

The Standard Bearer

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Casting our cares upon God

Rev. Steven Key

My heart desires thy peace

Prof. Brian Huizinga

The beauty of Lydia

Mr. Kyle Bruinooge

Chiseled for beauty

Mrs. Sherry Koole

Philippines' mission
newsletter

Rev. Richard Smit

The Holstege family

Mr. James Holstege



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Meditation

Rev. Steven Key, emeritus minister of the Protestant Reformed Churches and member of Loveland PRC in Loveland, Colorado

Casting our cares upon God

**Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.
I Peter 5:7**

From every earthly point of view as we enter this new year, we have reason to be anxious. We know nothing about what lies in store for us in 2023. Through all the political animosity and conflict, we see increasing hatred toward Christianity amidst the rapid development of wickedness in the world. From the perspective of our human natures, that is alarming. Nor do we know what trials may develop in the midst of our own families and churches. We know not whom the Lord will remove through death, nor when. We know not whether old or young will be afflicted with serious illness. We know not who will leave us, ensnared in the ways of Satan, the great deceiver. Besides all the unknowns, we enter this new year with our own personal trials. The year 2023 does not promise us any easier journey than we have had this past year.

How necessary, then, that we face the new year in the light of God's Word in I Peter 5:7: "Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you."

A significant admonition

That this is a significant admonition is evident from the fact that it hits so close to our own hearts and lives. When the apostle Peter speaks here of *care*, he is addressing our response to God's way with us, that way especially which calls us to humble ourselves under His mighty hand (v. 6). The idea expressed by the word is that we are torn apart inside by these things or events in our lives. These cares begin where we cannot control the outcome of things, nor the way.

A minister may be ever so faithful, proclaiming the Word in truth and in power to the congregation, or the elder to the individual, but he has no control over the outcome of that Word in the heart of the individual. He desires the salvation of that person who has departed from the faith; but he has no control over that sinner's conversion. He may labor with prayer and with tears with one who is in desperate need of help; but ultimately the Spirit has to change the heart and mind.

The farmer can be diligent in his preparations and

labors in the field. But he cannot make it rain; nor can he control the amount of rain that falls upon his fields. And, therefore, he really has no control over the outcome of the harvest.

Then there is our physical health. Although there are ways in which we can wrongfully contribute to the deterioration of our health even in violation of the sixth commandment, generally speaking we have no control over health or sickness, over life or death.

When God's way in our life is contrary to our own desires, we might be filled with care. That care, that being drawn in different directions, comes from the struggle between the old man of sin that is expressing discontent with God's way, and the new man of life within us that knows full well that God's way is only good for us. We are torn apart inside!

In the year that lies before us, there are times when our sinful flesh will want to fight against God's way for us. When we cannot see or understand God's ways, we are inclined to question the trials He has placed upon the pathway of our life. Sometimes we do not want the pathway that God has given. We do not trust God's power to help us; we question His wisdom; we even question God's goodness and mercy over us. We might even try to take matters in our own hands. We wrestle with our problems, even though the load is too big for us to handle. We justify our own way, even though that way might be totally wrong and destructive for us. And if we continue on that way of sinful anxiety and the sinful reaction to God's ways with us, the joy of salvation dies in our souls and darkness settles over us. At the same time there is this turmoil of soul, as we are being pulled in two directions—by that old man of sin, and by the new man in Christ that writes upon our conscience that we are doing wrong. Such are the cares that we are admonished to cast upon our heavenly Father—all your care, every care.

To cast our cares upon Him means that we submit our wills to God's will and way. As is evident from the connection to I Peter 5:6, casting our cares upon God is an expression of the humility to which God calls us.

The language here is strongly figurative. These cares and anxieties are represented as an oppressively heavy burden; and the sinking sufferer is pictured as casting

them off his own shoulders and onto God. The text is reminiscent of what the psalmist wrote in Psalm 55:22: “Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved.”

Furthermore, the figurative expression that speaks of “casting” announces to us that there is effort involved here. To get rid of these cares that plague us is not simply a matter of laying them aside. To drop something requires little effort; to throw something, especially something of weight, requires a great deal of effort! Our experience confirms that it is no easy matter to throw off the burden of our cares. We are not to expect that in some miraculous way and without the use of any means God is going to relieve us from these burdensome cares and give us happiness. The apostle would not encourage us in laziness and a foolish self-help philosophy. To cast our cares upon the Lord is done by using the means that He has appointed for the revelation of His will and way for us.

In this new year you may expect at times to face such cares as those to which the apostle refers. In order to cast those cares upon Jehovah, you must be continually strengthened especially by the chief means of grace, the preaching of the Word. Through the preaching of His Word, He comes to you with the voice of Christ and reveals to you the secrets of His love and His will for you. It is the powerful Word of Christ applied by His Spirit that works in us to will and to do of His good pleasure. It is that same Word which gives us to see the greatness of God our Savior. There is no other place to cast those burdensome cares.

But while the preaching is the primary means of grace appointed by God, that does not preclude the use of other means. There are times, for example, when we need the specific help of other people, whether pastors and elders, or other brothers and sisters who have been down the same pathway. But if we are truly to be helped, then we must seek not just to cast our cares onto a counselor, nor to pick ourselves up and do it on our own; but we must be led to the reality of things before the face of God and to cast our cares upon *Him*.

Do not put off seeking that help. When you are carrying a burden that God has called you to rid yourself of, and you ignore Him and are constantly carrying it and meddling with it, you should find it no surprise when you are crushed under it. God says, “Give me those cares.” If you disobey Him, should you not feel the full weight of them? Cast all your cares upon Him.

Finally, and especially, we cast our cares upon Him through prayer. That is the emphasis of Philipians 4:6: “Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be

made known unto God.” Through His means of grace and prayer, He feeds His flock like a shepherd. Lean upon Him who would have you pray to Him. For He gives us His promise in Psalm 145:18,19: “The LORD is nigh unto all them that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth. He will fulfill the desire of them that fear him: he also will hear their cry, and will save them.” Through the prayer of faith, in conjunction with the faithful use of the means of grace, you most assuredly will hear Him say, “I will bring the blind in a way that they knew not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known: I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight” (Is. 42:16). “I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way that thou shouldest go” (Ps. 32:8). “When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee” (Is. 43:2). In every situation in life, there are appropriate promises to you who would cast all your cares upon our faithful heavenly Father. Receive this admonition as the Word of God to you, a Word that is significant, a Word that is also powerful.

A well grounded admonition

This admonition is also well grounded. That ground is expressed by the apostle when he writes: “for he careth for you.”

There are many beautiful statements in Scripture, precious statements to the believer, but none is more precious than this: He careth for you. Others care for you too. But our heavenly Father alone is mighty and powerful to provide for all your needs. Not only is He able, but He is willing. For He loves you in Christ Jesus. The inspired apostle speaks to those begotten again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead (I Pet. 1:3), and to you, therefore, “who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time” (I Pet. 1:5). The work that He has once begun in you shall by His grace be fully done (Phil. 1:6). He has arranged every detail of your way in perfect wisdom.

That is what you must see—also in the year that lies before us. He has cared for you through all the trials of the past. He shall in the future. In every circumstance we may confess “the Lord thinketh upon me” (Ps. 40:17). So we sing with Asaph in Psalm 73: “Thou shalt guide me by thy counsel, and afterwards to receive me to glory.” God knows exactly what you need and when you need it. He cares for you. Cast all your care upon Him.

To that end God calls us to humble ourselves before

His mighty hand. It is, after all, His purpose to exalt you in due time (I Pet. 5:6).

The apostle does not write this to the ungodly. “God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble” (James 4:6). We cast our cares upon God only by faith in Christ, faith that is the gift of His grace. We cast our cares upon Him because by faith we have been given to see, and we each confess, that He has always cared for me; He has always loved me. And by the grace through which we receive that truth, we begin by casting upon Him our greatest care, which is our sin. Casting that burdensome care upon Him, we rejoice and say, “Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom. 5:1). Then we also humble

ourselves before Him and in thankfulness walk in the way in which He leads us.

When you walk apart from Christ and in your sin, you have not the testimony of God that He cares for you. Lay hold of Christ, therefore, in humility and repentance, today and tomorrow and every day of your life. For when you stand by faith in Christ Jesus, God comes to you by this Word and says, “I will care for you; I will help you. I will do so that My name is glorified in and by you.”

Cast all your care upon Him. He cares for you. “And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus” (Phil. 4:7).



Editorial

Prof. Brian Huizinga, professor of Dogmatics and Old Testament in the Protestant Reformed Theological Seminary and member of Grandville PRC in Grandville, Michigan

My heart desires thy peace

Peace in the church is fragile and precious. Threats to peace in the church are many and mighty. The call to peace in the church is urgent and necessary.

When we speak of the church, we are not referring to the mystical body of all the elect, but to the church institute as the visible congregation where we have our membership. Think of Jerusalem of old where the Israelites gathered for temple worship, or think of the congregation gathered in Corinth during the apostolic era, or think of your own congregation (and denomination). Concerning God's church may we all sincerely say and sing the words lifted from the sixth stanza of Psalter 348, “My heart desires thy peace.” As often as we pray, “Lord of the harvest, send forth laborers” (Luke 10:2), we ought to pray twice as often for the peace of Jerusalem, that peace may be within her walls and prosperity within her palaces (Ps. 122:6-7).

As we begin the year 2023, peace is the crying need in the PRC, as it surely is anywhere God has built and maintains His church in these last and evil days. We need God's grace poured out in rich abundance, for the sake of Christ, through the Holy Spirit, and into the hearts of all the members of the church so that each one says about the church, “I love thee O Jerusalem, and therefore, my heart desires thy peace.” Many things are necessary for peace in the church and I intend to address

some of them in upcoming articles; but we must begin with the *desire* for peace.

A needed desire

Our desire for peace in the church ought to become more and more fervent this year. The reasons are manifold. First, in recent times we in the PRC have been confronted with great perils. These perils have included doctrinal controversy, which always has the potential to tear the church apart, especially should the churches ever adopt false doctrine instead of vindicating the truth by identifying and condemning error.

In addition, the perils of our day include the sin of schism. A minister in the PRC was recently deposed for schismatic behavior. Matters worsened when some members and a couple of other ministers separated from the PRC in support of the deposed minister. Together, now, they create more schism and try recruiting more followers by slanderous the PRC with preposterous and oft-repeated claims like “the PRC teaches salvation by works,” and “the PRC hates the gospel and persecutes those who love it,” and “the PRC is the great whore of Babylon.” Under the judgment of God, schism always begets more schism and endless fragmentation until finally even chief friends are estranged and, most grievous of all, a generation of children is scattered.

Finally, there is the great peril of the horrific evil of abuse that has been exposed in recent years and includes the deposition of a younger minister for spousal abuse and an older minister for sexual abuse. With minimal effort Satan could use the abomination of abuse and any number of wrong responses to it to rip the church to shreds and cause still greater damage to abuse victims. But for the astonishing grace of God, the PRC in the midst of these perils would be reduced to the spiritual carnage of an American Civil War battlefield. Is not peace in the church more precious to your heart this year?

Second, our desire for peace in the church must grow stronger this year because the world outside grows increasingly restless. The nations are on edge. People all across the globe are anxious and agitated. This is to be expected because Scripture depicts the future antichristian world-kingdom as a hideous beast that will arise out of the “sea” (Dan. 7; Rev. 13). Have you ever stood alongside of or above the sea on an outcropping of rocks and looked below? The sea is not like a small freshwater lake in the mountains with a surface so calm and clear that it acts like a mirror. The sea moves. With its tides and waves it never stops moving, churning, pounding, heaving, and foaming. The nations are like the sea. All through the earth there is constant fear, restlessness, rioting, murder, strife, animosity, tyranny, stark political divides, war and rumors of war. The church may not be like the sea. How urgent is the call to peace!

Third, the spirit of our age is diametrically opposed to peace in the church institute. Take for example the so-called wokeism and critical race theory that are pushed by progressive activists and promoted in big corporations and secular institutions of learning. A new generation is being indoctrinated to view all reality through the lens of oppression, bias, and victimhood. They are taught to look for injustice everywhere, and automatically assume that all white (especially heterosexual, Christian) males are privileged oppressors while everyone else is a victim. This spirit is fatal to unity in the church institute because it promotes suspicion, distrust, frustration, and rebellion, and ultimately it would seek to eradicate church government exercised through God-ordained special offices as an inherently oppressive structure. How urgent is the call to unity among brethren in God’s church!

Fourth, in the modern world we are navigating our way through a new era of peril with social media and various forms of global-wide communication via the Internet. The Internet is one of the most amazing developments of world history, and for the church it is a powerful tool to disseminate the gospel, work efficiently, and connect believers from the four corners of the earth. There are many true, honest, just, pure, lovely, virtuous,

and praiseworthy things of good report that are easily accessible to a universal audience on the Internet. God be praised! But for every one of them, there are far more false, dishonest, unjust, defiled, ugly, sinister, and damnable things of evil report. For every bright and flowering meadow where the light of Christ’s truth and holiness shines, there is an immense and dense forest of darkness filled with words that can cause irreparable damage to the unity of the church. In that darkness flourishes vitriolic rants, vile slander, cruel defamation, anonymous threats, pompous scoffing, envious gossip, manipulative sophistry, and all the chatter of the babbler. Sometimes even the devout Christian is tempted to traffic in and repeat what goes on in those black forests, dismissing the words of our Lord, “But I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment” (Matt. 12:36), and the warning of the inspired apostle “Be not deceived, evil communications corrupt good manners” (I Cor. 15:33).

Fifth, every person whose name is written in the church directory, including the minister, elders, and deacons, possesses a sinful nature, and that old man of sin will not improve a whit this year. According to our old man, we are stubborn, proud, envious, angry, dramatic, and defensive. We often do not handle conflict in a manner becoming the gospel because hatred for one another and God yet resides in our flesh. With the appearance of the slightest disturbance in the church we are prone to an “us vs. them” mentality and we quickly form sides. Before long, we count the brother in the church with whom we have a disagreement as an “enemy,” and even suppose we honor God by doing so! How fragile is the peace of the church!

Sixth, our desire for peace must be ever stronger this year because we are one year closer to the appearance of the beast. This year brings us closer to the end that God has determined in His counsel. Before that end comes, the great beast that represents the final antichristian world-empire will rise to power by a combination of unrivaled force and diabolical deception exercised through the false church. The antichrist as king will seek to wear out the saints by making war with us (Dan. 7; Rev. 13). This systematic persecution will be so severe and such a trial of our faith that God will shorten the days lest the very elect perish (Matt. 24:22). Satan has great wrath, and it intensifies every year, as that blood-thirsty fiend knows his time is short (Rev. 12:12).

Brothers and sisters in Christ, “Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, 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” (Eph. 4:31-32).

We need each other, and we will need each other in that hour of great tribulation as never before! How can we prepare for battle when we are at each other's throats? How can soldiers march toward the last great enemy when they are crossing swords in their own ranks? In this calm before the storm, as our churches still enjoy material prosperity in the world and still fly under the radar of the evil powers that be, there is no time for strife in the church. An army divided against itself cannot stand. Every day we are one day closer to the end, and every day it becomes more and more urgent that we heed the call to church unity.

A commanded desire

Let us hear those calls then from the apostle Paul. Oh, how the Spirit of Christ dwelt richly in that servant of the Lord who fervently exhorted the churches unto peace. Paul did not consider his work on behalf of the church finished after the Lord used him for the establishment of new congregations all throughout the spiritually dark and hostile Roman Empire. When he departed a congregation, he always kept them in his heart, prayed fervently for their peace, and pleaded with them to dwell in unity.

In her early years, the Corinthian congregation looked more like the *city* of Corinth than the *church* in Corinth because of all her inner turmoil and strife. Toward the very end of his final inspired letter to them, Paul pleads, “Finally brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you.” To the saints of the church at Rome he urged, “If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men” (Rom. 12:18), and then he immediately warned against vengeful paybacks in congregational life (v. 19). He exhorted the Ephesians to walk worthy of their calling by “endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the

bond of peace” (Eph. 4:3). He charged the congregation of Thessalonica to know their officebearers, “and to esteem them very highly in love for their work’s sake. And be at peace among yourselves,” (I Thess. 5:13), implying that proper esteem for officebearers is demonstrated by living in peace with each other.

Finally, how often would not Paul (Peter too) close his letters with “Greet one another with a holy kiss” (Rom. 16:16; I Cor. 16:20; II Cor. 13:12; I Thess. 5:26; I Pet. 5:14)? You and I do not need to kiss each other with holy kisses at church, for there are other symbolic actions of Christian charity and friendly greetings. However, we had better be striving to the utmost of our power to live with each other in such a way that we are able to kiss one another.

A sought desire

May God grant hearts that desire peace in the church! Not a *fleeting* desire that appears one day only to vanish the following, but a *sustained* desire secured in the heart all the way to the grave. Not a *weakening* desire that fades like the summer grass under the heat of adversity and worldliness, but an *ardent* desire that swells with age and maturity in Christ. Not a *frail* desire easily overcome by the flesh when we feel slighted, but a *steadfast* desire that governs every thought, word, and deed, especially when our will is opposed. Not a *base* desire for the false peace that the world cultivates in the sphere of unbelief and iniquity, but a *heavenly* desire for the very peace of God enjoyed in the way of truth and holiness. Not a mere *human* desire, but the desire of the *Prince of Peace* who as the eternal Son of God became incarnate and entered into the torments of hell to accomplish peace for His church—peace with God and peace with one another, applying the same by His Spirit. May God graciously fill the hearts of His people with such a desire for Jerusalem’s peace!

Letters

Justification—Special issue

Thank you for the recent *Standard Bearer* issue (Nov. 15, 2022) dedicated to “Justification by Faith Alone.” I always enjoy the special issues that focus on a certain theme, and this one was outstanding. I have been having discussions recently with a theologically astute Roman Catholic co-worker (who joined the Catholic church as a young adult after growing up in nominally Reformed churches), and I just shared this *SB* issue with him. Lord willing, these articles will help spur further discussions with him.

May God use these truths to build up His people in hope, comfort, and joy in the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ, and may He also be pleased to use our witness of these truths to bring the light of this gospel to those walking in darkness.

Please be encouraged to know your work is appreciated and used by God for the good of His church.

Soli Deo Gloria!

Jason Elzinga

Byron Center, Michigan



Search the Scriptures: Bible characters

Mr. Kyle Bruinooge teacher of New Testament history at Covenant Christian High School in Walker, Michigan and member of Faith PRC in Jenison, Michigan

The beauty of Lydia

And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul.

Acts 16:14

Several of Paul's teachings are not popular in the church world today, particularly regarding women and church office (I Cor. 14:34; I Tim. 2:11-12). Any issues one may have with Paul's instruction regarding the role of women in the church simply reveals a lack of understanding of the inspiration of holy Scripture. As an apostle, Paul's message was the Holy Spirit's message; therefore, we may not play multiple choice with the inspired writings of any apostle. Scripture reveals God's clear and wise design regarding the role of women in the church, and yet repeatedly declares the gospel message that men and women are spiritually equal through the purchased blood of Christ.

Paul was no male chauvinist; rather, he consistently expressed his belief in the value and importance of women in support of the gospel ministry. The New Testament gives many examples of prominent, selfless, and spiritual women whom the Lord used in the spread of the gospel (Acts 18:2; Rom. 16:1-2; II Cor. 1:11; Phile. 2; II Tim. 1:15). These women played a vital role in the growth of the early church.

Paul's first missionary journey led him to establish church communities on Cyprus, then in Pamphylia and Galatia. Each time he was led by the Spirit to the synagogues in order to reason with a mostly Jewish audience. Reactions were mixed, sometimes violent; yet, God blessed the work of the missionaries and planted churches in those areas.

When the second missionary journey brought Paul to a crossroads, he was led away by the Spirit through the vision of the Macedonian man from Asia to Europe (Acts 16:6). Unchanging to this day is that the Aegean Sea separates Europe and Asia; therefore, Paul, along with Silas, Timothy, and Luke, were led into Europe to a Roman colony in Macedonia. Philippi was a city known more for military influence than for being a commercial boomtown like the nearby capital, Thessalonica.

There was no synagogue in Philippi; therefore, no passionate appeals to the crucified and risen Christ to Jewish males were given. Clearly Jews were hated and despised in Philippi, as was evident later when Paul and Silas were flogged and thrown in prison after exorcising the demon of the slave girl (Acts 16:16-18). As magistrates of a Roman colony (18:2), the accusers of Paul and Silas emphasized their Jewish nationality (16:20), revealing their hatred.¹

And so at the outset the missionaries were directed not to a synagogue, but to the riverside. There they found a group of women in prayer, and engaged them in the message of the gospel. Luke writes that a woman named Lydia "heard us," and "attended unto the things spoken by Paul" (Acts 16:14).

Lydia was the first fruits of God's work through Paul in the first century, but not the first Christian in Europe. There was a Christian community in Rome prior to Paul's entrance into Macedonia (Acts 2:10; Rom. 16). Nonetheless, there is significance in the fact that Lydia was Paul's first contact in Macedonia, hence the first convert in Roman Europe through Paul's labors.

The significance of this is found in a present reality. Consider the testimony of Scripture in bringing the gospel to Europe in light of your own family history. In God's providence, in the early AD 50s, Paul and his companions were led to a group of women, soon to be a church plant in Philippi. Not much distinguished Europe and Asia in the Roman world; yet, the gospel of the risen Lord was brought to this continent and spread like wildfire. As Reformed Christians today, we recite our gratitude for the time of the Protestant Reformation; yet, we can look back with thanks another sixteen centuries to the time when Gentiles first received the gospel.

Here we stand, in the twenty-first century, as God's people living throughout the world, richly blessed by the spread of the gospel to our land, wherever that is, through our ancestors from all directions (Is. 43:5-6).

¹ Louis Berkhof, *Introduction to the New Testament* (Oxford: Benediction Classics, 2009), 160.



original residence and one of the seven churches mentioned in Revelation 2:18-29, was once the capital of an ancient region known as *Lydia*. The Lydian region, holding influence from around 1200-546 B.C., is referenced twice in the Old Testament (Jer. 46:9; Ezek. 30:5). Not surprisingly, the context of these passages is the judgment of Jehovah on the heathen nations. Lydia from Lydia is certainly a coincidence, but significant in that the Lord called her out of darkness into light, through His grace.

All of this, the unfolding of God's covenant plan in history. Nothing left by chance, but a firm promise to gather them out of all countries, and yet maintain the covenant formula: "I will be their God and they shall be my people" (Jer. 32:37-38).

And its early beginnings are with a seller of purple, originally from Thyatira, and a God-worshiper.

Thyatira was located in Asia Minor, and was known for its purple-dying industry, a fascinating process involving precious dyes from the murex shellfish. These shells were crushed, loaded with salt, and then left in the sun so that the secretion would turn purple.² The dye was then worked into textiles, primarily as clothing for royalty and as draperies in idol temples.

Few women at this time would choose to sustain a prominent business; therefore, Lydia was likely a widow, carrying on her husband's trade.³ Because of this, Lydia needed resolve and commitment for her work in textiles. In a culture when many women were given fewer rights than men, Lydia was successful in the business world, and she managed her household well.

Lydia learned her craft in Thyatira, but at some point packed up her business and transferred to the region of Macedonia, also known for being rich in textiles. What motivated her to relocate is unknown; however, in Macedonia women did have a greater prominence and role in public affairs, coinciding with their important spiritual role in the Macedonian churches.⁴

Interestingly, however, the city of Thyatira, Lydia's

And God used her past to prepare her for work in His church. Unlike Philippi, Thyatira had a large Jewish population which undoubtedly influenced Lydia to become a God-worshiper. Some Gentiles, like Lydia, were attracted to the Jewish belief in one God and their strong moral compass. However, the term *proselyte* described a stricter group of such Gentiles who united themselves fully with the people of Israel. Lydia likely falls into the second class of Gentiles of this similar sort, often referred to in the book of Acts as devout, God-fearers, or God-worshipers. These men and women had not become full Jews, but had accepted many of the teachings of Judaism.⁵

This was no doubt what led Lydia to "attend unto the things spoken by Paul." What governed her desire to listen to the missionaries is what the Lord had already done for her, for the phrase that directly precedes this truth is that Lydia is described as one "whose heart the Lord opened" (Acts 16:14). How absurd that some would deny Scripture's clear teaching on the work of sovereign grace in the hearts of His elect people! No hint in the verse of any foreknowledge that she would open her heart herself.

But God did that for *her*. He changed her heart, and opened her eyes to the beautiful reality of the death and resurrection of Christ. For *her*.

How fitting, then, for a woman whose name means "beautiful one."

She *was* indeed beautiful. But do not merely imagine a woman named Lydia who sold beautiful purple garments, and donned them to expand her business (Prov. 31:22). Rather, picture the virtuous woman described

2 Ralph Gower, *Manners and Customs of Bible Times* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1987), 162.

3 Francis VanderVelde, *Women of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1957), 236-237.

4 Everett Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1987), 58.

5 J. Gresham Machen, *The New Testament: An Introduction to its Literature and History* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1976), 41-42.

in Proverbs 31:30, “Favor is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the LORD, she shall be praised.” Lydia’s beauty was inward, for the Lord graciously and powerfully changed her heart.

Therefore, as a sign and seal of the Lord’s beautiful work in *that* heart, Lydia was baptized with her household (Acts 16:15). This is the first example in Paul’s ministry of a household salvation, but many others are recorded (Acts 16:33; Rom. 16:10-11; I Cor. 1:11; 1:16, 16:19; Phile. 2). In Philippi, Lydia’s household received the sacrament confirming what the Lord had done for them through Christ. This led her to reply, “If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there” (Acts 16:15). Of this Paul and his companions were “constrained” (or persuaded), and accepted the invitation as a place of lodging, hospitality, and comfort (16:40).

Paul was hesitant to accept the invitation because he did not want to give the impression that he was using the gospel message for any personal advantage.⁶ This was one of the reasons he labored as a tent-maker, to remain unburdened on the churches. No prosperity gospel here, for that would be *another* gospel. His desire was to remain blameless in preaching Christ crucified, so God used Lydia’s hospitality to supply the needs of the missionaries (II Cor. 11:8-9).

Therefore, hospitality was an important aspect of the New Testament age. The word literally means “a love for strangers,” and that was certainly what motivated Lydia. She recognized that expressing a love for the missionaries was an expression of love for the One who sent the missionaries. This concept of hospitality was so important (as it is today) that it is recorded in Paul’s pastoral letters as a qualification for officebearers (I Tim. 3:2; Tit. 1:8). Lydia’s genuine desire was to show the love of Christ to God’s servants.

So, as the Lord opened Lydia’s heart, she opened her home to Paul and his companions. And in the midst of this hospitality, and through the Lord’s gracious work, she desired to “attend unto the *things* spoken of Paul.”

What *things*? Twenty years earlier, Martha had the experience of being admonished by the Lord to pause, listen, and desire the one *thing* that was more important than anything else to be done in the kitchen (Luke 10:38-42). She was instructed to hear the Son of man speak the beautiful truth of God’s loving relationship established with her. And the fulfillment of that love sat right in the living room!

“One *thing* have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to inquire in his temple” (Ps. 27:4). That was Lydia’s desire—to behold His beauty!—as one who was declared beautiful in His sight. No rebuke for Lydia by the riverside, for her priority was a longing to hear the gospel message as one of the Lord’s chosen, and nothing could take this personal reality from her. What a beautiful truth!

This salvation worked in her the spiritual desire to carry out her calling willingly, to work with her hands, to rise when it was yet night, to bring meat to her household, to gird her loins with strength, to stretch her hands to the poor, to make fine linen and sell it, and to open her mouth with wisdom and kindness (Prov. 31).

Her good works flowed out of the work of God’s grace in her heart, revealing her gifts of spirituality, hospitality, and industry.

Great in man’s eyes was the Roman colony of Philippi, but greater was the work of God in the heart of Lydia. Only He opens the heart and turns us, when by nature we will not be turned. What beautiful, regenerating grace, flowing from the mountaintop of God’s goodness.

And that goodness comes to each of His people, for God’s census calls each one of us by name.

Lydia may mean “beautiful one,” but *all* of our names are beautiful because they are written in God’s eternal book of life. *Every* name, because of the One who wore the purple robe, endured shame and death, and emptied Himself of all dignity—for us. “And the soldiers platted a crown of thorns, and put it on his head, and they put on him a purple robe, and said, Hail, King of the Jews! and they smote him with their hands” (John 19:2-3).

Is *your* name not beautiful?

Are *you* not beautiful, like Lydia, as one who has been numbered with the One who has a name above all other names?

Yes!

For as you stand before Jehovah God on the judgment day, He will declare to you face to face what He declared in all eternity: “You are beautiful and righteous. Regality is yours because of the death and resurrection of my dear Son. Wear the kingly robe for all eternity, and enter into my rest.”

“Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father’s house; So shall the king greatly desire thy beauty: for he is thy Lord; and worship thou him” (Ps. 45:10-11).

Lydia’s purple garments: worn with the stain of sin in this life, but transformed into a robe of righteousness. For she was a daughter of the King.

⁶ Don Doezema, *Upon This Rock*, Vol. 3, (Grand Rapids, MI: Protestant Reformed Sunday School Teachers Association, 2003), 227.



Believing and confessing

Prof. Ronald Cammenga, rector and professor of Dogmatics and Old Testament in the Protestant Reformed Theological Seminary and member of Southwest PRC in Wyoming, Michigan

Of Jesus Christ, true God and man, the only Savior of the world (Second Helvetic Confession, 11c)

Previous article in
this series: June
2022, p. 402.

Two Natures in Christ

We therefore acknowledge two natures or substances, the divine and the human, in one and the same Jesus Christ our Lord (Hebrews 2). And we say that these are bound and united with one another in such a way that they are not absorbed, or confused, or mixed, but are united or joined together in one person—the properties of the natures being unimpaired and permanent.

The fifth chapter of the SHC is concerned with the church's confession that Jesus Christ is true God and true man. This is the heart of the gospel. Everything that the church is and all that she is called to do depends on this fundamental confession of faith. If it is not true that Jesus Christ is both God and man, then there is no reason to preach His gospel or to live as His disciples. But because He is God and man, united in the person of the second person of the Trinity, He is worthy of being confessed, proclaimed, believed in, and obeyed.

This paragraph is concerned to confess that the “two natures or substances, the divine and the human” are joined “in one and the same Jesus Christ our Lord.” This is the fundamental confession of the Christian religion. This *is* Christianity. It is *Christianity* because of who Christ is and what Christ does. All who refuse to join the SHC in its declaration concerning the Christ of Christianity, forfeit the right to be called “Christian.” Whatever else they are, they are not Christians.

It is the truth that He is both God and man that qualifies Jesus Christ to be “the only Savior of the world,” as the title of this chapter declares. If He is not human and divine, neither can He be the Savior of the world. The justice of God demands that Christ must be both human and divine.

The one Scripture passage that Bullinger cites in this paragraph is Hebrews 2. He references the entire second chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews because

the truth of the union of Christ's two natures is woven throughout the chapter.

But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man (v. 9).

For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings (v. 10).

Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage (vv. 14-15).

For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham (v. 16).

Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in all things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people (v. 17).

In the second part of this fifth paragraph, Bullinger deliberately borrows the privative statements of the Creed of Chalcedon, AD 451, which acknowledges Christ in two natures: “without confusion, without change, without division, without separation.” Similarly, Bullinger says that the two natures of Christ “are bound and united with one another in such a way that they are not absorbed, or confused, or mixed, but are united or joined together in one person.” Christ's human nature was not deified, nor was His divine nature humanized. They remain two distinct natures within the one divine person of the Son of God. Chalcedon condemned those who taught that Christ had only a single nature, a divine nature, into which the human was absorbed, as well as those who taught a mixture of His two natures.

Bullinger's reference to the Creed of Chalcedon,

sometimes called the Chalcedonian Definition, is significant. He is representative of the Reformers who maintained classic, creedal Christology. The Reformers stood in line with the ancient church fathers in their confession concerning Christ. Their Christology was not new, but was that which the early church had articulated as a result of controversy with a number of heretics and heretical groups.

The fifth paragraph of chapter 11 closes with the statement, “the properties of the natures [of Christ] being unimpaired and permanent.” This statement summarizes Chalcedon. Besides addressing the ancient errors, the statement also speaks to the “new” error of the Lutherans, who deified the human nature of Christ by teaching that after His ascension into heaven, Christ’s human nature became ubiquitous or omnipresent. The Lutherans taught this in the interests of their wrong view of the presence of Christ in the Lord’s Supper. They taught the physical presence of Christ in the elements of the Lord’s Supper, that Christ’s physical body was ‘in, under, and around’ the elements of the Lord’s Supper. That was possible, they contended, because at His ascension Christ’s human took on the properties of the divine and became omnipresent. But, since the properties of the two natures are “unimpaired and permanent,” the Lutherans err.

Not Two But One Christ

Thus we worship not two but one Christ the Lord. We repeat: one true God and man. With respect to His divine nature He is consubstantial with the Father, and with respect to the human nature He is consubstantial with us men, and like us in all things, sin excepted (Heb. 4:15).

“We repeat: one true God and man.” Repetition for emphasis. Repetition to drive the point home. Repetition so that there is no misunderstanding. Christ is one, that is, one person, with two distinct natures. In one person, He is both God and man. Because of His divine nature, He is “consubstantial with the Father.” “Consubstantial” means “of the same substance as.” Because of His divine nature, Christ is “of the same substance as” God the Father, and therefore one with God. Because of His human nature, Christ is “consubstantial with us men.”

He is like us in every respect “sin excepted.” Bullinger cites Hebrews 4:15. The previous verse of the chapter calls the early Christians to hold fast their profession that Jesus is the Son of God. To which the inspired writer immediately adds in verse 15 that “we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling

of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.” Jesus is both the Son of God and a man like us men.

Christ is “like as we are.” He is fully a human being as we are human beings, sin excepted. That He is without sin means that our Lord has no original nor actual sin. He is everything that constitutes us as men. But sinfulness is not the essence of our humanity. That is plain from the fact that Adam was fully human before he fell into sin. That is also plain from the fact that the saints in their final glory will be fully human although without sin. It is true that every human being, as a result of the fall of the head of our race, our first father Adam, has become sinful and is born dead in trespasses and sins. But we men have become sinful when we were not originally sinful. Clearly, Jesus’ sinlessness does not make Him less of a man than us. He is a sinless man, but He is fully a man, as much of a man as we are men.

Because of the wonderful and mysterious union of the two natures in Christ, “we worship not two but one Christ the Lord.” This is the crucial issue, the issue that lies behind all of the debate over Christ’s natures and their union in the one divine person. Even before the issue of our salvation and the possibility of our salvation, before the issue of the satisfaction of the claims of God’s justice in the One who is our head and legal representative, there is a far more important issue at stake. We are never first; God and the glory of God are always first. The issue is worship. At stake in the doctrinal controversy over the natures and the person of Christ is the issue of whom we are to worship. We worship not two but one Christ.

If we worshiped two Christs, Christianity would be just another polytheistic religion in the long line of polytheistic religions in the history of the world. But what sets Christianity apart from the many gods of the heathen, also the “heathen” of our day, is that we worship one God who is God alone.

The Sects

And indeed we detest the dogma of the Nestorians who make two of the one Christ and dissolve the unity of the Person. Likewise we thoroughly execrate the madness of Eutyches and of the Monothelites or Monophysites who destroy the property of the human nature [of Christ].

This is the second of five paragraphs found in the eleventh chapter of the SHC devoted to “The Sects.” In each paragraph, Bullinger shines the spotlight of biblical truth on different heretics and heresies, which deny

in one way or another the truth that Jesus Christ is true God and man.

The truth is always antithetical. It is never enough to confess the truth positively. It is always equally important to know and to reject the heretics and their heresies. These individuals are heretics and their false teachings are heresies because they have been officially condemned by the church. And then, not only by a local church, but by the church universal, the church in its broadest gatherings. These broadest gatherings in the early church were the ecumenical councils that met to deal with the pervasive threat of the heretics in the church at large.

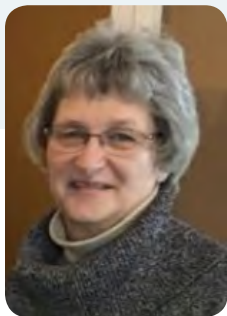
Besides being heretics, these men were also invariably schismatics. That was not only the case because heresy in the nature of the case is schismatic, inasmuch as it threatens the basis for the church's unity, which is the truth. But these men were schismatics because they refused to submit to the decisions of the church, refused to recant their errors, stubbornly persisted in their false teachings, and led their followers out of the orthodox church. They were gifted and articulate men. They all had their supporters and sympathizers. But when their errors were condemned, they refused to recant. They are not all Husses and Luthers who refuse to recant. Some are "ensnared of the devil" and "taken captive by him at his will" (II Tim. 2:26). And where are they today? Not only outside of the orthodox church, but scat-

tered to the four winds—under the judgment of God. An awful warning to schismatics in our day.

The heresies that are mentioned in this particular paragraph are of two sorts. Either they denied the union of the two natures of Christ in His one divine person, or they failed to do justice to the two distinct natures of Christ which, although united in the one divine person, nonetheless remained two distinct natures, the human nature and the divine nature.

Nestorius and his followers so separated the two natures that the end result was that Christ had two distinct persons. The "madness of Eutyches" that the SHC "execrates" is really the opposite of Nestorius. Eutychus had been an outspoken opponent of Nestorius, but his vehement condemnation of the teaching of Nestorius led him to an equally extreme although opposite view. He denied that Christ was "consubstantial" with us men. He taught that the human and the divine natures combined to form a new, composite nature. The Monothelites and Monophysites denied the distinction between the two natures, the former asserting that Christ had only one (*mono-*) will, while the latter taught that Christ had only one nature. Both errors "destroy the property of the human nature."

Thus, with Bullinger, "we repeat: one true God and man," whom we confess and whom we worship now in the church on earth, and one day with the church in glory.



When thou sittest in thine house

Mrs. Sherry Koole, wife, mother, and grandmother in Hope PRC in Walker, Michigan

Chiseled for beauty

Many are the afflictions of the righteous....

Psalms 34:19a

Our children may find it disheartening to know that as children of God they will be called upon—chosen really—to suffer many afflictions and persecutions in this life. The concept that it is *necessary* for them to endure these trials may be hard for them to comprehend. Thus they must be taught to understand that it is a privilege to suffer for the Lord's sake, and a privilege for which they should give thanks.

That the children of God will suffer persecution is scriptural. Being followers of Christ will put us at odds with the world who hated and despised Him (John 15:18-21). Because they hated Him, they will hate and despise us also. And this hatred will only increase over time. Our refusal to approve the open sins of homosexuality (LGBTQ) and murder (abortion) will continue to bring scorn and derision upon us. Our freedoms of public worship and Christian schools will be jeopardized and possibly taken away. Persecutions such as these, and many others as well, will only increase and

intensify with time. Yet all of these are instrumental in preparing us for our place in glory. They are a form of chiseling, chiseling done by the hand of a loving Father.

Jesus is the *Cornerstone* upon which God builds His church; and His church is composed of *lively stones*, who live and move and have their being in Him. As *living stones* of the church militant here on earth, we are being shaped and formed—*chiseled* really—for a more glorious place in the church triumphant in heaven. All of life, from one's first cry to final breath, is governed by the almighty hand of God, who makes every joy and every sorrow in this life subservient to His people's salvation.

Teaching our children (especially our young children) to view themselves as *living stones* may be a little more difficult than we would like to imagine. The very idea may seem strange and even silly to them. People as *stones*? *Living stones*? We may find that this concept is a little hard for them to understand. So we need to instruct them that this is the teaching of Scripture. Jesus is the *Cornerstone*—the firm foundation upon which His church is built (Is. 28:16; Eph. 2:20-22; I Pet. 2:4-6). As His people, we are the *stones* that need to be shaped, formed, and fitted for our individual places—specific places—in the building of His spiritual house. Left in our natural state, we are as plain stones, unattractive and useless. The Lord quickens us by His Spirit—making us as *lively stones* that need to be chiseled, and chiseled, and chiseled again before we can *fit* into the places that are marked with our names. And this chiseling hurts. It hurts a great deal!

Most people would agree that while the joys in life are very easy for us to accept, the difficulties and hardships are often hard for us and our children to understand. We can often find ourselves discontent in God's way with us and we mutter—oftentimes in bitterness—"Why? Why me? Why my loved one?" Yet, we are told that we are to *expect* these hardships. There will be many of them. We are being chiseled by them. And they are necessary in preparing us for our place in glory.

Although persecution is a very painful form of chiseling, it is not the only form of chiseling that the Lord chooses to use in fitting His people for heavenly glory. There are many more. And they can be just as painful. Every tear and every sorrow in the lives of believers is the result of their Lord's chiseling. He chisels with sickness, sometimes in the form of a deadly and incurable disease placed upon us or a loved one. Oh, how this hurts! The loss of a job can often raise doubts and fears as to whether one can provide for the physical needs

of the family as well as support the kingdom causes. This can result in stirring up a sense of failure and low self-esteem. And it hurts, really hurts. Disruptions to covenant family life caused by the abandonment of one's spouse or the harsh sadness of having to deal with a wayward and/or rebellious child can bring indescribable heartbreak. Oh, how this chiseling *hurts*! Being called by God to live the lonely life of singleness, when one desires to marry but God chooses not to bring a godly mate, hurts a great deal and contentment must be painfully learned. God might choose to chisel His stones by taking away their sight, their hearing, or their use of limbs, thus, leaving them to experience the rest of life in a way they would never have imagined or chosen. And it hurts, really hurts. And most, if not all of us, have experienced the chiseling hand of the Lord when called upon to bring a loved one to the grave. Whether it be a beloved parent, spouse, child, or friend—an aged saint, teen, young child, or stillborn babe—whether expected or unexpected, the severing of earthly ties is a very heart-wrenching and painful experience for the children of God. These and many others are the afflictions that befall God's people. The Lord uses these exceptionally strong and grievous chiselings in order to beautify us for our place in glory.

...but the Lord delivereth him out of them all.

Psalms 34:19b

Although we experience many afflictions in life and suffer greatly under the chiseling hand of God, He, in His love and mercy, delivers us out of them all. He does not leave us comfortless. Rather, He sends these trials and afflictions for our good. It is during these hardships and sorrows of life that God's people grow spiritually. He uses the sufferings and trials of life to draw us closer to Him. He strengthens our faith. He comforts our hearts. He brings us to realize anew that we are fully dependent upon Him for all things. So when we are overwhelmed by the storms and trials of life, where else can we go but to our Cornerstone? He can identify and sympathize with all the struggles we are called to face. Hebrew 4:15, 16 says, "For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." We should not be afraid or ashamed to go to our Cornerstone and ask for His mercy and grace in our time of need. We should do so boldly, knowing that He has been where we are, has experienced what we are experiencing, and He understands the heartbreak and frustrations with which we struggle.

When I read Hebrews 4:15, 16, my mind goes to some of the most recent chiselings we have been called upon to suffer—as individuals, families, churches, and denomination. Our children and grandchildren ask, sometimes amidst tears, why those who have been their friends for many years now say they can no longer have anything to do with them. And this question is a difficult one for us as parents to answer because we too are hurting. We too have experienced such heartache. Not only have friendships been broken and dissolved, but family relationships have suffered damage as well. Husband and wife, parent and child, sibling and sibling—many of these relationships have suffered severely as a result of our recent denominational controversy and split. *Chiseled!* Severely chiseled! And it hurts. Oh, how it hurts! This is for our good? This is necessary? How can we explain it to our children when it is so very difficult to understand ourselves?

And so we go to Jesus, our Cornerstone and High Priest. He has been where we are. He has experienced what we are going through—experienced this and so much more. He was betrayed by one of His own disciples while others forsook Him and fled. He was denied, not once but thrice, by His beloved Peter. And listen to the words of the anguished cry He uttered while hanging on the cross, “My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?” Oh, what suffering He endured! Truly, then, He knows our heartache and suffering! And He is a sympathizing Savior. He knows our many afflictions—and delivers us out of them all!

What comfort for us! Though we suffer many afflictions, the Lord will deliver us out of them. Though our afflictions be many, we are told they are light and but for a moment. We have both the blessing and comfort of knowing that they work “for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory” (II Cor. 4:17). Unworthy sinners that we are, polluted with sin and depraved in nature, when we think about the beauty and glory of heaven, it is no wonder that we must go through much chiseling—grievous chiseling—before we are properly and perfectly fitted for our place in glory. We need to be totally reconstructed, or transformed so to speak. Transformed from useless and unattractive to amazingly beautiful. That will be glory, glory indeed!

Glory. That, too, can be a difficult concept to teach our children. Scripture does tell us some things about the beauty and glory of heaven. To name a few: God’s dwelling place, Father’s house of many mansions, streets of gold, peace and joy, no more tears, no more pain, living with our Lord and seeing Him face to face, and being in the company of angels and God’s chosen people from every nation, tongue, and tribe. Sounds amazing-

ly wonderful. And yet, no matter how strikingly beautiful the Scriptures may describe heaven, the reality of it is beyond our ability to fully comprehend. Even so, I believe that even though the Lord chisels us sorely, He also allows us small tastes of heaven’s joy amidst our afflictions. He gives us the blessings of godly marriages, covenant family life, and the communion of saints within our congregational and denominational lives. I believe He allows us to enjoy these small tastes of heaven to encourage and strengthen us for the journey we must travel in getting there.

What follows is a short reiteration of the article in poetry form.

“How Beautiful Heaven Must Be”

As we journey through life in this world below
And we follow the path that God wants us to go,
He gives earthly pictures to you and to me
That we through comparison pictorially see
Of how beautiful heaven must be.

He gives us the blessing of husband and wife
United as one for the rest of their life,
'Tis a picture of Christ and the church, His bride,
And in wonder we see how the Lord does not hide
Of how beautiful heaven must be.

He gives us the picture of family life, too,
The love of a father so tender and true
Who cares for his children—each little need,
And then in comparison our thoughts must lead
To how beautiful heaven must be.

He gives us the gift of communion of saints
And we think of the beautiful picture this paints—
As we fellowship here in a love that is sweet
We think of the day when we’ll sit at Christ’s feet
And how beautiful heaven must be.

But all is not well as we dwell here below,
For also through troublous times we must go.
God *chisels* with hardships—some hard to bear,
But they’re sent in His love, and we’re kept in His care.
Oh how beautiful heaven must be.

He *chisels* with sickness, sorrow, and pain
And yet, when compared to our heavenly gain
We see He’s preparing us not for this earth
But for a life with our Lord of unmeasurable worth.
Oh how beautiful heaven must be.

And so when our journey and work here is done,
When by our Lord's grace the vict'ry is won,
From death's cold wave we will not flee
For 'tis only then we will truly see
Just how beautiful heaven must be!

Chiseled. Chiseled for beauty. Chiseled for the beauty of heaven. We must be thankful for such chiseling. For it is *necessary*, so very necessary, in preparing us for our place in glory. “In every thing give thanks [includ-

ing chiseling]: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you” (I Thess. 5:18). And we must teach our children to be thankful also. For although chiseling is extremely painful, we have the blessing and comfort of knowing that it is rendered in love by the hand of our heavenly Father; and that when we are tried and beautified (purified), we shall come forth as gold—perfectly and beautifully *fitted* for our place in Father's house. That will be true glory for you and for me. Thank God for our Cornerstone. And *all* praise be to Him!



Pertaining to the churches in common— Foreign Mission Committee

Fall 2022 Philippines' newsletter

Greetings in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of the harvest, from the City of Antipolo in the province of Rizal of the Philippines. Here is an update regarding our labors in the past several months.

2022 furloughs

My family enjoyed our furlough from May 31 to July 28, our first since being called back to labor here in December 2017. Rev. and Mrs. Daniel Kleyn enjoyed their furlough from July 11 to August 30.

When thinking about our respective furloughs in June to August 2022, now seemingly long passed already, I was reminded of a comment about furloughs in a book, *The Reformed Church in China 1842-1951*, written by Gerald F. DeJong. The comment appears on page 80:

Furloughs for missionaries were, of course, necessary. Few critics could find fault with Philip Pritcher's observations that “missionaries, like all other busy workers, get run down, worn out, and on account of the unvarying daily routine...become more or less rusty. Physically, mentally, and spiritually the whole life is apt to, and very often does, become sluggish.”

Although those observations were written in a vastly different age of transportation and communication in May 1897, yet his main point is certainly still apt. We, too, understand from experience the need for periodic furloughs among our PRCA congregations in North America, in the midst of our calling church in

Doon, and among our families and friends. Although our furloughs involved a different kind of work, including overcoming jetlag, pulpit supply, presentations, and attendance at various ecclesiastical meetings, yet they provided rest, vacation, and recuperation. As a result, we have returned to the field “oiled” for our ongoing task here.

Our task within the PRC in the Philippines

The first main part of our current task here has been providing pulpit supply to the vacant Provident PRC. Rev. Kleyn and I currently provide pulpit supply to Provident three Sundays per month. We continue providing pulpit supply in the Berean PRC when necessary. Usually that is the case for the Berean PRC in the weeks that Rev. Ibe is on vacation or when he is sent to Gabaldon to teach a catechism class and to lead a worship service on the first Sunday of each month. Sometimes we provide pulpit supply in the Berean PRC on the Sundays after a week when Rev. Ibe's pastoral workload is unusually heavy. We are thankful for the opportunity to be engaged regularly in sermon work and regular preaching for the PRCP congregations.

Our preaching task includes catechism instruction. Rev. Kleyn teaches two catechism classes in the Provident congregation: the Old Testament Bible History for the younger children, and the Reformed Doctrine class (Belgic Confession) for the teenagers. With the approval of the Doon consistory, I teach our four sons here, since

the class schedules in the Berean and Provident churches do not work for our family. I am teaching Old Testament History for Beginners, Heidelberg Catechism, and Essentials of Reformed Doctrine.

A significant second element of our task within the PRCP is our role as teachers in their seminary program. We are teaching one seminary student, Bro. Ace Flores, who is in his third year of training. We have a pre-seminary student, Bro. Peter Zuniega, who has joined Bro. Ace in the New Testament Greek Grammar course. Rev. Kleyn teaches two courses (Hebrew Reading and Church Polity), while I am teaching Introduction to Dogmatics, Theology, and New Testament Greek Grammar. This part of our task keeps us busy each week in preparation and in the actual classroom instruction.

Our task within the PRCP includes a third component of leading Bible Study. Currently, the Council of Provident PRC has assigned me to lead the Wednesday night Bible Study. We have been studying the book of Acts, and currently are studying about the first New Testament martyr, Stephen, in chapter 7. There are on average about 17 persons in attendance.

Our task within the PRCP has included a fourth element of participating in conferences with lectures. We have done so in past years, and Rev. Kleyn had the opportunity to do so again in a conference on July 2 that was sponsored by the PRCP Classis for the PRCP membership. The conference addressed the topic of the recent schism in the PRCP and PRCA in 2021. In addition to Rev. J. Laning (“Repentance and Good Works”) and Rev. W. Langerak (“The Covenant, Fellowship, and Good Works”) from the PRCA, Rev. Kleyn also spoke

on the schism under a speech entitled, “Church Political Matters.” In addition to the speeches, Rev. Kleyn, Rev. Laning, and Rev. Langerak were kept busy with many questions and profitable discussion during the coffee and lunch breaks.

Finally, our formal task within the PRCP includes attending the Classis meetings of the PRCP and providing advice as a committee whenever asked for such by the consistories, the Classis, or one of its standing committees. The last PRCP Classis was held on November 1.

Medical leave

We have been reminded again that the gift of health and strength is necessary for continuation in the mission task here by the recent announcement in the PRCA regarding the health needs of Rev. and Mrs. Kleyn.

The Council of the Doon PRC, with the concurrence of the FMC, has approved and announced a nine-week medical leave of absence for Rev. and Mrs. D. Kleyn from their missionary task in the Philippines. It is expected that the leave of absence (October 26 to December 28) will provide sufficient time for their surgeries and recovery.

If all goes as well as the physicians expect, then we are looking forward to welcoming the Kleyns back home again in Antipolo on December 29, the Lord willing. Pray that the Lord will watch over them in their travels and through the medical procedures, will provide a good outcome, and will give them a speedy recovery in order to resume their role in the ongoing task at hand here.



Berean PRC, Manila, 16th anniversary photo, November 2022

Some adjustments

In light of the leave of absence, some adjustments were prepared in our pulpit supply schedule in the PRCP and in the catechism instruction in Provident PRC. The elders helped with leading worship services when pulpit supply was unavailable and with teaching catechism until Rev. Kleyn returned.

With regard to seminary instruction, the impact of the medical leave on the instruction in the seminary program for the PRCP was manageable without requiring, for example, emergency help from one of our retired pastors or professors. Adjustments were proposed and approved by Committee 1 (TSC) for the second half of the first semester and the upcoming semester. Thus, what could not be completed in the courses that Rev. Kleyn was teaching this semester will be covered in the upcoming semester without difficulty in the scheduling. We are thankful to the Lord that, in His wise timing, the impact of the leave to our seminary task is minimal.

Our task in Southern Negros Occidental

Another major element of our missionary task in the Philippines is our work with churches and contacts in the Visayan area that we, who have been very familiar with snow in North America, affectionately call SNO.

We started visiting again in SNO in May. At that time, we resumed our monthly Monday classes with the regular group of pastors and elders with whom we had been working before the disruptions of covid regulations. Currently, we are presenting lectures in Homiletics (sermon making) and in Christology.

Then, earlier in September, in addition to our monthly Monday classes, we resumed preaching in the area churches on Sundays at their request. On September 18, Rev. Kleyn preached in the Reformed Christian Church in Canturay while I preached in the Reformed Free Church in Inayauan. The churches at this point have one regular worship service with all of the necessary elements of worship according to the regulative principle. However, prior to their morning worship service, they have a tradition of a one-hour service of “Sunday School” in which the pastors teach catechism to the congregation. This type of service is common in many churches in the Philippines, and we have experienced this in our labors with other churches. In some, the “Sunday School” service eventually became a full worship service for Heidelberg Catechism preaching. Thus, to develop to that goal, the local pastors preach

the Heidelberg Catechism in that one-hour service, which we also do when visiting.

We intend to continue laboring with them, the Lord willing, at their request as they continue their development as Reformed congregations in all necessary respects according to Scripture, our Reformed confessions, and Reformed church order. A commendable goal that the leaders desire is not a loosely associated group of independent Reformed congregations, but a communion of churches of like precious faith. Our prayer is that the Lord will bless us in our role of service to the leaders and their gatherings in their development and that the Spirit of our Lord by this means may continue to guide them into His truth.

Bro. Dick Espiritu (1941-2022)

Some visitors may remember meeting our fellow saint, Bro. Dick Espiritu, one of the first officebearers of the Berean PRC when Rev. A. Spriensma was laboring here. He labored several terms as deacon after the Berean congregation was instituted in 2006. Bro. Dick was taken by the Lord to glory in death on Monday morning, September 12. His burial was on September 19, which would have been his 78th birthday. He is survived by his wife, Sis. Violy. Two of his sons, Bro. Herbert and Bro. Andrew, along with their wives and children are also members of our Berean PRC. The missionaries and our wives had the opportunity to visit with the family at the funeral wake and, in their sorrow, to bring them words of comfort and hope from Scripture.

We give thanks to the Lord that, in a predominantly Roman Catholic country where most believe the horrible, ungodly teaching of purgatory, we with the Espiritu family might stand in genuine faith before death and the grave in the victory of our Lord Jesus Christ! What a comfort to know assuredly that at the end of our earthly sojourn we have for Christ’s sake alone this triumphant expectation: “Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory” (Ps. 73:24).

In His service,
Rev. Richard J. Smit



Remembering the days of old

Mr. James Holstege, member of Southeast PRC in Grand Rapids, Michigan and administrator at Eastside Christian School in Grand Rapids, Michigan

The Holstege family (2)

Previous article in this series: December 15, 2022, p. 143.

In my previous article, I mentioned the name Lambert Holstege, who was my great grandfather. Lambert (Lammert) was born on December 3, 1880 in Doornspijk, Gelderland. Five months later, he was carried on to a ship and he immigrated to the United States with his family. His parents settled in the Beaverdam area, just west of Hudsonville (West Michigan). For those of you who are familiar with the Hudsonville area, we are talking about 56th Avenue and New Holland Road. Don't blink or you will miss it...and it still has gravel roads! For the remainder of his life, Lambert called this area his home. He was the youngest of four siblings born to his parents, Hendrik Jan and Batje Holstege. He grew up working on his parents' farm, and was a member of Beaverdam Christian Reformed Church.

There was another family close by, who also farmed and were members of Beaverdam CRC, Steven and Froukje (Florence) VanderMeulen. They also came from the Netherlands and settled in the area, at approximately the same time as the Holstesges. Steven VanderMeulen was memorialized at the time of his death as one who "established his home in the then wilderness, suffering the privations of pioneer life," and who "converted...a veritable wilderness and water-covered swamp into a highly valuable farm" (*The Zeeland Record*, Oct. 9, 1930). The VanderMeulens had five children, four of whom were daughters. The youngest, Elizabeth, apparently caught the eye of Lambert Holstege. They married on January 5, 1906. The Lord gave them fifteen children. During their lifetime, the Lord also led them through the heavy trial of having to commit six of their children to the grave, including twenty-seven year-old Bernard, who died as a paratrooper in Normandy on D-Day, June 1944, during WWII.

Meanwhile, as Lambert, Elizabeth, and others of their generation grew up in America and became adults within the Christian Reformed Church, the ecclesiastical scene in the Netherlands had seen many changes. We will not use this article to go into depth, but there are good resources available to help you explore this history if you wish to do so. One is the book, *For Thy Truth's Sake*, by emeritus Professor Herman Hanko

(available at rfpa.org). Another is a series of speeches given by Professor Doug Kuiper last summer on Protestant Reformed church history, which you can find on the PRC Theological Seminary YouTube channel ([youtube.com/@ProtRefdSeminary/videos](https://www.youtube.com/@ProtRefdSeminary/videos)).

Briefly, but significantly, a theologian turned politician named Abraham Kuyper rose to prominence in the Netherlands. This man led a second reformation movement out of the state church in 1886, known as the Doleantie. Soon thereafter, in 1892, a merger took place between this group of churches of the Doleantie, known later as the Kuyperians or Neo-Calvinists, and the Secession churches (Afscheiding), who earlier had separated from the state church in 1834. This latter group became known as the Pietists, because they emphasized piety, godliness, and a life of separation from the unbelieving world. The Kuyperians, on the other hand, were interested in becoming actively involved in the Dutch culture in order to transform it and make it Christian. This would require believers to cooperate with unbelievers, rather than to separate from them. In any case, the "Kuyperians" and "Pietists" came together to form a new denomination, called the Reformed Church in the Netherlands (GKN). This new denomination brought real reformation in separating from the state church, but doctrinal disagreement and disunity were still involved afterward.

The doctrinal disagreements brought on by the new merger included debates over something newly developed and promoted by Abraham Kuyper regarding a common grace of God. He taught that, although not in a saving way, God nevertheless looks favorably upon all humans including the wicked unregenerate in such a way that He restrains them from becoming as wicked as they could be and enables them to do much good in society and culture. Others in the new denomination, those among the "Pietists," who held to another form of common grace called the well-meant offer of the gospel, did not agree with the Kuyperians, and vice versa.

All of this debate and controversy found its way into the Christian Reformed Church in North America. As Dutch immigration into the USA continued, the CRC, originally made up of those known as the Pietists, in-

creased its membership from those who were followers of Abraham Kuyper. Added to that, when it came to discussing the doctrinal question of the common grace of God, there were some who did not agree with either side. They denied any teaching that claimed God looks favorably, in His grace, on all mankind. Rather, they believed that God limits His grace and favor only to those whom He has sovereignly chosen in His good pleasure, through election. Enter Herman Hoeksema, who was ordained into the CRC ministry in 1915.

Rev. Hoeksema soon became publicly known for his criticism of the teachings of common grace through the articles he submitted to the CRC publication, *The Banner*. Lambert Holstege was certainly one among many who were following and discussing Hoeksema's writings with interest. Then came the Janssen controversy. (Please refer to the sources I mentioned above to learn more.) To sum that up briefly, Dr. Ralph Janssen was a professor in the Calvin Theological Seminary who was condemned by the 1922 CRC Synod for teaching higher-critical views of the Scriptures. As the controversy developed, it became clear that Janssen defended his views based on Kuyperian common grace. Rev. Hoeksema, along with Rev. Henry Danhof, served as delegates to this synod, and were both a part of the committee who studied the Janssen case.

Part of the fallout from Hoeksema and Danhof's in-

volvement in the Janssen case was that the tables were turned, and they now came under attack by those who were friends and supporters of Dr. Janssen. The attack did not have to do with their opposition to Janssen's higher criticism of the Bible. Rather, it was because Hoeksema and Danhof opposed common grace. A writing war ensued, which resulted in, among other things, the start up of the *Standard Bearer* and a book titled *Van Zonde en Genade* (published originally in 1923; translated and published in 2003 by the RFPA as *Sin and Grace*). Dr. Janssen's friends included his relatives, some of whom lived right there in little Beaverdam as neighbors to the Lambert and Elizabeth Holstege family. As neighbors do, especially neighbors who are members in the same church, they discussed...and argued the issues of the day.

While finding serious disagreement with these relatives of Dr. Janssen, who were rather influential in the Beaverdam CRC, Lambert also found those within his neighborhood who agreed with him that Hoeksema was indeed correct, according to Scripture, regarding common grace. His aging father-in-law, Steven VanderMeulen, spoke often with him about his wholehearted agreement with the views expressed by Hoeksema and Danhof. And so it was, that Lambert purchased his own copy of the book, *Van Zonde en Genade*.



The Lambert and Elizabeth Holstege family

(Back row) Bessie (Bosch); Steven; Bernard; Andrew; Henry John; Gerrit; Benjamin

(Front row) Florence (Haveman); Elizabeth; Maggie Grace; Lambert; Elizabeth (Brink); Hattie (Haveman)

In 1924, Lambert and Elizabeth had a busy household, with ten active children. Five of the ten were five years old or younger. My grandfather, Henry John (Hank Jan), was twelve years old—old enough to be able to pass along many memories of what took place at that time. Much of what follows has been given to us and preserved through Hank Jan (cf. “A Blessed Heritage” by Len Holstege in the April 2016 *Beacon Lights*). He was the second oldest living Holstege sibling, with one older brother, Steve. By the year 1924, the family had witnessed the burials of four children.

The CRC Synod of 1924 adopted the well known three points of common grace. This effectively brought together those of the well-meant offer persuasion with the Kuyperians, and united them in opposition to those who stood in agreement with Rev. Hoeksema and Rev. Danhof. Shortly after the 1924 synod, the Holsteiges were visited by the elders from Beaverdam CRC for their annual family visitation. Their minister noticed *Van Zonde en Genade* lying on the table. He praised the book, said he also had read it, expressed agreement with the authors as far as the truth was concerned, and told Lambert he was happy to see that he was reading it.

When Classis Grand Rapids East (December 1924) and Classis Grand Rapids West (January 1925) voted to depose Rev. Hoeksema, Rev. Danhof, and a third minister who joined them, Rev. George M. Ophoff, along with their consistories because they refused to refrain from their opposition to common grace, the Protestant Reformed Churches were born. Soon after, a committee of elders from Beaverdam CRC came to see Lambert Holstege, but this time the visit was not as friendly. Their message was simple: if Lambert insists on taking and propagating the views of Hoeksema, Danhof, and Ophoff, he will be barred from partaking of the Lord’s Supper.

A few days later, when “Pa” was nowhere to be found and supper was ready, Hank Jan was told by his mother

to go look for him and summon him to the house. He eventually found “Pa,” praying in the hay mow. That evening around the table, Lambert informed his family that he was going to buy their first automobile and that his oldest son Steve had to get a driver’s license. They were going to begin traveling to Grand Rapids for church services, and so they did. Lambert and Elizabeth Holstege, with their children became members of the “Eastern Avenue Protestant Christian Reformed Church,” where Rev. Herman Hoeksema was the pastor. They were not alone; there were many others from Hudsonville who also made the trip to Grand Rapids. On July 16, 1926, the organizational meeting for Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church took place in “Spoelman’s Barn.” Lambert and Elizabeth joined with twenty-two families to become charter members.

More than seventy years have passed since they were taken to glory; Lambert in 1950 and Elizabeth in 1952. Their children have departed from this earth as well. Among God’s people who remain within the church militant are many who can trace their lineage back to this simple, humble, amiable, but resolute couple. A couple who knew themselves to be sinners, saved by grace alone, in Christ alone. May we who claim a place within these ranks join to confess with the church of all ages, these words of the apostle:

...Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men. For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty...that no flesh should glory in his presence. But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: that, according as it is written, he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord (I Cor. 1:25-31).



Bring the books...

Mr. Charles Terpstra, member of Faith PRC in Jenison, Michigan and full-time librarian/ registrar/archivist at the Protestant Reformed Theological Seminary

The following book is reviewed by Rev. Daniel Holstege, pastor of Wingham PRC in Wingham, Ontario, Canada.

Say Among the Heathen the Lord Reigns, by Mrs. Jean Kortering, Reformed Free Publishing Association, 2022, 368 pages, \$24.95 paper. [Originally self-published in 2007.]

In 1992, after serving as a pastor for thirty-two years in Protestant Reformed churches throughout America, Rev. Jason Kortering and his wife Jean moved around the world to Singapore and served God throughout Asia

for the next ten years. Imagine. You are in your 50s, healthy, living in the comfortable community where you grew up. Then the Lord calls you to serve Him in a faraway land, to leave your family behind, to sacrifice the precious moments you so looked forward to with your grandchildren. That is what the Lord called them to do. But as Jean writes, “I always preferred to think of our years in Singapore as a privilege rather than a sacrifice—a sacrifice would make me feel it’s something *I’m* doing, whereas a privilege to do this work is really a rich blessing given to us by the Lord. There are comparatively few who have that privilege, and the Lord in his goodness had given that to us” (pp. 3-4).

She originally wrote this collection of stories to her grandchildren to tell about the Lord’s work of calling His children out of darkness into His marvelous light in several Asian countries. Her hope was that the stories would “help to bridge the gap of separation” that was there between them and their grandchildren during those years and also to make them “realize anew the urgency we have to daily pray for missionaries and missions and at the same time to appreciate more fully the great blessings you children have in family, church, and school” (p. 5). *Say Among the Heathen the Lord Reigns* is not a full, year by year narrative of the decade when the Kortering lived in Singapore. But it is a collection of stories from 1992-2002 as well as several years after that when they returned during retirement. Here is a summary of the three parts of the book.

Part one has a history of the primary church to which Rev. Kortering ministered when they lived in Asia: the Evangelical Reformed Churches in Singapore (ERCS). In my judgment, this history alone makes the book valuable to any reader from the Protestant Reformed churches and their friends. One will learn about the roots of the Covenant Evangelical Reformed Church (CERC); the role of men by the names of Johnson See and Goh Seng Fong, Lau Chin Kwee, and Jai Mahtani; the original visits from PR ministers and elders in the 1970s; and the first PR missionary to Singapore (in the 1980s), Rev. Arie denHartog. Another chapter tells about the Kortering’s first trip to Singapore, a six-month trip in 1991, and the subsequent call to labor there as minister on loan. The ERCS asked the PRCA for a senior pastor to help them with “their beginning efforts in mission work and theological training.” Grandma Kortering adds, “Mission work has always had a soft spot in Grandpa’s heart, so it wasn’t surprising that Grandpa would be thinking very seriously about that possibility” (pp. 9-10). Indeed, he brought it up one night when they were out to eat at a restaurant in Singapore on that 1991 trip. Grandma

Kortering did not sleep at all that night (p. 10)! When they returned to the States, he got the call, and the rest is history...some of it in this book.

Part two of the book contains ten amazing stories of people they personally knew and interviewed from Singapore, Myanmar, and India, most of whom are converts from paganism. She tells of a little girl who got caned by her pagan mother for going to church, but whom the Lord later used to lead her mother to faith in Christ; a woman whose family devoutly consulted with necromancers and fortune tellers, but who found peace for herself in the gospel after struggling through depression and thoughts of suicide; another woman who was raised by a staunchly Buddhist mother in the midst of poverty, gambling, drugs, and prostitution, but whom God graciously led to Christ and the Reformed faith; a man whose family was involved in Chinese witchcraft and black magic, who testified of strange demonic activity in his life that we cannot fathom, but who came to believe in Jesus Christ as the crucified and risen Lord.... These stories are sometimes strange, always humbling, and often encouraging as they demonstrate the sovereign grace of God drawing His elect out of darkness and moving them to count the cost of discipleship and to follow Christ.

Then there is a chapter that tells the story of Titus, who first came into contact with the PRCA in 1994. Titus later came to Singapore from Myanmar and studied for a few years with Rev. Kortering around the kitchen table in their apartment using Herman Hoeksema’s *Reformed Dogmatics*. Jean writes, “Grandpa said [Titus] was the most delightful person he ever taught. He always came well prepared, having read all the assigned reading, and he was always eager to absorb more” (p. 122). Titus returned to Myanmar and has been faithfully laboring there in the ministry of the gospel ever since. This chapter will be fascinating to anyone interested in the background of the Protestant Reformed Churches in Myanmar (PRCM).

After that, there is a chapter that tells the story of Paulraj and Kasthuri. Paul and Kas (as they are nicknamed) came to Singapore from India after getting married in 2001. For one year, they both studied together under Rev. Kortering at the newly formed ARTS (Asian Reformed Theological Seminary). They embraced the Reformed faith. The chapter tells the story of their church background, marriage, family, and labors in Vellore, India. Jeans writes affectionately, “Paul and Kas are such dear people; we just wish all of you could meet them. They are so committed to the Reformed faith and are willing to give everything they have in order to share this precious truth with others” (p. 138). Paulraj

too has been laboring faithfully in the gospel ever since the days when the Korterings visited them. This chapter will be a joy to anyone interested in the background of the Reformed church and Grace Foster Home in Vellore, India.

Poverty is a common theme throughout the book. As one who labored in missions in a poorer Asian country myself, I can appreciate those many references and the incredible challenge of missions and money. The reader who is well informed in these challenges may or may not agree with all of what he reads about it in this book. But he will have to admit that the Korterings struggled, having the desire to establish self-supporting churches, but also moved with bowels of compassion toward the poor: “We always had to smile that regardless of how much money we took along to Myanmar, we always came back empty-handed” (p. 127). “Another thing we discussed is what it would take for the church there to be self-supporting...he [Titus] believes the church could be self-supporting in about a year’s time” (p. 220). The reader may judge for himself whether the instances of personal giving on the part of the Korterings as recorded in the book involved situations of real need and did not seek to elevate the economic status of the recipients. That would be the personal opinion of this reviewer.

Part three of the book has Grandma telling her grandchildren the fascinating tales of their numerous mission trips from Singapore to other countries from 1996-2006. There are chapters on five different trips to Myanmar, four to India, one to the Philippines, and one to Malaysia. Rev. Kortering enjoyed these trips “immensely. This was real mission work!” (p. 168). These stories are truly fascinating, even if perhaps heavy at times on details (for example, the repeated references to foreign exchange rates and hard-to-pronounce names and places. In that connection, I found it helpful to keep Google Maps open by my side while reading, so I could follow the course of their journeys from place to place; that was very helpful for understanding the location and extent of their travels). Jean tells about conferences, preaching through a translator, the frustration of not knowing the local language, the experience of moving through the sea of people in India as white Americans, the sick feeling of watching people worship idols, the danger of being conned in a third-world country, a Presbyterian seminary in northern India, a Christian hospital in southern India, contending against heathen religion and false doctrines like Arminianism and Charismaticism, dealing with church controversies and splits, seeing an orphanage, electrical black-outs, headaches, vomiting, and the sad story of the sudden death of a friend who joined them with his wife on one of their trips to Myanmar.

I appreciated Jean’s positive assessment of their admittedly exotic cultural experiences. Although she shows re-

alism in talking about certain sad and painful struggles, at the same time she keeps a positive and godly attitude that is admirable. The Lord suited her well to be a help-meet for her missionary husband. She speaks of friendly people (Philippines), beautiful scenery (India), cute children (everywhere), and “fun” experiences. There were times, of course, when they could not stomach the local food. One time, they secretly fed their dinner of liver and fish eggs to a cat! (p. 158). Another time, “We saw a rat scurry across the floor. Oh well, the food was good, and India is no place to be squeamish” (p. 267)! But she endeavors to be positive: “It was absolutely delicious” (pp. 155-156). “We always took *poori* for breakfast. For *poori* you get two pieces of an Indian bread (Indian breads, by the way, are very delicious) and some sauce that has small pieces of potato, onion, and other things in it. You rip off a piece of the bread, scoop up some of the sauce with it, and put it in your mouth. All eating is done with your fingers, and actually, for that kind of food, I do believe fingers work better than forks” (p. 304). Her descriptions of the delicious Indian and Burmese food made my mouth water as I remembered the great Filipino food we enjoyed during our years in the Philippines.

The book is a treasury of cultural observations. The North American reader will be whisked away to places and customs far different from his own and will want to sing, “Christ shall have dominion over land and sea, earth’s remotest regions shall his empire be....” The book makes clear that the Lord qualified the Korterings to adapt to very different cultures, heart-breaking poverty, language barriers, sickness, and more. As the great apostle wrote, “For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more.... To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. And this I do for the gospel’s sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you” (I Cor. 9:19-23).

I commend the RFPA for publishing this book of mission memoirs. I recommend it to all. May reading it inform and inspire lay believers and ordained ministers alike regarding the urgency of missions and our calling to go into all the world and “say among the heathen that the LORD reigneth” (Ps. 96:10).

Announcements

Resolution of sympathy

The Council and congregation of Georgetown PRC express their sincere sympathies to Bev Kamminga, Frank and Kristie Van Baren and family, Brian and Lori Kamminga and Lynne Huizinga in the death of their beloved husband, father, brother and grandfather, **Randy Kamminga**. It is our prayer that they may receive comfort from the words of our Savior Jesus Christ in John 10:27-28 "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand."

Ron Schut, Vice President

Kevin Timmerman, Clerk

Classis West

Classis West will meet in regular session on Wednesday, March 1, 2023, at 8:30 A.M., in the Lynden Protestant Reformed Church, Lynden, Washington. Material for this session must be in the hands of the stated clerk by January 30, 2023. All delegates in need of lodging or transportation from the airport should notify the clerk of Lynden's consistory.

Rev. J. Engelsma, Stated Clerk

Reformed Witness Hour

reformedwitnesshour.org

Rev. W. Bruinsma

January 1—Jehovah Sees the Heart

I Samuel 16:6-13

January 8—Making a Stand

I Samuel 17:38-51

January 16—Israel Rebels Against David's House

I Kings 12:16, 28-30

January 22—Halting Between Two Opinions

I Kings 18:20-39

January 23—God Sends Ahab Strong Delusion

II Chronicles 18:4-34

Call to aspirants to the ministry

All young men desiring to begin studies in the Protestant Reformed Theological Seminary in the 2023-2024 academic year should make application at the March 16, 2023 meeting of the Theological School Committee.

Accompanying the application must be a testimonial from the prospective student's Consistory that he is a member in full communion, sound in faith, and upright in walk, and exhibits the qualities and personality necessary for a gospel minister; a certificate of health from a reputable physician; and a college transcript. Before entering the seminary, all students must have earned a bachelor's degree and met all of the course requirements for entrance to the seminary. These entrance requirements are listed in the seminary catalog available from the school or on the Seminary's website (prcts.org/admissions).

All applicants must appear before the Theological School Committee for interview before admission is granted. In the event that a student cannot appear at the March 16 meeting, notification of this fact, along with a suggested interview date, must be given to the secretary of the Theological School Committee before this meeting.

All correspondence should be directed to the

Theological School Committee,

4949 Ivanrest Avenue SW

Wyoming, MI 49418

Joel Minderhoud, Secretary

The Protestant Reformed Seminary admits students of any race, color, and national or ethnic origin.