieved" by its apostasy. History cancelled his claim.

It is at this point that Kuyper's common grace became important. He had to have some explanation for the fact that within the Reformed Church there were countless unbelievers who, as citizens of the Netherlands, were and remained members of the Reformed Church. He had to have some explanation for the fact that all the members of the Reformed Church, also citizens of the Netherlands, could work together to establish the Netherlands as a land where the Reformed faith influenced and determined the character of every institution of society and all culture so that the Netherlands could exert a Reformed influence throughout the world.

Kuyper found this in the doctrine of common grace.

Several things must be noted

concerning this Kuyperian common grace. In the first place, it differed from the common grace as held by some in the Secession Churches. The defenders of common grace in that tradition held to a general attitude of God's favor towards all men, manifested especially in the well-meant gospel offer. This is, by the way, the common grace set down as dogma in the first point of common grace as adopted by the Synod of Kalamazoo in 1924.

Kuyper's common grace had to do with culture. Kuyper made especially five points in his development of common grace. The first is that his doctrine of common grace had to be distinguished from the common grace found in the Secession Churches, a common grace with which Kuyper did not agree. To emphasize the difference, Kuyper even used a different term: *gemeene gratie*, instead of *algemeene genade*. (The two terms cannot be distinguished in any English translation; and, ironically, in his definitive work on common grace, called *Gemeene Gratie*, Kuyper often used the two terms interchangeably.)

Secondly, Kuyper's doctrine taught that if common grace had not intervened after the fall of Adam, man would have become a beast or a devil, and this world would have become a wasteland. The result would have been that the development of culture was impossible. This common grace, given to man after the fall, was found especially in the bestowal of the Holy Spirit, who restrained sin, produced good works in the wicked, and all without saving them.


Thirdly, Kuyper taught that, because of common grace, the cultural mandate not only remained in force, but was capable of being carried out in society by a cooperative effort on the part of believers and unbelievers. The result was that two streams could be found in history: the stream of

common grace and the development of the cultural mandate, and the stream of special grace and the salvation of the church. Kuyper insisted that the former was as important as, if not more important than, the latter. Indeed, so crucial was the stream of history, characterized by the workings of God's common grace, that the fruits of that culture would be preserved in the new Jerusalem.

This view formed the theological basis for the cooperation of all citizens in the Netherlands, backed by a government which gave official sanction to the Reformed Church. It would enable all to labor together to make the Netherlands the fountain of Reformed culture which would send forth a mighty stream flowing into all lands.

Fourthly, Kuyper himself recognized the fact that his doctrine of common grace was a novelty and an innovation. He granted that hints could be found in other Reformed writers going back to Calvin, but he insisted that he was really the author of this doctrine (as indeed he was) and that it now remained for the church to develop further his thought. This was completely contrary to the Synod of the CRC in 1924, which virtually adopted Kuyper's common grace in the second and third points of its decision, but added that these doctrines were held "in the most flourishing period of Reformed theology." Kuyper himself said this was not true.

Finally, when the Dutch who had followed Kuyper out of the State Church came to this country, they brought Kuyper's views along and attempted to implement Kuyper's vision here in America. They pleaded for involvement in all aspects of American society to influence society's institutions and cause the Reformed faith so to dominant that all of American life was permeated by the principles of the Reformed faith.

... to be continued. 

Like the Publicans or Like God

Matthew 5:43-48

Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.

Matthew 5:43-48

Much ink has been spilled over this passage of Holy Scripture. Especially the 45th verse of Matthew 5 has seen its share of controversy. It has figured prominently in the controversy over common grace. Adherents of common grace have used it in support of their error. The Protestant Reformed Churches had their beginning in this controversy. Its founders were expelled from the Christian Reformed Church for their rejection of common grace.

As is true of every controversy,

especially those that involve the beginning of a new denomination, so here, each side attempted to defend its teachings and actions. The Christian Reformed Church did so. It declared that the teachings of Hoeksema, Ophoff, and Danhof were contrary to the Scriptures, Matthew 5:45 among others, and that they therefore properly fell under discipline for their teachings.

These three men, and others with them, also defended their teachings and actions. They countered that common grace is not taught in the Scriptures, not even in Matthew 5:45. Because common grace is an unbiblical doctrine, they said, it was to be rejected.

As these two sides engaged in this controversy, Matthew 5:45 had its corresponding treatment. The side promoting common grace poured a certain content into Matthew 5:45, as into a bucket. That content was the doctrine of common grace. The line rejecting common grace took the bucket of Matthew 5:45, and emptied out that same content.

There is one important reason why there is no room in the bucket of Matthew 5:45 for the teaching of common grace: the bucket is already full. We must see and enjoy its fullness, the clear waters of the Word of God. Drinking in that fullness, we must see even more clearly that there is no room to pollute its waters with the teaching of common grace.



Matthew 5:45 can be properly understood, first, only in light of its context. That context, Matthew 5:43-48, partakes of the same nature as its larger context, verses 17-48. The King of this kingdom, Jesus Christ, instructs His people in the righteousness of His kingdom. He has set His instruction in sharp contrast to what was said "by them of old time." The righteousness of the kingdom Christ has shown to be far greater than the traditions of men. However, Christ is not giving any new law. He has not come to destroy but to fulfill. To this end He teaches the fullest implication of the commandments of God. That fullness of the law carries two points for us. First, we must feel the weighty obligation of the law upon us. We must know exactly what we must do. Second, we must know exactly what we may *not* do. This knowledge must lead us to the King. We must be clothed with His righteousness, and we must rest wholly upon His grace. Only by His grace can we do the things He commands.

Matthew 5:43-48 also develops the thought of those verses which immediately precede. We saw that the righteousness of the kingdom excludes the motive of personal vengeance. Whenever we are tempted to personal vengeance, we must labor to give more than is required, even to our enemy. The passage before us now develops this same matter further. Not only must we be taught to deny ourselves, even in the face of the enemy, but we are taught how, posi-

tively, we must treat our enemies.

This, then, is the clear water of Matthew 5:42-48: with definite particular deeds we must treat our enemies just as we do our friends. We are to love them. We must bless them. We are obligated to do good to them and to pray for them.

The Positive Example: God

In verse 45 Christ shows us the example we must follow. We are to be the children of our heavenly Father. He calls us to follow God with respect to His actions toward men, specifically toward the just and the unjust. Upon them both He sends rain and sunshine alike.

Exactly what does this mean? In the first place, it means these gifts are good. According to the context of this passage, Christ does not refer to the sunshine of drought, or to the rain of destructive floods. The goodness of the rain and sunshine is that they are conducive to the earthly life of men. By means of these gifts both the righteous and the unrighteous have life and they are able to conduct their affairs on the face of the earth. This goodness is, however, of a very limited nature. It applies only to the nature of the things in themselves. In fact, this goodness is so limited that it does not change its recipients. The evil remain evil. The unjust remain unjust. They even use the rain and sunshine to strengthen themselves in their wickedness. Scripture records the testimony of such unjust: they use the rain and sunshine to prove to themselves that God will not judge them because of their wickedness (Ps. 10:4-6; 49:11, 12; II Peter 3:3, 4).

We must also understand that the God who gives those gifts is good. This is the fundamental reason why God is the example we must follow. We must be good, just as God is good, in giving these gifts. Such is also the testimony of many Scriptures. God is upright in all His ways. Even these gifts themselves bear eloquent witness to the good-

ness of the Giver. All men, receiving them, are obligated to confess the goodness of their Giver. They are obligated to love, serve, and worship Him alone. That obligation belongs both to the evil and the good, to the just and the unjust.

However, the point of verse 45 is neither the condition of these gifts, nor the goodness of their Giver. It is not even the obligation of the recipients toward God. The point is the *condition* of those receiving these good gifts. They are divided into two groups. The one group is described as good and just. The other is described as evil and unjust. In the distribution of these gifts, God does not withhold from the one, the evil and the unjust, while He gives abundantly to the other, the good and the just. In the realm of rain and sunshine, the good and evil alike have the sunshine, and the just and unjust alike receive the rain. Here is the point: God does not look to the condition of the recipients before He bestows these gifts. The evil and the unjust are the enemies of God — yet He gives them the same gifts as He gives to the good and the just, His friends.

This divine activity Christ presents to the citizens of His kingdom as an example. He calls them to be like Him. We find it quite natural to love them that love us, to bless them that bless us, to do good to them that do good to us, and to pray for them that pray for us. However, we find it natural to do only that, and no more. We easily do what "hath been said," in verse 43: to love our neighbor and hate our enemy.

The Negative Example: The Publicans

In that condition, loving only the neighbor and hating the enemy, we are not like God. We feel the rebuke. However, God is not the only example in this passage. Our Lord gives another, this time negative, example: the loathed, hated publicans.

These publicans had their

neighbors. Since the vast majority of Jews considered them the enemy, the publicans' neighborhood was small, but tightly knit. In that neighborhood they exercised love for one another. Since the average Jew would not salute them, the publicans shared greetings with one another, and with other "sinners."

Understand the weight and emphasis of this example. First, there is a harmony between Jesus' words in verse 43 and the actions of the publicans. This "law" they fulfilled! They did what "hath been said." Second, these publicans, who fulfilled that law, were the enemies of the Jews! The Jews hated them. Yet, in their actions, the Jews were like their enemies, whom they hated, and unlike God, whom they claimed to love!



There is another point to the deep contrast between these two examples, God and the publicans. The publicans were the bitter enemies of those to whom Jesus spoke these words. In the thinking of His audience, part of their godliness was their hatred for the publicans. The typical Jew expressed that hatred. He refused to love the publicans. He refused to salute the publicans. However, God sent rain upon those publicans. God caused His sun to shine upon the publicans.

Here is where the Jew (and we with him) fall far short of the glory of God. God does not discriminate in His distribution of rain and sunshine. Contrary to the example of God, we do discriminate. Once we reckon a man as our enemy, any goodness we might otherwise bestow on him we withhold. We withhold our love, our blessing, our good, and our prayers. Instead we hate, we wish him destroyed, we work for his destruction, and we certainly refuse to pray for him. We would love to see him to come begging to us, so that we might shut our door in his face.

We see, then, how far we fall short of the glory of God. Our

righteousness falls far below the standard Christ impresses upon us in the last verse. "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."

However, we also see in this requirement the perfection of the King of the kingdom. He is the fulfillment even of this Word. We were His enemies, certainly no children of our "Father which is in heaven." Yet, the King did not hate us. Instead He laid down His life for us. He does not curse us. Instead He blesses us with the blessings of salvation. He does not harm us, but does us good, translating us into His kingdom of grace, bringing us to God our Father. He prays for us, even in heaven.

This was His fulfillment of the law. He fulfilled it for us, His enemies. By that fulfillment He has worked our reconciliation. Loving His enemies, He brings upon us the blessings of salvation, even eternal happiness with Him, before the face of our Father which is in heaven. The same law that we could not keep He fulfilled in our behalf.

The Love Commanded

By the love of our gracious King, He equips us now to love in the same manner. The King of the kingdom has made us children of His kingdom. By His blood we are adopted, and by His Spirit we are actually born again into that kingdom. The grace of the King is that He sheds abroad in our hearts even this love for our enemies.



Let us look narrowly at what all of these things mean.

Let us look specifically at the *manner* of this love. Here we must attend to the command of the King of the kingdom of heaven. He commands us, "Love your enemies." This is, of course, the most broad and general of the commandments recorded in verse 44. It is in complete contrast to what "hath been said..." Rather than giving the command, "Hate thine

enemy," our Lord commands, "Love your enemies."

This love is distinctive. It is not necessarily an *embrace* of the enemy. That is impossible if the enemy is also an enemy of God. In such a case, that love ought to have fellowship as an ultimate goal. However, such a goal cannot be realized unless that enemy is converted to God by His grace. Love will seek that enemy's conversion to God. Love will do that even though that enemy has committed great offense. That love is also sacrificial. It seeks to bestow great good, even at great cost, even one's own life.

The second word is a command to bless those that curse. Cursing calls down divine destruction upon the cursed. With this word, the enemy breathes out destruction and slaughter against the child of the kingdom. The response must not be a curse, but a blessing. The Christian speaks good things to such a cursing enemy.

The third word is the very point of doing good. While the hatred of the enemy is bent on destruction, the response is that of actually doing good. One works to discover what the enemy needs, and then supplies that need, even at great cost perhaps. We are reminded of the words of the apostle Paul, in Romans 12:20, 21: "Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou

shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good."



The fourth word is to pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you. Here we go to the depths of the matter. The first three speak of acts which may be seen and felt. This one is within the heart. Before God His Father in heaven the child of the kingdom comes. With his heart open before the living God, he sends petitions heavenward. Those petitions are for the welfare of those that despitefully use him and persecute him. He prays, not for their temporal blessing, but for their eternal blessedness: the salvation of God in Jesus Christ.




This is, indeed, a high calling. Looking at it, we see our need of grace. We are hardly, by nature, children of our Father which is in heaven, so far short we fall. We need the grace of the King to forgive. We need His power to act as the children of our Father in heaven. These things we find through the proper worship of God. Knowing our need we are prepared to enter into our Lord's teaching concerning the proper worship of the Father, in Matthew 6. Drinking this clear water of Holy Scripture must lead us to its Fountain, to praise and glorify Him, our Father in Heaven.

Questions for Meditation and Further Study

1. How must we reconcile the commandments of this passage with our calling with respect to the enemies of God, e.g., Psalm 139:21?

2. Consider the rest of the Sermon of Matthew 5-7. What other passages refute the teaching of common grace erroneously drawn out of this passage?

3. Are there any instances in which God does love His enemies? How does He love them? How does this love show itself to be wholly particular and not common at all?

4. What reasons are there for the calling to perfection in verse 48? Is this a proper goal to strive after, even in this life? 

Chapter One

The End of All Things

As the biblical doctrine of the last things, eschatology concerns an end of all things. It has to do with *the* end of all things—the end of time and history; the end of our present world; the end of the history of the church; the end of the time of salvation; and the end of each human personally.

End as Goal

The end with which eschatology is concerned is not merely the cessation of time, history, and the world. It is true, of course, that time will eventually run out, history will be done, and the world will be no more. Time will have its final moment. History will have its last chapter. The present creation will pass away.

Scripture denies that the history of this world goes on forever. It is the scoffers who teach that “all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.” Their teaching of an endless continuance of the world and its history is a direct assault upon the truthfulness of Jesus Christ and upon the hope of the church. For the teaching is intended to cast doubt upon Jesus’ promise of His second coming: “Where is the promise of his coming?” Against this unbelieving assertion that the world goes on forever, the apostle opposes the truth that there is com-

ing a day—“the day of the Lord”—“in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.” The universe will be “dissolved” (II Pet. 3).

But the end of all things in the doctrine of Scripture is far more than their eventually petering out. Even evolution acknowledges this kind of an end of all things, at least of all things earthly. Evolutionists gravely predict that after millions of years the energy of the sun will burn out, so that the earth will grow cold and die. The end that Scripture teaches, however, is the *goal* of time, history, and this present world. The Greek word in the New Testament is *telos*, which means ‘purpose’ (I Cor. 15:24; I Pet. 4:7). From this Greek word comes the English word “teleology” (increasingly popular in scientific circles today), referring to the study of the evidences of design or purpose in nature and history.

The end of all things is certainly an event that puts a stop to all things. By it, the present form of creation, space, time, and history reach the limit that God has set for them. But it is also that which gives them meaning and significance. It is that for which, knowingly or unknowingly, willingly or unwillingly, all things were aiming. It is that which accounts for the existence of all things, as well as for their movement in history. When the end oc-

curs, all men will say, “Ah, now I understand both the history of the world and my own personal history, to the minutest detail. This is why everything had to be, and this is why everything happened as it did.” The reprobate unbeliever will confess this relation of all things to the end, gnashing his teeth; the elect believer, with a broadening smile of delight.

The idea of the end in Scripture is not that of one’s rusting old car sputtering and finally giving up its automotive ghost, so that the owner junks it and says, “That’s the end of it.” Rather, the idea is that of the graduate’s finally completing his long course of schooling, so that he can enter upon the work which was the goal of all his studies.

In this way, Christ spoke of the “end of the world” in Matthew 24:14. In answer to His disciples’ question in verse 3, “Tell us, when shall these things be? And what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?” Jesus said that the gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world “and then shall the end come.” By means of the preaching of the gospel, and when the preaching of the gospel shall have finished its course, the world will one day reach its goal.

So far is the end of all things from being the mere cessation, the petering out, of everything, that it is, in fact, a *beginning*—a *new beginning*. This is what the end will be for the individual elect believer:

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he will receive a new body and a new name (I Cor. 15:42-54; Rev. 2:17). This is what the end will be for the church: the consummation of her marriage to Jesus (Rev. 19:6-8). This is what the end will be for the creation: renewal unto a new heaven and a new earth (Rom. 8:19-22; Rev. 21:1).

“Unyielding Despair”

With its conception of the end of all things as the attaining of the goal of all things, the Christian faith distinguishes itself from naturalism, philosophy, and pagan religions. Naturalism expects that the earth and its life, if not the entire universe, will eventually perish, whether by catastrophe or by gradual decay—T. S. Eliot’s “bang” and “whimper.” In neither case does the universe reach a goal.

The best that philosophy can do is to speculate of a vague immortality of the soul as the future, though not the goal, of the individual life.

Heathen religions do not even think in terms of linear time. Therefore, they know nothing of history as a progression from a beginning to an ending. Rather, they have a dreary cyclical view of the movement of human life and of the world: reincarnation and endless revolvings of epochs. Theirs is the application of the unredeemed vanity of Ecclesiastes to the world as a whole and to everything the world contains.

Because they are ignorant of the end of all things, as the goal of all things, naturalism, philosophy, and paganism are hopeless. Although he was giving expression to the utter hopelessness of his own naturalism, or materialism, Bertrand Russell eloquently voiced the despair of philosophy and paganism as well.

That man is the product of causes which had no prevision of the end they were achieving: that his origin, his growth, his hopes and fears, his loves and his beliefs are

but the outcome of accidental collocations of atoms; that no fire, no heroism, no intensity of thought and feeling, can preserve an individual life beyond the grave; that all the labors of the ages, all the devotion, all the inspiration, all the noon-day brightness of human genius, are destined to extinction in the vast death of the solar system, and that the whole temple of man’s achievement must inevitably be buried beneath the debris of a universe in ruins—all these things, if not quite beyond dispute, are yet nearly so certain, that no philosophy which rejects them can hope to stand. Only within the scaffolding of these truths, only on the firm foundation of unyielding despair, can the soul’s habitation henceforth be safely built.... Brief and powerless is man’s life; on him and all his race the slow sure doom falls pitiless and dark. Blind to good and evil, reckless of destruction, omnipotent matter rolls on its relentless way; for man, condemned today to lose his dearest, tomorrow himself to pass through the gate of darkness, it remains only to cherish, ere yet the blow falls, the lofty thoughts that ennoble his little days ... proudly defiant of the irresistible forces that tolerate for a moment his knowledge and his condemnation, to sustain alone, a weary but unyielding Atlas, the world that his own ideals have fashioned despite the trampling march of unconscious power (“A Free Man’s Worship,” in the *Basic Writings of Bertrand Russell*, George Allen and Unwin, 1961, p. 72).

Before the Ephesians were “made nigh by the blood of Christ” and came to know the purpose of God with all things, they had no hope (Eph. 2:12, 13; 1:9, 10). Because only the Christian gospel knows the end, only the Christian gospel proclaims hope.

The End Appointed

The explanation of the end of all things is God’s appointment of the goal of the world, time, history, and the human race in His eternal counsel. In the free exercise of His


sovereignty, God has decreed His purpose with all things. There is the end of all things in history’s last moment, because there is the beginning of all things in the eternal purpose of the decreeing God. God’s decree of the goal is the reason why He knows the day and hour of this end, or goal, of the world, as Christ teaches in Matthew 24:36. That God eternally purposed the goal of all things, and what this goal is, the apostle declares in Ephesians 1:9, 10: “Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: that in the dispensation of the fullness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth; even in him.”

When God created all things in the beginning of Genesis 1:1, He had this end in view. By the providence with which He upholds and governs all things ever after, He unerringly directs all things to this end. Eschatology depends squarely upon the sovereignty of God, who once created and now governs the universe according to His purposeful decree. All things move toward their one end. Nothing fails to move toward the end, whether the disobedience of Adam, or the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, or the departure of many professing Christians from the faith, or the falling of a sparrow from a housetop. The reason is not blind necessity, or fortuitous circumstance, or a mindless, evolutionary impulse immanent in the world seeking utopia. The reason is the infinite wisdom and almighty power of the God and Father of Jesus Christ, “who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will,” to achieve His purpose (Eph. 1:11).

The truth of the end of all things is fundamental to biblical eschatology. To ignore the end, or to mistake it, is to skew everything that the Bible teaches about the things that must shortly come to

pass. As a result, one cannot discern, or rightly interpret, the signs of the end, even though he sees

them. One who mistakes the end very really runs the risk of seeking and working for a wrong end, both

of his own life and of all things. He will be indifferent to, and may even resist, futilely, God's end. 

In His Fear

Rev. Daniel Kleyn

Delighting in the Sabbath Day

If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the LORD, honourable; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: Then shalt thou delight thyself in the LORD.

Isaiah 58:13, 14a

The sabbath day is widely broken today. This is done not only by the world, but also by the church.

It is desecrated by working. For many it is business-as-usual on Sunday. Stores, factories, and restaurants are open. Buying and selling take place just as much as (or even more than) on any other day of the week.

It is also desecrated by playing. Throughout our country and the world, Sunday is a day for sport, entertainment, and pleasure. These activities, perhaps more than any other, contribute to the violation of the sabbath.

The child of God is also tempted to break the sabbath. He might be tempted to work on Sunday because of the risk of losing his job. He is perhaps pressured by friends to participate in sport and leisure. He is possibly tempted to turn on his television and to break the sabbath by being a spectator of those who are breaking that day. We are not immune to this sin.

We might be inclined, in light of this, to take a negative approach to sabbath observance. That approach would be to produce a list of things we consider inappropriate for Sunday – the kind of list the Pharisees produced. We would then impose this list upon ourselves and others. Proper sabbath observance would be to abide strictly by these rules.

While rules are often helpful and sometimes even necessary (as parents well know), a legalistic approach is wrong. Instead, the child of God should approach the sabbath day along the lines of the Word of God in Isaiah 58:13, 14. The day ought to be viewed positively as a day in which to delight.



Sunday is a special day. It is so because it is a holy day. This means it is a day that is set apart from the other days of the week. It is unique. It is not the same kind of day as Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, or Saturday. It is different from every other day of the week.

That Sunday is a holy day means it is a day that is to be dedicated to God Himself, and thus to the things of God. Sunday is God's day. God says so in Isaiah 58:13 when He states that it is "my holy day!" It is not man's day, but God's. It is to be used, therefore, not for man, but for God.

The unbeliever has, of course, no desire or intention to do so. He has no interest in keeping any of God's commands. He will not and does not keep the sabbath day holy.

But the problem today is that also many confessing Christians forget (or even deny) that the sabbath is God's day. They imagine that it is man's day and that man can use it as he pleases.

As a result, many use the day to do their own things, to seek their own pleasures, and to speak their own words. They have no problem with Sunday being used for work. They have no problem with Sunday being used for recreation. Such activities, they claim, are legitimate on Sunday. And what legitimizes them, in their judgment, is that by means of such activities they can use the day for quality time with the family, as though "family time" justifies breaking the sabbath.

In contrast to this, the spiritually minded believer delights in God's holy day as God's day, and therefore seeks to honor Him in it. That ought to be the case with us.

To delight in something is to enjoy it, to take pleasure in it. To do that with regard to Sunday means we do not view it as a burdensome day. We do not consider it a hardship that we cannot use the day for ourselves in order to do what appeals to our flesh. We find the day a day of great joy. It is a day we look forward to. It is the best day of the week.

Such delight becomes evident in the fact that we strive to keep the sabbath day. We do so by doing in it what God requires. We delight in it by not doing our own ways, not finding and doing our own pleasures, and not speaking

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our own words. We delight in it by delighting in our God.



We delight in the sabbath and honor God in it, first of all, by not using it as a day for doing our own ways.

“Our ways” refers to our daily work, to the things that normally occupy us during the week. Whatever that work may be, whether one is a teacher or student, an employer or employee, a husband and father who works outside the home or a wife and mother who is a keeper at home, on Sunday we put that work aside. Apart from works of necessity and mercy, all work is strictly forbidden. We may (and must) work on the other six days of the week, but not on Sunday.

God’s purpose with this command is not, however, that we sit around and do absolutely nothing on Sunday. A positive activity is implied. We must still be busy. But we must be doing the things of God. The command not to do our own things must be obeyed exactly so we are able to be busy doing what God requires on His day.

We delight in the sabbath, in the second place, by not finding and doing our own pleasures.

Isaiah 58:13 mentions twice the sin of seeking one’s own pleasure. This is repeated for emphasis. And it is a necessary emphasis today in light of the fact that that is exactly what most people are doing on the sabbath day, using it for their own pleasure. And is it not also true that we, by nature, desire to do the same?

It is tempting for us to think, and perhaps even to argue, “But all week I’ve been working hard. It’s been a difficult and exhausting week. And now finally, on Sunday, I have a day for myself. Finally a day to pursue my own interests. Finally a day for vacation or sport or travel or television. Finally a day to relax by doing what I want!”

We are instructed to turn away

from our own pleasure on Sunday. That means we may not look for and seek out our own pleasures. And it means that even if those pleasures are before us, we may not do them. We may not use the day to please ourselves. That is a sinful use of the sabbath day. And why? Because Sunday is God’s holy day. We must do, not what pleases us, but what pleases Him.

We delight in the sabbath, thirdly, by not speaking our own words.

It is striking that keeping the sabbath involves also our speech. Forbidden is speaking our own words. This refers to speech characterized by mere idle talk, the kind of talk in which God is forgotten or ignored, the kind of talk about things which draw us away from thoughts concerning God.

We often do just that. We use the sabbath to talk about all kinds of earthly things. But all such trivial and idle talk should be avoided. Not that we may not speak at all on Sunday. We must speak. But our conversation should contain the words of God. Our speech must be centered in the Word that is preached and the Word that we read. Is it?



Finally, we delight in the sabbath day by doing something positive – delighting in Jehovah.

We delight in Jehovah on His holy day by going to His house, in order there to fellowship with Him. What a joy it is to do so! There we can delight in Him as He reveals Himself and His grace to us in Christ through the preaching of the gospel. There we can delight in Him when we hear Christ say: “Your sins, though many and great, are forgiven! I have delivered you from them all. I have delivered you from the punishment of hell that you deserve because of them!” We can delight in God when the Spirit writes the Word upon our hearts and assures us that we belong to our faithful Savior, Jesus

Christ. We can delight in God when we are assured once more that we are heirs of eternal life. And we can delight in fellowship with God’s people who rejoice with us in all these things.


What a joy it is to delight in Jehovah! What a joy it is to focus, in God’s house, on Him and His love for us in Christ! What a delight to hear the blessed gospel! What a pleasure to fellowship with our covenant God who delights in us!

Is there anything else that gives the child of God that kind of joy and delight? Can any earthly pleasure compare? Can anything earthly give such great joy? Is it not, then, foolish (utterly so) for the child of God to want to be somewhere other than in God’s house on Sunday?

We also delight in Jehovah throughout the rest of the day. We do so through personal worship of God. We do so through worshipping Him as families. We do so through singing God’s praises together, either in our homes or as we visit with each other. We do so by what we read. We do so by visiting with other believers and discussing with them the things of God. We do so by visiting and giving encouragement to the widows and widowers, the elderly and the lonely.

What wonderful and blessed activities with which to occupy ourselves on Sunday. There is so much to do. There are so many ways in which to be busy in the things of God. How can there possibly be time for our own ways, our own pleasures, and our own words?

And remember, we need to delight in the sabbath. We need to do for our own spiritual welfare. We need to do so that we may hear the blessed gospel and be assured through the Spirit’s work in our hearts that we are at peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Do you call the sabbath a delight? Is it a delight to you? 



Proceedings of the International Conference of Reformed Churches, June 20-27, 2001, Philadelphia, U.S.A. Neerlandia, Alberta, Canada/Pella, Iowa, U.S.A.: Inheritance Publications, 2001. Pp. 287. \$9.90 [US] (paper). [Reviewed by the editor.]

The International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC) is an ecumenical organization of more conservative Reformed and Presbyterian churches. The Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (liberated) and the Free Church of Scotland took the lead in forming the ICRC in the 1980s following their withdrawal from the Reformed Ecumenical Council over issues of theological liberalism. The ICRC meets every four years.

The purpose of the ICRC according to its constitution is the following:

1. to express and promote the unity of faith that the member churches have in Christ;
2. to encourage the fullest ecclesiastical fellowship among the member churches;
3. to encourage cooperation among the member churches in

the fulfillment of the missionary and other mandates;

4. to study the common problems and issues that confront the member churches and to aim for recommendations with respect to these matters;
5. to present a Reformed testimony to the world.


Proceedings gives the decisions, reports, and speeches of the recent meeting of the ICRC, June, 2001, in Philadelphia, PA. The book also contains the constitution of the ICRC, as well as the names and corresponding addresses of the member churches.

The book contains the full texts of the speeches at the conference: "Principles of the Unity of the Church—A Reformed (Continental) Perspective"; "The Unity of the Church in the Westminster Tradition"; "Hermeneutics and the Bible"; "Work among the Jewish People: Historical Perspectives and the Contemporary Challenge"; "The Regulative Principle of Worship"; "The Work of the Holy Spirit in the Believer: Illustrated by the Spirit's Office of Leading the Believer from

Regeneration to Glorification." Of special importance are the two papers on the unity of the church. Evidently, it is the practice of the ICRC that the speeches are followed by responses from designated theologians and by discussion. This procedure is beneficial. The responses, however, are not given, although the main points of discussion are noted.

This book enables the Reformed or Presbyterian church member to stay abreast of the discussions and actions of the soundest Reformed ecumenical organization in existence.

In the United States, the book can be ordered from Inheritance Publications, Box 366, Pella, Iowa 50219. Canadians can order from Inheritance Publications, Box 154, Neerlandia, Alberta T0G 1R0. Australians can order from Inheritance Publications, Box 1122, Kelmescott, W.A. 6111.

Similar books of the proceedings of the former three gatherings of the ICRC are available from the publisher. 

Report of Classis East

September 11, 2002
Trinity PRC, Hudsonville, MI

Classis met in regular session on Wednesday, September 11, 2002 at the Trinity PRC in Hudsonville, MI. Each congregation was represented by two delegates. Rev. Nathan Brummel was the chairman for this session.

This was the first time that Trinity hosted the classis. And it was fitting, since this session of classis was also the occasion for the examination of their pastor-elect, Rodney Kleyn.

Two pastors-elect were examined: Rodney Kleyn, who accepted the call to Trinity PRC, and David

Overway, who accepted the call from Covenant PRC, Wyckoff, New Jersey. Both men preached a sermon and then submitted to a lengthy examination. At the conclusion of the exam, classis unanimously approved both and authorized their respective consistories to proceed with their ordination and installation. Classis gave thanks to God for the addition of two more to serve in the ministry of the gospel in the Protestant Reformed Churches.

Classis also admitted a third person into the ministry of the Protestant Reformed Churches: Rev. Angus Stewart. Rev. Stewart has been without a charge since the

congregation in Northern Ireland disbanded. Synod 2002 advised Rev. Stewart to contact the Hudsonville PRC to inquire about entrance into the ministry of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America. Rev. Stewart followed this advice and Hudsonville subsequently brought this request to classis.

Classis East, with the concurrence of the synodical deputies from Classis West, received Rev. Stewart into the ministry of the Protestant Reformed Churches with his ministerial credentials and church membership residing in our Hudsonville PRC. This was done without a classical examination,

since Rev. Stewart's examination at synod had included the elements belonging to a classical examination. Classis considered this to be a temporary measure until Synod 2003 decides whether to reconstitute the congregation in Northern Ireland or declare this area to be an object of missions.

Classis took this decision on the grounds (summarized) that 1) Rev. Stewart received a full four-year course of study at our seminary. 2) Synod 2001 declared that Rev. Stewart had sustained a thorough exam, was fully qualified for the


ministry, and was eligible for a call. 3) Covenant PRC of Northern Ireland was a sister church, which allows ministers of sister churches access to our pulpits and opens these ministers for a call from one of our congregations. 4) Article 9 of the Church Order allows for a minister's credentials to be temporarily held in a local church without the church extending a call to him.

Classis also decided to appoint its church visitors as a classical committee to inquire into the viability of Covenant PRC and to re-

port at its meeting of January 8, 2003. This action was in response to an instruction from Synod 2002 regarding the matter of continuing subsidy to small churches.

Classical appointments were granted to Byron Center and Grandville for their evening services.

The expenses of this session amounted to \$1,366.04. Classis will meet next at Faith PRC on Wednesday, January 8, 2003.

Respectfully submitted,
w.s. Jon J. Huiskens,
Stated Clerk 

News From Our Churches

Mr. Benjamin Wigger

Young People's Activities

All present and incoming members of the Young People's Society of the Doon, IA PRC were encouraged to participate in a kick-off-camp-out on Friday and Saturday, September 6 & 7. Plans called for the young people, along with chaperons, to hold an overnight camp-out at Newton Hills State Park. On Saturday they went swimming at nearby Lake Alvin. The camping trip was informal, so there were no formal discussion groups or topics planned. We trust that this time together served to bring these young people closer together, and that they had opportunity to admire the handiwork of God's creation.

In news somewhat closely related to our young people, but really not one of their activities, the congregation of the Byron Center, MI PRC sponsored a Young People's Leaders Seminar, September 15, at Adams Christian School in Wyoming, MI. This seminar focused on the many different aspects of leading our young people in their society life. Rev. R. VanOverloop gave a short speech,

followed by a discussion on the methods and practices of leading. A special invitation was extended to all current, future, and especially experienced past leaders to attend in order to add their insight to the discussion.

Next summer, the Lord willing, the congregation of the Loveland, CO PRC will be hosting the 2003 Young People's Convention at the YMCA in Estes Park. The dates are Thursday, August 14, through Tuesday, August 19. Check out their web site at www.prca.org and click on "News and Views" to locate their link on the 2003 Convention for information on lodging and activities for families who plan to vacation in Estes Park during the convention.

Mission Activities

The delegation of Rev. S. Key, representing our churches' Foreign Mission Committee, and Elder Leon Uittenbogaard, representing the calling church, visited our denominational mission field in Ghana for approximately two weeks, starting on September 29, for their annual visit to the field to oversee Rev. W. Bekkering's work and visit with members of the Fellowship.

A recent bulletin from the Byron Center, MI PRC contained a thank-you from Philippine's missionary Rev. A. Spriensma and the Reformed

saints of the Berean Bible Church. This past summer the children in Byron Center's Sunday School took collections each week for the purchase of Sunday School literature, which Mrs. Spriensma purchased and brought back with her to the Philippines, where it is now being used in the Berean Bible Church.

Congregation Activities

For some time now we have reported on progress being made with the building project at the Byron Center, MI PRC. If all goes as planned, their parking lot will be repaved the week of October 7, and they anticipate having the addition and narthex ready for occupancy the week of October 13.

On the evening of September 20 the congregation of the Hope PRC in Walker, MI hosted a special thank you program for Rev. and Mrs. J. Kortering, who returned earlier that month after having spent eleven years in Singapore as minister-on-loan to our sister churches there. But lest you think the Korterings plan a retirement of inactivity, let me assure you that that does not appear to be the case. Currently they plan on returning to Singapore the first of next year in order to help out by teaching in the Seminary there.

The consistory of the Lynden,

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

WA PRC has made arrangements for a Bible Study for older members of their congregation who do not care to be out at night or who have trouble hearing at the regular weekly Bible Study. This group will meet on Tuesday afternoons at their parsonage.

This fall the consistory of the Byron Center, MI PRC carried out their calling regarding family visitation in a way different from past years. This year they did not have a theme and a set passage for each visit, but rather they hoped to discuss in more depth the spiritual life and needs of each family and the necessity of a godly home, by choosing Scripture and a theme that best fit the needs of that particular visit.

Evangelism Activities

September 6 the Evangelism Committee of the Hope PRC in Redlands, CA sponsored a lecture by Prof. D. Engelsma titled, "Did Christ Come in A.D. 70, or The Error of Preterism." A question and answer period followed the lecture.


Denominational Activities

The annual meeting of the Reformed Free Publishing Association was held September 26 at Southwest PRC in Grandville, MI. Prof. H. Hanko spoke on the interesting history of the long-out-of-print book, *Van Zonde en Genade*, a book published in 1923 by Hoeksema and Danhof, translated now by Rev. C. Hanko, and prepared by Prof. Hanko for publication soon in English by the RFPA.

After the meeting, the RFPA offices at the Seminary were open for guided tours.

The annual Mass Meeting of Adult Bible Societies in the west Michigan area was held at First PRC in Grand Rapids on September 24. Rev. M. Dick spoke on "Missions: As We Have Opportunity? (How to determine our calling for missionaries with vacancies in our churches.)"

Minister Activities

The Grandville, MI PRC has extended a call to Rev. K. Koole to serve as their next pastor. From a trio of the Revs. A. Brummel, M. Dick, and K. Koole, the Byron Center, MI PRC voted to extend a call to Rev. Brummel to serve as their pastor. 

Announcements

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].

UPDATE

The 2002 Acts of Synod (PRC) and Yearbook has a change in city for Rev. Spriensma. Please change the address to:

Cainta, Rizal 1900, Philippines.
His mobile phone number (from the US) is:

011-63-920-210-522.

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The council and congregation of Southeast PRC express their Christian sympathy to Helene DeVries in the death of her husband,

GERALD DEVRIES.

May she be comforted in the words, "Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed" (I Corinthians 15:51, 52).

Rev. Dale Kuiper, Pres.
Tim Pipe, Clerk

Reformed Witness Hour

Topics for November

Date	Topic	Text
November 3	"Ruth: A Sad Sojourn in Moab"	Ruth 1:1-6
November 10	"Ruth: Loyal to the Core"	Ruth 1:7-18
November 17	"Ruth: Brought Home Again"	Ruth 1:19-22
November 24	"The Great Thanksgiving"	Psalms 118:1