

THE *April 15, 2007*
STANDARD
BEARER

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

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Volume 83 ◆ Number 14

Taught in Silence

I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue: I will keep my mouth with a bridle, while the wicked is before me.

I was dumb with silence, I held my peace, even from good; And my sorrow was stirred.

My heart was hot within me, while I was musing the fire burned: Then spake I with my tongue,

LORD, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is; That I may know how frail I am.

Psalm 39:1-4

He kept his mouth with a bridle. He was dumb with silence. So silent was he that he held his peace, even from good!

Why? What was the cause of his silence?

He feared. He feared the power of sin. He determined to take heed to his ways, lest he sin with his tongue.

We inquire further. Wherefore

this fear that led to such silence?

The answer is: the presence of the wicked before him. Wicked men were the cause of the psalmist's fear. They were the cause of his silence, this holding of his peace, even from good.

Why from good? Why not speak what is right and good? Why not speak that which distinguishes good from evil? Why not bring out with the lips the good that is mighty to bring evil to naught? Why not bring evil to shame and cause the evil speaker to flee from the presence of the good?

Could it perhaps be that the purpose of the psalmist's silence was to refrain from casting pearls before swine? Sometimes evil men will take the good that is spoken and twist and turn it to their evil end. They will take what is good and right and make it into grievous and sore evil. Such is the way of wicked men, always to make crooked what is straight.

Or was the purpose of this silence before the wicked to maintain the psalmist's own safety? He desires to preserve his life. He keeps silent lest he should be de-

stroyed because of the good that he has spoken. His life or his name or reputation before men may fall under attack.

Or perhaps these wicked men are so set in their wickedness that it is absolutely useless to speak to them. A waste of effort it would be to bring anything good to their ears or even to rebuke them.

This reasoning, however right and proper it might sometimes be, is not the reasoning of the Scriptures here.

The psalmist kept silence for his own sake. Not for the sake of upholding his reputation before the wicked. Nor for avoiding opposition. No, his silence was a taking heed to his ways. He feared that he would sin with his tongue.

He feared sinning against God with his tongue. Taking heed to his ways, the psalmist examined his *motives*. Speaking can so easily be an act of pride. To speak, even what is right and correct, may then be wrong. To speak when one's purpose is simply to silence or put to shame wicked men is sinful. Sinful it is when one speaks in order to show that his tongue, too, has might and power. That his tongue

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The Standard Bearer (ISSN 0362-4692) is a semi-monthly, except monthly during June, July, and August, published by the Reformed Free Publishing Association, Inc., 1894 Georgetown Center Dr., Jenison, MI 49428-7137.

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\$17.00 per year in the U.S., US\$20.00 elsewhere.

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The Standard Bearer does not accept commercial advertising of any kind. Announcements of church and school events, anniversaries, obituaries, and sympathy resolutions will be placed for a \$10.00 fee. These should be sent to the Editorial Office and should be accompanied by the \$10.00 fee. Deadline for announcements is one month prior to publication date.

16mm microfilm, 35mm microfilm and 105mm microfiche, and article copies are available through University Microfilms International.

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can conquer this wickedness and evil before him! Yes, let his words put wicked men to shame!

Then would he sin with his tongue, being heedless of his ways! Then wickedness should beget wickedness! No, let him keep his mouth with a bridle while the wicked are before him.

Or, perhaps the psalmist feared being drawn into a sinful argument. He might be able to begin well. He might speak such words as are fitting and proper. He might even speak those words out of the deepest humility before God and men. But as he continues to speak, he could too easily grow more vehement. He might then be carried away with the force of his own words and become self-willed in his anger. Forgetting the fear of the Lord, he would forget that God is Judge alone.

So he takes heed to his ways, he keeps silence, lest he should sin with his tongue. While the wicked are before him, he keeps his mouth with a bridle.

The silence of the psalmist has a powerful effect in the depths of his heart. This self-imposed silence works upon the psalmist. His sorrow is stirred. His heart grows hot within him. While he muses the fire burns.

We must understand that the wicked do not learn from this silence. They continue to speak, their mouths pour out wickedness, deceit, lies, arrogance, and bold hypocrisy before the psalmist. As they speak, they only strengthen themselves in wickedness, harden themselves in deceit, and encourage themselves in their hypocrisy. They hardly even notice that no word in answer comes from the man before whom they stand.

As they continue to speak, pouring out wickedness from their lips, the psalmist's sorrow is stirred to greater depths. The silent man's heart grows hotter and hotter. The fire within him burns ever higher. So great the heat becomes, so hot the fire burns, that he must speak.

His silence must be broken. Words that are good and right must come forth from his lips.



But what words we have! These fiery words the psalmist does not address to the wicked. The psalmist is not interested in setting matters straight before the wicked. We do not hear in these words a rebuke of the wicked. Much less do these words call for them to be cast out or executed, as they rightly deserve.

These words are directed to God. He prays to God, in an exercise of heartfelt, sincere fellowship with Him. He makes entreaty to the Lord, expressing his deepest desire to Him.

See what the psalmist brings before God. He makes no mention of the wicked. He asks for nothing concerning them, not for their shame and confusion, nor for their judgment at the hands of God. Neither is their wickedness brought to God. Their wicked words and deeds are not mentioned, though those things have been heard and seen. Wicked men are left far behind. This exchange is not about them.

He brings before the Lord his God...himself. He sets before the Lord his own need of instruction.

Here is where the wicked have led him: to stand before the Lord his God. These are the things the wicked have given him to think about: his end and the measure of his days. He has been brought before the Lord. He feels the fire burning in his heart. Sorrow stirs up in his inmost being. Hear what he has to say in the presence of his God.

"Lord, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is; that I many know how frail I am."

How frail I am!

To know accurately and clearly his frailty, to know his frailty as utter weakness, to avoid the danger of thinking himself to be some-

thing when he is nothing—those things are the prayer of the psalmist.

Make me to know! Teach me. Overcome my vain imagination! Overcome my pride and arrogance! Make me to know mine end, how near it is. Make me to know the measure of my days, that they are but few and short.

Lord, make me! Make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is, that I may know how frail I am.

In his silence, the psalmist has learned something about himself. He has been reminded by the wicked before him that in him is found the same wickedness out of which those wicked men have spoken and acted. That wickedness is the wickedness of pride and arrogance. Those great evils are not found only in the wicked; they are also found in the godly.

Confronted with the wicked, the psalmist is confronted with himself.

Only one thing is there to do about that wickedness of pride: "Lord make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days."

This dear, precious, spiritual knowledge is taught only by God. Only the Eternal One can teach us our finitude.

Without that teaching of God, we will always see something good in us. Something, howsoever small it may be. Then our pride will take hold upon that something and build it up to be greater and greater. We will not only think ourselves to be something, but we will think ourselves to be something great. In our wickedness we will find the same evil upon our lips as was spoken by these wicked men.

God makes us to know. He makes us to know our end. When He does that, He brings us also before Himself. He brings our end before us, in the light of His eternity. He who is without end or beginning makes us to know our end.

He also makes us to know the measure of our days. Our days may be very few compared to the days of other men. Our days may be three score and ten, or if by reason of strength fourscore. Whatever that measure, He who teaches us is of days innumerable. With Him a thousand years are as a day. He who is without days teaches us our days.

Being taught by God, we are brought to rest in Him.

Being taught by God, we rest in His eternity and in His power. To rest in Him who is eternal is our safety and security. To rest in Him who is of all power is our strength and might. We rest in God. Fellowship with Him is our delight and joy.

In that fellowship, we come to know how frail we are. We desire to know our end, and the measure of our days, for that knowledge leads us to rest more deeply in the everlasting arms of our God. More delightful becomes God's strength to us as it fills more and more our frailty.

Being taught by God, we also

are kept safe from wickedness, the very wickedness that manifested itself before the psalmist.

The true knowledge of our end not only teaches us the folly of pride, but teaches us also the folly of all wickedness built upon that pride. So frail we are. How can it be that any mere man might try to rebel against God? Yet, the way of the wicked is established upon their stubborn refusal to know their end and the measure of their days. Their wicked way is established upon their refusal to know God's eternity and His almighty power.

Let such deception be cleared away from our minds and hearts! Lord, make me to know mine end!

The true knowledge of our end teaches us the wonderful way of righteousness. To walk humbly with the Lord our God is to walk in obedience to Him. Feeling deeply the knowledge of our frailty, we seek His strength to keep us and His power to guide us in that blessed walk with Him. Seeking to please Him by whose strength we are kept, we delight in keeping His ways. We take heed

to our ways, that they may always be close to Him.

Lord, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is, that I may know how frail I am.

Yes, the wicked leave the presence of the psalmist. They leave thinking themselves triumphant. They spoke; their audience was silent. Their wickedness they made known; they were not reprov'd. As they came, so they leave: in the deception of their own wickedness. But the psalmist learned much. Through his silence he was preserved from temptation and the deceitfulness of sin. Through his silence he learned of his great need, that God must teach him about his frailty. This encounter with the wicked was for his eternal profit. His prayer was answered. The Lord made him to know his end, and the measure of his days, what it was. He learned how frail he was.

Blessed knowledge! Learned in silence, learned from the Lord!

May we so learn! In our silence! 

The Evil Fruits of the Conditional Covenant (5): Baptismal Regeneration

The conditional covenant maintains that the promises of the covenant are for all baptized children without exception. According to this conception of the covenant, in the sacrament of baptism God promises to every baptized child that He makes an everlasting covenant of grace

with the child. God, through the minister, calls the child by name and promises redemption from sin through the blood of Christ. God promises that He will dwell in that child by His Spirit. All this is dependent, is conditioned, on the child believing the promises.

However, by insisting that each baptized child has these promises pronounced to him personally, conditional covenant proponents have left the solid ground of Scripture and the Reformed confessions and

entered dangerous theological territory. According to their theology, promises of salvation are signed and sealed to each child at baptism. How do they guard against the obvious implication that each baptized child actually is saved, for they know that not all are saved? In the past, the solution often given was that each child has these promises objectively, but not subjectively. Faith is the prerequisite condition to receiving these benefits subjectively.

Previous article in this series: April 1, 2007, p. 292.

The problem is, however, that this man-made distinction does not do justice to the covenant. The covenant is not merely an arrangement (as it is sometimes described). Even conditional covenant theologians have come to see that the covenant is a relationship of love and friendship. God promised Abraham, "I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed...to be a God unto thee and to thy seed after thee" (Gen. 17:7). He spoke the same promise to Israel, "And I will take you to me for a people, and I will be to you a God: and ye shall know that I am the LORD your God" (Ex. 6:7). Thus, if God's covenant with His people is real, if it be more than a paper contract, then the members of that covenant must really and truly possess the blessings that belong to the covenant. God is their saving, covenant-keeping God.

Another teaching of the conditional covenant is that God establishes the covenant unilaterally, but that the maintenance of the covenant is bilateral. According to that idea, God establishes His covenant with every baptized child. Each of these children is a member of the covenant, a member of the church, and a part of the body of Christ. Whether or not any individual child retains this position depends on whether the child believes. Or, to speak of it in terms of John 15 (which is being done today), it depends on whether or not the branch produces fruit. The fruit is faith and the obedience of faith.

It is out of this fertile soil of the conditional covenant that the bold new heresies known as the Federal Vision are springing up. As is true of all heresies, this one also contains some truth, otherwise it would not be deceptive. A main theme of this error is the truth that the covenant is real; God means what He says. However, that truth mingled with the error of the conditional covenant, leads to the abominable position that every

baptized child truly possess all the blessings of the covenant.

The cementing together of baptism and the blessings of the covenant is cleverly done. Doug Wilson is a vocal proponent of the "Federal Vision." His manner of uniting the two is an apt illustration.¹

First, Wilson writes as though to reject the doctrine of "baptismal regeneration," that is, that regeneration occurs through the very act of baptism. Historically this has been described by the Latin expression used by Rome, *ex opere operato*. Wilson claims to reject that idea of baptism, for "the blessings of the covenant are appropriated by faith, not by water" (242).

However, he does not discard the phrase *ex opere operato*, but claims that it describes baptism's power to bind a child to the covenant. He writes, "Baptism in water does establish, *ex opere operato*, a binding relation to the covenant and the Lord of the covenant" (242). He explains.

So water baptism is covenantally efficacious. It brings every person baptized into some kind of an objective and living covenant relationship with Christ, whether the baptized person is elect or reprobate. Baptism is always to be taken by the one baptized as a sign and seal of his ingrafting into Christ. If the person is reprobate, he will refuse to do so, and will be cut out of the vine. If he is elect, he cannot be cut out. An unbelieving covenant member incurs all the curses of the covenant, while the believer appropriates all its blessings by faith alone (242).

This is a common theme among theologians of this ilk. Steve Wilkins, having affirmed the biblical truth that "all the blessings and benefits of salvation...are found 'in Christ'," applies this to baptism as follows:

The Bible teaches us that baptism unites us to Christ and His body by the power of the Holy Spirit (I Corinthians 12:13). Baptism is

an act of God (through His ministers) which signifies and seals our initiation into the Triune communion (we are "baptized *into the name* of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit"). At baptism we are clothed with Christ, united to Him and to His Church which is His body (Ephesians 3:26-28).²

Astounding assertions! Where does he get such notions? From the fact that the covenant is a real relationship, as he points out.

In fact, covenant is a real relationship, consisting of real communion with the triune God through union with Christ. The covenant is not some *thing* that exists apart from Christ or in addition to Him (another *means* of grace)—rather, the covenant *is* union with Christ. Thus, being in covenant gives all the blessings of being united to Christ. There is no salvation apart from covenant simply because there is no salvation apart from union with Christ (262, his emphasis).

But what of those that eventually reject God and His covenant and perish in unbelief? Did they also have these blessings that result from union with Christ? Oh, yes, affirms Wilkins.

The apostate doesn't forfeit "apparent blessings" that were never his in reality, but real blessings that were his in covenant with God (264, his emphasis.)

All this is based squarely on a conditional covenant. God establishes it with every baptized child. Every child has "the objective, real nature of union with Christ" (265). Wilkins writes:

1. "Sacramental Efficacy in the Westminster Standards," *The Auburn Avenue Theology Pro and Cons: Debating the Federal Vision*, Calvin Beisner, Ed. Published by Knox Theological Seminary, 2004, pp. 233-253.

2. "Covenant, Baptism, and Salvation," also in *The Auburn Avenue Theology*, p. 259. (Emphasis his.)

Covenant, therefore, is a gracious relationship, not a *potentially* gracious relationship. To be in covenant is to have the treasures of God's mercy and grace and the love which He has for His own Son given to you. But the covenant is not *unconditional*. It requires persevering faithfulness (255-256, his emphasis).

Such quotations could be multiplied by the hundreds.³ Essentially these men are teaching that baptism forms a real union with Christ because it brings the individual into the (conditional) covenant. But because union with Christ is a living union that makes one to be alive with the life of Christ, they are teaching baptismal regeneration, in spite of their disavowing it.

Now we could present a refutation of baptismal regeneration, but that is quite unnecessary. For nearly the last 500 years the churches of the Reformation have rejected Rome's teaching of baptismal regeneration and the notion that baptism confers grace on all who are baptized. I refer the reader to John Calvin's treatment of this in his *Institutes* (4.14.14-17).

The point that must not be lost is this: These heretical teachings are a natural and necessary consequence of conditional covenant theology.

This is the only conclusion that can be drawn also from a conditional-covenant reading of the Heidelberg Catechism's instruction on the necessity of infant baptism. We noted last time that the conditional covenant interprets Q. & A. 74 as applying the promises of baptism to every baptized child. Let's read the Catechism's answer, and change the pronouns to "all baptized children, head for head." Then the Catechism reads as follows:

Are infants also to be baptized?

Answer. Yes: for since *all baptized children head for head*, as well as the adult, are included in the covenant and church of God; and

since redemption from sin by the blood of Christ, and the Holy Ghost, the author of faith, is promised to *all baptized children head for head* no less than to the adult; *all baptized children head for head* must therefore by baptism, as a sign of the covenant, be also admitted into the Christian church; and be distinguished from the children of unbelievers as was done in the old covenant or testament by circumcision, instead of which baptism is instituted in the new covenant.

Such a reading is untenable because the sovereign God always accomplishes His purposes, as every Reformed believer knows. Since God cannot lie, but fulfills all His promises in Jesus Christ, one can only conclude that God does give to all these baptized children redemption and the Spirit, the author of faith, and makes them all living members of His church. They are grafted into Christ. Any child who rejects God and His covenant has fallen away from grace. But this is a blatant denial of the preservation of the saints.

The right choice is to reject the conditional covenant entirely, and see the beauty of a covenant theology that is governed by election. God's covenant promise is that He will be the God of believers and their elect children (the seed, which ultimately is Christ and those in Him, Gal. 3:16). God promises to give to believers and their elect seed a place in His church and covenant. God promises to give to believers and their elect children redemption from sin in the blood of Christ, and the Holy Spirit, *who will work faith*. To the elect children, baptism is a sign and seal that they "are spiritually cleansed from [their] sins as really as [they] are externally washed with water" (Heidelberg Catechism, Q. & A. 73). These elect children will come to full assurance that they are elect from the fruits of election (Canons, I, 12).

But one may ask: Why baptize all the children of believers if some may not be elect?

Part of the answer is that believing parents are not given to know (at the birth of their children) God's determination concerning these children—elect or reprobate. For good, holy, and wise reasons, God has chosen not to reveal this to parents.

But God has revealed His command that parents are to baptize all their children, even as Israel was to circumcise all their boys. The point of the command is not that God promises to save all. Nor is it that baptism gives something of salvation to all, or puts them all in a better position to be saved. The fact is, everything in the sphere of the covenant will work against the reprobate children of believers—their baptism, the godly covenant homes, catechetical instruction, the Christian school—everything will harden, foment rebellion, blind their eyes, make their ears dull and hearts fat (Matt. 13:16).

(Yes, there is a "sphere of the covenant," in which are found elect children of believers and non-elect children of believers. Why this should be so hard for some to accept is a mystery. Virtually every Reformed believer knows that not every baptized child of believers is truly a member of the body of Christ, even though each of these is a member of the church institute for a time. They are in the sphere of the church. Likewise the covenant. God does not make a covenant with every child born to believing parents and baptized. The reprobate are only in the sphere of the covenant; God makes no covenant with them. However, with the elect, God truly establishes His covenant of grace.)

Believers gladly obey God's command to baptize all their children because it is a sign and seal that Jehovah does establish His covenant in families and in generations. God sovereignly will gather whom He will from among our children. You and I, as parents, may not object to God's way of working in the covenant. We may not demand that

He give all our children equally the promise of salvation. Believing parents rather rejoice that God is pleased to continue His covenant with them and with their children. They delight in the sovereign fruits of election manifest in the lives of their children. They give thanks that the salvation is not conditioned on anything that they or their children do. God has established a real covenant of love and

friendship with them and their seed, that is, their elect children.

When a child does not give evidence of faith and love (God's gifts) but rebels, then parents grieve, to be sure. They pray fervently that the Lord will turn their child; that the Lord will spare him the dreadful consequences of spurning God, of trampling underfoot all the covenant instruction he received, of crucifying Christ afresh. Neverthe-

less, these parents do add, must add, Not my will, but Thine be done. Thy sovereign, eternal, good will, of predestination. Thou art God. 

3. Guy Prentiss Waters has gathered many such quotations in his fine book, *The Federal Vision and Covenant Theology: A Comparative Analysis* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2006).

All Around Us

Rev. R. Kleyn

■ Blame it on the...

Perhaps, with me, you took note of NASA's response to the recent sex and attempted murder scandal among its elite astronauts ("NASA Reviews Mental Health Testing," *Grand Rapids Press*, February 8, 2007). The morning after I read of NASA's disappointing response, "a breath of fresh air" came across my e-mail under the title "The Booze Didn't Make You Do It." Here is the article in full (Breakpoint Commentaries, February 9, 2007, www.breakpoint.com).

If you ever doubted the complete triumph of the therapeutic culture in America, look no further than this week's news. Take NASA for example. How did it respond to the sad and bizarre story involving a love triangle and an astronaut charged with attempted murder? It wants to tighten psychological screening procedures for astronauts! Now, I find it hard to imagine more rigorous screenings than those already given to naval aviators and astronauts.

How about sin? It doesn't take rocket science to figure out what happens when you crowd at-

tractive men and women into a space capsule.

Or take the recent case of San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom. Following his election in 2003, Newsom was considered a rising political star. Times have changed: Now, he's the butt of late-night comedians' jokes, and his political future is, at best, uncertain.

A few weeks ago, Newsom confirmed reports that he was involved in an affair with his campaign manager's wife. He claimed that he was "deeply sorry about that," but then announced that he was "seeking counseling for alcohol abuse."

"Upon reflection" he told reporters, "I have come to the conclusion that I will be a better person without alcohol in my life."

Newsom is hardly alone in his approach to moral failure. If a politician or celebrity is caught up in a scandal, you can pretty much count on their entering rehab soon afterwards. (And these "rehab centers," by the way, are like little Ritz-Carltons.) This is true even if the behavior that caused the scandal has little, if anything, to do with alcohol or drugs, as in Newsom's case.

Thus, after being caught on tape spewing anti-Semitic nonsense, Mel Gibson checked into rehab. After his behavior toward underage congressional pages became known, Congressman Mark Foley (R-Fla.)—what else?—entered rehab.

In all these instances, the mes-

sage is the same: The booze made me do it. Even when some personal fault is acknowledged, the unstated assumption is that once the drinking or drug use is dealt with, everything will be okay.

This is a prime example of what sociologist Philip Rieff called "the triumph of the therapeutic." In his book by that name, Rieff described the emergence of what he called "psychological man."

"Psychological man," who was only possible because of Christianity's declining cultural influence, is the product of a Freudian worldview. It isn't interested in the good life, but "living well"—that is, with a minimum of emotional and psychological distress. Anything that causes this distress becomes the enemy, including a sense of responsibility and respect for authority.

But what happens when you do something bad, like having an affair with your friend's wife? Or trying to kill a rival for your lover's affections? Well, now, you don't talk about sin because that has been dispensed with in our culture. So you look for an external cause of the behavior like alcohol or mental illness. You do not punish; you provide "treatment" that deals with these external causes.

Nonsense! What we need instead is to recover what therapy replaced: sin and individual responsibility, knowledge of right and wrong and the sense of shame that reinforces it. This might be

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decidedly politically incorrect, but it's the only thing that will make "better persons" of us all.

We can say "Amen" to this.

Since that date Britney Spears has also checked into "rehab."

There are two things here. First, the cause of scandal is not simply external. The cause, and so also the blame, is within. Jesus says it very clearly in Matthew 15:19: "Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies." The problem is a sin problem.

The second thing is this: let us who read be careful to make the applications personally. Sin is not simply something that someone else, outside of us, commits, but sin is within our hearts. Given the right circumstances, the appropriate temptations, the escape from the shame of sin, any one of us could be guilty of scandalous sin. It behooves us to look inward. And not like NASA, to inward policies and practices regarding psychological evaluation, but like the apostle in Romans 7, "Oh wretched man that I am...." We need a sense of self-depravity that humbles us in relation to others. Isn't that what was missing in the female astronaut who now awaits trial?

■ The Media and Homosexuality

We know the power of the mass media. Governments, such as the Nazi regime of Hitler's Germany, have used it very effectively to spread propaganda and brainwash the masses. In our country, Hollywood has infiltrated and taken it over to promote godless and materialistic living. Somehow, the power to communicate to the masses will also be a part of the Antichrist's influence. This power to communicate was weakened at Babel, but is the wound of the beast that will be healed close to the end of time (Rev. 13:3).

Because of this, we are wary

of what we read in the papers and see on the television, but at the same time we are interested in seeing how this instrument for promoting the rise of Antichrist develops. The Bible's instruction to us is to stay on watch for the signs of the times.

Recently, this came very close to home for our churches. This is not to dramatize, or seek some kind of pity. We rejoice in tribulation, and count it a privilege to bear reproach for the name of Christ. And we are not alone in receiving this kind of reproach.

Here is a story of what the media in the Republic of Ireland is doing against Rev. Stewart and the biblical teaching he is promoting and maintaining in his mission endeavors. This was on the front page of the *Limerick Leader* (March 16, 2007) one week before Rev. Stewart was scheduled to speak in that city.

Headline-Fury Over Gay Hate Preacher

Limerick's gay community has called on a hard-line pastor to cancel a public lecture depicting homosexuality as a sin and gay marriage as an abomination. Presbyterian-style preacher Reverend Angus Stewart will travel from Ballymena to deliver the talk in Limerick next Friday.

But gay rights activists in the city want the lecture called off, saying views like Mr. Stewart's fuel a climate of fear where gay and lesbian youngsters are too scared to come out, which eventually leads many to suicide.

Vanessa Buswell, coordinator of the Rainbow Support Service, which provides counseling to gay young people and operates a phone helpline, said: "Gay and lesbian people should have the freedom not to be required to live by someone else's view of morality. Some lesbians and gays are still rejected by their families, some are still very badly bullied at school, some feel they will never be able to come out and some take their own lives because they cannot bear living in

a world where they still receive rejection."

Ms Buswell added the city's gay community was considering holding a protest outside the lecture at the Limerick Youth Service Center on Glentworth St. She has tried to make contact with the youth service to make the Rainbow Service's dissatisfaction with the lecture known. "I don't think the youth service should be hosting it," she said. Rainbow tries to work with the city's youth clubs so that gay teens can access its support services but the lecture was sending out all the wrong messages. At the very least, Ms Buswell said, the city's gay community wants to see a public boycott of the talk.

Reverend Stewart meanwhile said the Bible makes it very clear that homosexuality is a sin. Speaking of gay people he said: "They need to confess these sins of homosexuality and then God can give them the strength to fight against it." Speaking of the gay community he continued: "It's natural in so far as someone does it. Some people murder children, for some people it's natural to punch, for others it's natural to spit on people."

Ms Buswell said that studies show that 10% of the population is gay. "That's a higher proportion than the Traveller Community," she added.

Meanwhile statistics show, said Ms Buswell, that two out of three male suicides in the 18 to 35-age category are by gay men. The talk is due to go ahead at the Youth Service at 7 P.M.

Besides misrepresenting what Rev. Stewart had said, there is obvious bias and even hatred in this piece. When Rev. Stewart was interviewed, his point was that one cannot argue that homosexuality is natural just because someone practices it. If we could, then we would have to condone all sorts of things just because people are doing them (murder, punching, spitting, etc.). In response to the article, the Youth Service called off the meeting by not allowing Rev. Stewart to speak

in their facility, and another venue had to be found.

The same bias and hatred is here in our country too. Not yet in the realm of the right to free speech, so that such speech is silenced, but certainly in the realm of politics and public office. The same week as the piece above, there was a massive media hype in the USA over the comments of a high-ranking U.S. official. Under the heading, "The Crime of Conviction: General Pace and Morality," Chuck Colson of Breakpoint.com gave this balance to the media's bias (March 15, 2007).

Our nation's top military officer, a veteran decorated with no less than forty-eight military awards and a very distinguished career, made a startling revelation this week: He has moral conviction. The world gasps, hurls insults, and demands an apology. How dare one of the top leaders of our land have a moral belief and share it when questioned!

But that's exactly what happened this week when the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff—the first Marine general ever to hold that position—General Peter Pace, commented in a wide-ranging interview with the Chicago Tribune, "My upbringing is such that I believe that there are certain things, certain types of conduct, that are immoral. I believe that military members who sleep with other military members' wives are immoral in their conduct, and that we should not tolerate that."

But then Pace went on to tell the Tribune, "I believe that homosexual acts between individuals are immoral and that we should not condone immoral acts." Well, stop the presses.

Of course, all that the radio, news, and television outlets have focused on since General Pace's comments are his remarks on homosexuality. Never mind that he puts immorality of all kinds on equal footing. General Pace went on to say in the interview, "I do not believe the United States is well served by a policy that says it is OK to be immoral in any way."

While the world should be applauding a man who proposes that one of the most important institutions in our country should have moral integrity, instead we hammer him for having a conviction.

But I believe this goes far beyond the whole question of homosexuals in the military and the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy. This cuts to the core of the question of whether anyone in public office is free to speak his deepest religious or moral convictions. The Constitution says there will be no religious test for office, and yet we are applying one. We are basically saying that if you are the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, you are not allowed to express your moral or religious views—especially on matters of sexual preference and behavior.

This is another sign that we live in an age that no longer believes in objective truth or a moral order. Moral relativism is the rule, and personal preference trumps all. And government is there to ensure that no one place any restraint on the pursuit of our own desires.

I have long said that C. S. Lewis was prophetic when in 1943 he wrote about the irony of our education system, saying, "Such is the tragicomedy of our situation—we continue to clamour for those very qualities we are rendering impossible.... In a sort of ghastly simplicity we remove the organ and demand the function. We make men without chests and expect of them virtue and enterprise. We laugh at honour and are shocked to find traitors in our midst."

Ironic that today, the head of our Joint Chiefs of Staff argues that the military should have consistent policies of moral integrity, and the world demands an apology. Maybe it is time to lock him up: General Pace is guilty. He has committed the intolerable crime of our day: He has stated his conviction in a value-free society that respects only so-called "tolerance."

As for me, well, General Pace makes me proud that I am a former Marine.

Again, the crime is "intolerance" for immoral/criminal conduct. The target is the Scripture's teaching. The goal is to silence those who speak up for truth in society. The result is a generation that tolerates every immoral behavior, and the "bad-guy" is the believer who dares to care about God and His honor.

To Rev. Stewart, and others who dare to speak on these issues, because they love Christ and what Scripture teaches, Jesus is still saying today, "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you" (Matt. 5:11-12).

■ Youtube Madness

In this column in the past I have tried to address some of the dangers of technology and the computer age, especially their threat to our homes and young people. So when I saw the title "YOUTUBE MADNESS" suddenly displayed on the right of my screen, I had to click on it.

Now, I have to admit, I myself have been drawn into the world of "youtube" from time to time—after receiving a link to a humorous clip, or reading a press report on a particularly captivating clip of the presidential funeral flyover here in Grand Rapids. But after listening to the brief audio warning to which the "YOUTUBE MADNESS" link led, I am certainly reconsidering.

Perhaps, especially for our young people, these words will serve as a warning, and for our parents, as helpful direction. They are from Dr. Alan Cairns of the "Let the Bible Speak" radio program, aired over stations around the world, but also archived online at www.sermonaudio.com. Below

is a transcription of the “hot topic” section of the February 21, 2007 program.

Many of you will never have heard of youtube. The brave new world of high-tech gadgets has left you behind, and you may not be able to tell an iPod from a peapod. I don’t blame you. And yet we do well to stop and take note of what is actually happening to the current generation of Americans, and not just Americans, but people almost everywhere.

Youtube is an internet site where people place their pictures and videos, especially those that are shocking, provocative, pornographic or violent. Rick Warren’s infamous report from Syria showed up on youtube. So have explicit celebrity pictures.

But, more and more, ordinary people are demanding their moment in the lime-light of internet stardom. So, they post pictures or videos of themselves doing things. There have been videos of gangs of pre-teen and teenage boys viciously beating up some hapless victim, and it seems that those who can get themselves noticed on the internet doing such things gain extra points with their peers.

Now the girls have joined the violence. A gang of young girls shot a video of themselves setting

on a lone girl and giving her a savage beating, repeatedly kicking her in the back of the head, and for no other reason than to gain a fleeting notoriety on youtube.

We may be tempted to dismiss this as typical teenage folly. It’s much more than that. What we are seeing is the inevitable results of the takeover of the social and educational system by people whose agenda is the destruction of every vestige of Christianity in society. These are the people who have pumped rebellion and the denial of all absolute truth into millions of young people, questioning even the validity of speaking of right and wrong, and who have assured them that evolution is true—“We are not created in the image of God, but are just a step removed from brute beasts.” You sow that kind of moral corruption in young minds and you will certainly reap a harvest of unrestrained degeneracy. This is precisely what we’re witnessing today.

What is the answer?

The awful truth is that there is no ready made answer. Clearly, parents must get back into the lives of their children. They must make sure that they govern their education and not give them up without supervision to the revolutionary indoctrination that masquerades as education in many schools today. They need to get a

handle on what their children are watching. The steady diet of TV, porn and violence—to say nothing of the crazy video games that most kids play—is bound to derange young minds and desensitize them to the sufferings they inflict on others. Most of all, parents need to realize that they cannot live godless, self-centered, hedonistic lives and expect to have any moral authority with their children. If kids grow up seeing their parents cheating on their spouses and binging out on booze and drugs, or selling their souls for money, they will interpret it as license to do anything they want. Until the homes of America once again become places where God’s Word is honored and obeyed, and where families actually worship together in a bond of true Christian love, we will never break the downward spiral of our youth into the pit of corruption.

Youtube is just one symptom of the problem. The tragedy is that many Americans would prefer to endure the loss of their children than to embrace the remedy.

My hope is that this serves as a warning to our parents, as Dr. Cairns puts it, to “get back into the lives of their children,” for the sake of God’s covenant and the church of tomorrow. 

Sounding Out the Word

Rev. Carl Haak

The Coming Hour of the Resurrection

All of us, at one time or another, have experienced one of the most sobering acts for mortal men and women: entering into a cemetery. Perhaps

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it was when you stood by the graveside of your loved one and saw the coffin poised over the open grave, soon to be lowered and covered with the earth. Maybe it was when you went to visit the grave of your father, your mother, brother, husband, or dear friend, and you stood in tears as memories came alive. Or maybe you have walked in old cemeteries,

gravestones dating back hundreds of years, people swallowed up in forgetfulness—veterans, children who died in infancy, mothers in childbirth, young girls in an outbreak of cholera, young men in war. Each grave bears witness to the truth that the devil is a liar, for he said, “Ye shall not surely die.” Each grave proves God’s word, “Dust thou art, and to dust shalt

thou return." Each grave speaks to us, "You, too, must die."

But we know something about the grave that unbelief cannot know. The grave has no victory. Death is swallowed up in victory. We know, by faith, that to die in the Lord means that we shall live with Him in glory: "Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord" (Rev. 14:13). And we know that our bodies shall arise from the grave and be made like unto His most glorious body, according to the power whereby He is able to subdue all things unto Himself (Phil. 3:21).

On this resurrection Sabbath, I call your attention to the Lord's words in John 5:28 and 29: "Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation." Jesus speaks of the coming hour of resurrection. He speaks of the most momentous, awesome, marvelous moment in history when, at the end of the world, He returns to pass a final judgment. He will stand on the earth and He will speak. And all who are in the graves shall come forth—every grave, every human being since Adam died.

Billions of men and women, boys and girls, infants, those whose bodies long ago dissolved into the dust, those consumed by fire, drowned in the sea, or lost in the war—all will hear His voice and come forth to be judged in the body and to hear His verdict of life or damnation, Paradise or hell, the joy of Father's house or the lake of fire and brimstone.

You will be there! Whether you live to that day or whether you die before He returns, your body, though it be buried, and your soul as it is returned to God who gives it, whether death comes normally to you in old age and you pass away in sleep, or it comes through pain or cancer, drowning or car

crash, you will be there. You will hear His voice and you will come forth.

Do you belong to this Savior, by faith? Do you confess this mighty Son of God? Is your hope fixed on Him? Does He, even now, live in you, and are the fruits of that to be seen in your life in repentance, love, and obedience? Are you ready to die today, to be with Him? For you there is, this day, a word from Christ's own mouth so wonderful, so powerful, so glorious. The hour is coming in which He will raise up your body to life eternal.

When we look carefully at the passage, we learn that Jesus is talking about two divine works that He performs: spiritual resurrection and physical resurrection. In this chapter (John 5), Jesus answers the hatred and the unbelief of the Jews. He had healed a man on the Sabbath day and defended it on the basis of the fact that He is equal to God. "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." He means that, as God the Father is busy every day in the work of salvation, so, as God the Son, He is busy constantly in the same work. That this is the meaning, namely, that Jesus defended His healing on the Sabbath on the ground of His being equal to the Father, is plain from how the Jews reacted. The Jews, we read, sought the more to kill Him, because He had not only broken the Sabbath, but said that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God. Then, in verse 19, the Lord begins to show that He is indeed equal to God and that He does the works of God. He says that there is perfect unity and concord between the Father and Himself. Together they work as one. The work in which both the Father and the Son are engaged is especially the work of resurrection, verse 21: "For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them (makes them alive); even so the Son quickeneth whom he will."

Jesus is saying to the Jews,

"You marvel at My healing of a man on the Sabbath? There is a greater work than this in which I am engaged. I raise the dead. I make them alive. I am the One who does not simply heal a lame man. I am the One who makes dead sinners alive spiritually—whomsoever I will. I perform this, as does My Father."

Then the Lord goes on to explain this wonderful work of spiritual resurrection. He says that this takes place now, in the present time (v. 24). "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life." Verse 25, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live." Right now, and continuing on into the future, there is this resurrection—a passing from death to life, that is, a bringing of the heart to faith in Me, a lifting up of the soul from condemnation and an inserting of everlasting life into the heart. This, too, He says, is done by the voice of the Son of man.

Beloved in the Lord, and all who hear, Jesus is speaking of regeneration: to be born again; to be taken, by the grace of God, out of the spiritual death into which we were born in this life, and to be given the everlasting life of Jesus Christ—a work that Jesus says He does by His voice when He speaks powerfully through His Spirit, saying your very name, saying, "Dead sinner, Awake, and believe in Me."

The Lord says, "Don't marvel at this. Don't be taken aback and say, 'Incredible! Can't be! What do you make yourself out to be?' Don't marvel at this," says Jesus, "for the hour is coming in which all that are in the grave shall hear My voice and come forth."

What is the Lord saying? He is saying this. "Are you amazed over the fact that I heal a lame man

on the Sabbath? That bothers you, O Jews? You think that is incredible? Listen to this: I make alive whomsoever I will by My very voice, spiritually alive from the death of sin. And if that sounds astounding and you are taken aback by it, then hear this word. An hour is coming in which I will speak and all the graves will burst open and the bodies in them will come forth by My power."

Understand: Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, is the living One. Verse 26, "For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself." The risen Jesus is not *given* life. He *is* life. And as the living Son of God, His work is resurrection—to bring life out of death—right now, spiritually. Through the Word of the gospel and by the Spirit we are born again. By the mighty quickening Spirit we are given His life whereby we believe in Him.

Still more, He shall make alive our physical bodies on the day of the resurrection. Why, He says, should you marvel at the stupendous reality that every grave shall be opened—from Adam even unto the last hour? Do not marvel at this! I have the power right now to make alive. And I have made alive all who believe. They have passed from death to life.

The grave to us seems to have the victory. It seems to come out on the top. It cannot be beaten. Has anyone since Adam beaten the grave? Yes! We celebrate today. Our Lord Jesus Christ is risen from the dead. The mighty Son of God, the sin-bearer, He lives as the representative of all of God's children.

Jesus, God's Son in the flesh, is risen. He shall speak. As the risen Son of God, we are told in Revelation 1, He holds the keys of life and death, heaven and hell. By His voice, by His mighty power, as the living Son of God, He shall speak. The One who once spoke at the grave of Lazarus: "Lazarus, come forth"; the One who once said to a leper, "I will. Be thou clean"—that

One shall stand before the grave and speak and all shall come forth.

Do not be astonished. Do not stand in unbelief. The hour is coming when the risen Lord shall open the graves. All who have died shall come forth.

Whatever division or classification men and women may have makes no difference. Whether they are white or black, Asian or Indian; whether they lived in ancient, medieval, or modern times; whether they were good or evil, that is, believer or unbeliever, elect or reprobate—all shall be raised. You see, it makes no difference that unbelief says, "I don't want anything to do with Jesus. I don't believe that He existed. I deny that He is the only Savior." It makes no difference that unbelievers rail against Him. They must stand before Him. All must face Him, for He is mighty God, the Son of God. You see once again the truth that man is in the hands of God and not God in man's hands. All that have lived, all that have done good and all that have done evil—the resurrection shall be a resurrection of all. We shall all be raised.

With what kind of body, do you ask, shall we be raised? The Lord says, there shall be a resurrection of damnation for those who have done evil, for those who believed not in the Son of God. The resurrection of damnation means that one shall be damned also in his body, to all that sin deserves. He shall be sent, both body and soul, at that time, to the place where the worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched. Those were the words of Jesus. The Lord is saying that the wicked, the impenitent, and the unbelieving sinner shall be raised in a body in which he shall suffer the anguish and the torments, the fire, of hell.

Now I tremble. There is nothing so serious as the state of your soul before God. Repent and flee from this just and holy wrath. In the book of Revelation (14:10, 11), we read this of those who would

worship the beast and receive his mark, that is, of those who would deny this Lord Jesus Christ and would live for themselves: "The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up forever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night." This is no fable. This is God's Word. The wages of sin is death. Do you see the importance of bowing before the Word of God?

For the believer, the Lord says there shall be a resurrection unto life. That means that our resurrected bodies will be fitted for eternal life. They shall be raised with eternal life within them. The immortality of Jesus Christ shall be given to our bodies. A resurrection of life! No more sin, no more tears, no more sorrow, no more pain, no more toil, no more weariness. But life! All the joy and the love of God will pulsate also through our bodies, even as the blood now flows through them. Now we have a perishing life. We are weak, and in our very cells and blood, death flows right now. But then eternal life shall course through my veins. With my eyes I shall see Him. With my mind I will know Him even as He knows me.

Believest thou this? That is always the question with which we are left as we stand before the resurrection gospel. It was the question the Lord put to Martha after He told her that He was the resurrection and the life and that whosoever believed in Him, though he were dead, yet shall he live. And whosoever liveth and believeth in Him shall never die. Then the Lord said, "Martha, believest thou this? Martha, the faith I have given to you, that faith must declare itself. It cannot sit there mum and silent." Jesus declares that this is certain. Do not marvel at this.

The hour is coming when all who are in the grave shall hear My voice and they *shall* come forth! I am the living One, says Jesus Christ. Right now I live. There is no uncertainty in these words. There is not a hint, not a shred, of doubt. This is no dream. This is no fond wish. This is no religious folklore. This is not something that the disciples conjured up and is come down to us by tradition. The Christian faith does not take a place today among other, false religions. This does not say that as other cultures and other people have had their ideas of the afterlife, now the Christians have their ideas too. Oh, no. This is truth. These are the words of God's Son, risen from the dead. He that heareth My words, said Jesus, and believeth in them, *hath* life. This is to be embraced and believed because it is the testimony of God's dear Son John 12:47, 48: "... he that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth

him: the words that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day."

Now hear the word: the hour is coming. Every believer knows that. The hour of the resurrection of the body is coming. We know that by the wonder of spiritual rebirth today. We know that because through faith we experience that we have passed from death to life. Now we know also that the body, purchased by Jesus Christ through His suffering on the cross, shall be raised. The body is not a plaything of sin. The body is not for the entertainments of evil. The body that you have, believer, is for heaven. You will live now as one whose hope is fixed and whose faith is sure. I know that I shall not be left forgotten in the grave. I know that I shall see Him for myself. And although worms destroy this my body, yet in my flesh shall I see God.

On this resurrection day, the first day of the week in which He broke down death's door, we hear

His voice. Do you hear it? No, not some mystical, eerie voice in the wind. But you hear it, do you not, in the Scriptures, in the preaching of this Word, in the depth of your soul, where He alone can enter? A living word, which He speaks as the Lord who has conquered sin and the grave, the word that He says, "Because I live, ye shall live also."

And one day you will hear Him with your ears as you hear my voice. Those ears shall hear His voice. Think of it. I hear Him by faith right now. I hear Him at the moment of death when He says, "Come away with me, My beloved. The Father's house is prepared for you." But in the grave, when the body awakes, we will hear Him, and we will come out of the grave. And He will say our name: "Lazarus, come forth."

As for me, I will behold Thy face in righteousness. I shall be satisfied when I awake with Thy likeness. 

Traditions and the Whirlpool

According to Scripture's log, only believers boat. The rest, the wicked, are lost at sea. In fact, the wicked are not only *lost* at sea. They *are* the sea, or at least quite similar, spiritually speaking.

What sea are sinners like?

They are like a big sea, and a deep. For the entire human race is lost; a vast sea of unholy nations. And the sin-lostness is as deep as the great Mariana Trench; as deep as the deceitful heart (Jer. 17: 9).

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As well, this sea of nations is as the dead sea; for the sea of sinners, the whole human race, is dead in trespasses and sins (Eph. 2:1), incapable of sustaining life with God, and not in the least desirous of it.

These wicked are, the prophet says, "like the troubled sea" (Is. 57: 20, 21). Their waters and their cultures continually cast up mire and dirt, squids and abortionists, green peace activists and existentialism.

Adding to the roil is the righteous God Himself. The holy God is angry with the polluted, proudly swelling sea. He gives such seas

no peace. He stirs up their souls. He sends sharks and octopi their way, and especially His holy law, to whirl them round and round, in fear of His judgments.

These troubled seas trouble the boats—the flotilla of the Church of Jesus Christ.

Hail and ahoy! Noble fleet of the Captain of our salvation! Catching the wind of the Spirit! Graceful gallant galleons skimming the seven seas in His Majesty's service!

Hail and ahoy! Watch out! The seas are stirring. There's another wind-spirit whirling up

whitecaps. To whirl you too. To bend your keel. To board your ship. To ransack your ancient cargo. To hurl your men, women, and children to the bottom. To hoist an *other sail*. Or dismantle your boats.

Till all are sea.

Fellow frothing troubled troublers.

The Whirlpool

One way many churches go down into the sea of nations, to become like them, is by being sucked toward and into the seas' many whirlpools.

Whirlpools of the wicked are their swirling spots of non-traditional, truth-less religion. They are those places in these seas of nations where there is no place for truth, at least for truth that is truly traditional—something been around a long time, the once-for-all kind of truth, the from-one-unchangeable-God kind of truth, the Jesus Word, the infallible and ever living Word of the Scriptures.

These places of "no truth," at least of no *one* truth, are "whirlpoolish" in that they are the places where are seen and felt in a big way the vortex and the force of the vanity of this world, where men go round and round, philosophies spinning 'round, folks playing around, and where you Christian are OK, and yon Muslim is OK, and you secular humanists are OK...as if there were no God, no One Way, nothing to do that is right or wrong and meaningful but only to eat and to drink for tomorrow we die and then maybe come 'round again....

In a recent book one has argued that especially America, where there is now "no place for truth," is whirlpoolish. And, to be sure, the whirl swirls here in the universities, San Francisco, Grand Rapids, and everywhere. Certainly since about the middle of last century, when Trinity became good men at most, and caught the last train for the coast, has the music

of our father's truth and morality ...died.

But really now *all the world* is a whirlpool. It has come to this. Adam and Eve began writing the soap opera about the glories and excitement of life without God as their God and God's Word as man's guide. Babel was more babble. Athenians continued the swirling tale of this enchanted God-less and godless life, spending time "in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear some new thing" (Acts 17: 21). But now it is all over. Not as in finished. But as in ubiquitous. Whirlpool here. Whirlpool there. Perilous pools. In these our perilous times. Midst men going round and round, "ever learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth" (II Tim. 3:7) and not enduring sound doctrine, but, after their own lusts, heaping to themselves teachers, having itching ears (II Tim. 4: 3).

Wherever it is, the whirlpool is always off to Port. Way off. To get there, traditional boats must always come about, change tack, make a hard left. All of Christendom's boats that have, to one degree or another, abandoned the truth traditions of Christ and His Church, lean in this direction. They are all headed for the whirlpool. Only an act of grace can keep them away, working either Reformation of church, or the courage of God-fearing crews to man the lifeboats in order to escape the pull of the whirlpool while they and their families can.

The scary thing is that even sailors on traditional boats, boats built *solid*, boats of the Old Ironside-rugged-cross variety, of beautiful three-forms-of-unity-masted schooner make...they can go that way, toward the whirlpool. Not because their boat does, all of itself. Truth of itself never tends to the lie, leans left or right, leads one astray. But such traditional boats can indeed *be steered left*. Or maybe someone on board smuggles in some extra cargo, or throws off

some old stuff so that it tilts left. Or maybe something happens to the mates, the ordinary sailors. Something can happen, and sometimes, all too often, tragically, does—to *young sailors!* So that folks born on the boat, maybe, or married into it, and sailing along with it for awhile, then gradually, or by and bye—hop ship. Maybe they end up in the next (Christian) boat over toward the port; maybe they abandon the Christian ship altogether. They may just start swimming with wicked buddies. But always left. Toward, and then sucked into, the whirl of the whirlpool.

How can it be? How can it be that some boats steer left and that some, even many young people/adults go left? Why do they go from traditional Church to *emerging* church? Why do they go from holy church to the *laughing* church? Why do they exchange suits for blue jeans? Why do they go from the Holy God to the Sex God? To Buddhism? To cults? To humanism? Where keels and creeds are suspect, irrelevant...?

A couple of reasons, I've been thinking...

Reasons for the pull toward the whirlpool of humanity are not hard to find.

The Bible speaks, after all, of this thing that remains even in the most holy and truthful Christians. It is called "the flesh." And the flesh just loves to whirl. Eve was the first whirler. From the moment she joined hands with Adam thus began the human dance around and around the truth. That kind of a whirling dervish of a flesh remains in us.

Then there is, for folks like young Grace-life readers, this fact of youth: young people and young adults are prone to whirl *in everything—good or bad*. They like new things. Exciting things. To try things—from X-Sports to X-whatever. The whirls of whirlpools are about all this. They have this ap-

peal, especially to folks who may not have been around many blocks yet. In whirls are all kinds of things floating around, and popping up and down. Here a flash. There a flash. Something moving. Something turning. Something different. Looks like fun. Certainly not dull. I'll just go over and look at it. Then I'll just try it.

Advertisers know it, and so they sell you this stuff today, and next year tell you that you have to have this other stuff. And you actually listen, and I know, because you wear it to church. Not bad in itself, this youthful whirling. Keeps us all not only on our toes, but sometimes livens up a dead place, a severe routine, or a complacent church. But throw into that

whirling all this: car keys in the hands, and freedom on a Friday night, and an invitation to a party, and the whirls of youth and the whirling of the world are bound to collide. And watch out, when whirls collide!

Or, such is the vulnerability of the whirling and the growing time of life that all you need is to get angry with your parents, and never to forgive your seventh grade teacher. Then the minister (and all the truth he stands for) is next in line to face your anger and critique. And as soon as you are out of the house and as soon as the poor preacher-man has a bad preaching day and sounds as dull as oatmeal, there you are, off to the whirlpool

that is Mars Hill, where you've heard that that guy can really connect and I am allowed and encouraged to sip iced tea during the sermon. And then you meet some girl there. And there you are, off to the races. Lured by the whirl, the girl, and the...???

Other reasons for our being seduced by the whirl of truthlessness? Think of them. Then think of one reason you would rather sail than whirl. Talk to each other. What is it? What floats your boat? Why not abandon your traditional ship? Why sail on *as a Christian*? "Why sail on *as a Protestant Reformed Christian*?"

Till we meet again. On board. All hands. All Grace Life hands. On deck. 

In His Fear

Rev. Daniel Kleyn

Worship in His Fear: (7) *The Scripture Reading*

One of the most important elements of worship is the reading of the Scriptures. Because God is the object of worship, His Word must be central. The reading of that Word should therefore be given a prominent place, and the people of God must see to it that they participate in it as much as in any other part of worship.

It ought to be obvious that the reading of Scripture belongs in worship. If the Bible is not read, then the church fails to worship God. How can He be praised if His Word is ignored? How can a

church honor God if it does not hear and give attention to what He has to say?

The Scriptures themselves make this point clear. We read in Luke 4:16, for example, of Christ entering the synagogue in Nazareth on the Sabbath day and reading from the prophet Isaiah, after which He expounded the passage He had read. We are also told of the "reading of the law and the prophets" in the synagogue in Antioch (Acts 13:15). In addition to this, Paul, under the inspiration of the Spirit, gives specific command to the churches to read the Word of God (see Col. 4:16; I Thess. 5:27).

The faithful church of Christ, therefore, includes the Scripture reading in worship. The Bible is read in every service. A passage is read that is the basis of the

preaching, and that usually contains the text for the sermon. In this way the Word of God is kept central in worship. The faithful church understands that it would be impossible to worship, or to have preaching, without the reading of God's Word.

It should be noted that God's Word, and the reading of it, are at the heart of all our worship. This is true of the vatum, salutation, and blessing, as well as of the benediction, all of which amount to reading the Word of God. The same can be said of the congregational singing, and of the reading of the ten commandments of God's law. And insofar as the congregational prayer is biblical, as it ought to be, it is also true of that part of worship as well. All these elements of worship constitute or involve the reading of Scripture.

Rev. Kleyn is pastor of First Protestant Reformed Church in Holland, Michigan.

Previous article in this series: February 1, 2007, p. 206.

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It is important that God’s Word be read in worship because of what the Bible is.

The Bible is not simply a book like other books. It is not a man-made book. Nor is it simply a book that contains the words and ideas of some very pious and godly men. Nor is it a book, as some claim, that contains the words of God *and* the words of men. The Bible is the infallibly inspired Word of God.

The Scriptures are literally “God-breathed” —they came forth from God’s own mouth. We do not deny that God used men in the writing of His Word. But these men were directed by the Spirit to write only the words of God. They were holy men of God who were moved by the Holy Ghost (II Pet. 1:21). God, through the Spirit, put His Word in them. God then had them write, without error or addition, what He willed that His people hear from His mouth.

This is true of all Scripture. Every word of it is given by inspiration of God (II Tim. 3:16). God did not simply inspire parts of it. God did not simply inspire the ideas or concepts that are set forth in His Word. But He inspired every single word—yes, also the conjunctions and prepositions. It is not so, as some say, that God’s Word is *in* the Bible, and can be found by figuring out what God said and what men said. Rather, the Bible is word for word the Word of God.

The reading of Scripture is important in worship also because of what the central message of the Bible is. The Scriptures reveal God to us as the God of our salvation. The central message and theme, which is set forth in every book, chapter, and verse of the Bible (including even the passages in which we cannot see it so clearly, such as the genealogies or the Old Testament laws), is the gospel of salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ. By means of the reading of Scripture, therefore, the child of God is

directed to Christ, in whom alone he has and finds hope and joy, comfort and peace.

Yet another reason why the reading of God’s Word is important in worship is that such reading is profitable for the believer. II Timothy 3:16 points this out, stating that Scripture is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness. It is profitable for doctrine, for it sets forth the truth and thus shows us what we must know and believe. It is profitable for reproof, for it points out the errors in doctrine that we must refute and reject. It is profitable for correction, being the Word that points out our sins and calls us to turn from them. And it is profitable for instruction in righteousness, teaching us positively how to live lives that are pleasing to God.

God’s Word is profitable with regard to every area of our life on earth, and with regard to every aspect of life eternal. We therefore need it to be read in worship. It would not only be disobedient, but also foolish, if this were not done.



Because of what the Bible is, and because of the important place it occupies in the worship of the church and the life of the believer, it is both crucial and necessary to have a faithful translation of the Bible.

Out of the many translations that are available today, few are accurate. The main reason is that many are not word-for-word translations. Men have taken the liberty to translate ideas, instead of words. This has allowed for the corruption of the truth, and for the Bible to be rewritten to suit the thinking and ideas of men.

Although what was just said is not true of all translations, yet the one translation in which God’s Word is most faithfully preserved is the Authorized (or King James) Version. This is the best English translation available, especially be-

cause it is a faithful, word-for-word translation from the original.

It is this that the people of God need, so that when they read the Scriptures or hear them read, they can be confident they are reading or hearing the words of God. We do well, therefore, to continue using the King James Version, not giving in to the pressure to change over to a more modern translation.



The child of God must be actively worshipping God when the Scriptures are read.

Worship is activity. The worshiper must be actively involved in every part of it. Because of our sinful nature, there is a danger that we do not do this when the Bible is read. We simply hear words, or follow along without much thought. Though God Himself is speaking to us, we do not pay close attention. We fail to meditate upon the Word (Ps. 19:14). We fail to hide it in our hearts (Ps. 119:11).

To aid us in this element of worship, we ought to open our Bibles and follow along when Scripture is read. Parents should see to it that their children do the same.

Anyone who understands that the Bible is the inspired Word of God, which reveals Him as the God of our salvation in Jesus Christ, will want to hear every word God says. He will want this as much as he desires to hear the preaching. He understands that simply following the words mechanically and thoughtlessly is not enough. He therefore carefully considers every word that is read, and thus worships God “in spirit and in truth” during the reading of God’s Word. He makes it a spiritual activity. He reads and listens to God with his heart.

May we say from our hearts what Samuel said (I Sam. 3:9): “Speak LORD, for thy servant heareth!” Then God will be properly worshiped by us when His Scriptures are read. 

Laboring in the Consciousness of God's Sovereignty in Missions (1)

The Commission, Calling, and Sending

In every aspect of our life and calling, both as believers and as churches, we labor under the sovereignty of God, and we ought, moreover, to labor in the consciousness of it. Just as this consciousness in our daily life includes both God's counsel and God's moral will, so it is in our mission work, in our evangelism, and in the labor of the ministry. Christ, in His work as our Mediator and Savior, sets a certain pattern before us. He constantly speaks of His Father's will respecting His calling, of God's purpose in His work, and of His sovereign determination among those with whom He labored. He also speaks of His own obedience to the will of the Father. Standing in Christ, we would follow after Him as His people, also in this aspect of our spiritual life. This is a vital principle of our spiritual life, and it is that also of missions and our mission work.

The church and churches in common have the calling of God given us by Christ to labor in the gospel and missions. "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations..." (Matt. 28:19). This great commission is the will of God for the church of Christ. We are to "...preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15). This calling, given by Christ to the apostles and in them to the church, is the sovereign will of God. Preaching in the churches

and in missions is set before us as the fundamental calling of the church. It is in the consciousness of that calling that we seek as churches to carry out the calling to do mission work. This is why we engage in missions as churches and in local evangelism as congregations, preaching the Word, not only within the body but to others who stand outside. This commission to preach and do the work of missions precedes any Macedonian call that comes to the church engaged in missions on the mission field. It is integral to the life of the church.

Two things we should note about that commission or calling: first, that it is the calling to preach and teach and, second, that this calling is given to the church. It is in the church as the body of Christ that God has set this labor of the gospel, "And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers..." (I Cor. 12:28). Just as it is the church, through the offices, that preaches the gospel in the congregation, so it is the church on the mission field that does mission work according to the will of God.

The commission is not given to private individuals or parachurch organizations but to the church. Even the believer's personal wit-

ness to his neighbor is not an independent activity in isolation; he bears witness as a member of a specific body of Christ. Likewise missionaries labor only according to a calling of God under Christ, and that calling is through the church who calls and sends, in God's name, men to labor in missions.

To the church, therefore, belongs the calling and sending of missionaries. The Lord of the harvest sends forth laborers into His field to labor in the gathering of His elect and in the building of His church. Jesus trained His apostles for that work and sent them out. An aspect of the training for the ministry is training for the work of missions. Paul and Barnabas were called by the Spirit to do

mission work, through the church in Antioch (Acts 13:2). This included their being set apart and sent to that work by the laying on of hands (Acts 13:3), though both men were already ministers of the Word and Paul an apostle. This laying on of hands was a token not only of their calling and sending but of the qualifying work of the Spirit to equip them for their specific calling as missionaries.

Training is necessary for the work of the ministry and for mission work as an aspect of the ministry, but the qualifying work of the Holy Spirit, the gifts for the work

This commission to preach and do the work of missions precedes any Macedonian call that comes to the church engaged in missions on the mission field. It is integral to the life of the church.

Rev. Miersma is western home missionary of the Protestant Reformed Churches.

that only God can give, are indispensable. Assurance of this work of God's grace is embraced in our form for ordination of missionaries. The first question to the missionary to be ordained or installed asks, "whether thou feelest in thy heart that thou art lawfully called of God's church and therefore of God Himself, to this holy ministry?" The form also includes in the benediction pronounced upon the one called and sent these words: "God our heavenly Father, who hath called thee to His holy ministry, enlighten thee with His Holy Spirit, strengthen thee with His hand, and so govern thee in thy ministry that thou mayest decently and fruitfully walk therein, to the glory of His name and the propagation of the kingdom of His Son Jesus Christ. Amen."

Knowing that God sends and gives the gifts for the work in His sovereign wisdom is vital for the laborer on the mission field, for he knows that he is an earthen vessel in himself. The apostle Paul repeatedly speaks of this confidence. He says, "For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who commanded the light to shine out of the darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us" (II Cor. 4:5-7).

This is called the lawful call and applies to that aspect of the ministry that is mission work, just as it does to the regular labors of minister, elder, and deacon (Belgic Confession of Faith, Article 31). Without that call one does not preach or do mission work. In an era of a multiplying of self-appointed, so-called evangelists and preachers, it is well that we remember that this is a matter of the will of God, of His sovereignty over the church instituted of God in Christ,

our Head. It must also shape our thinking as we contemplate the mission work of the churches.

For the missionary this is especially important. Not only that by that calling and sending he may have proof of his calling but also that he walk in the consciousness of it as one called and sent. Our confidence is not in ourselves but in Him who, calling and sending, gives also the gifts for the work and puts His word in our mouth. Our Savior Himself, as our mediator, constantly speaks of the fact that He was sent of the Father, that He was anointed with the Spirit, that He must work the will of Him that sent Him. The apostles also, in their epistles, speak of the fact that they were called and sent by the will of God. It is mentioned, for example, in almost every opening verse of Paul's epistles.

This consciousness of one's calling applies to all the offices in the church, the ministers of the Word especially, and to missionaries laboring in this specific aspect of the ministry. It means that one holds, first of all, the commission and authority to stand as a herald in Christ's name, as an ambassador of the King eternal. The very word for preaching in the Greek means to function as such a herald of the king. As such a commission from the Lord, it embraces the contents of the message, which must be the King's Word. That calling and sending gives also to the laborer the authority to proclaim the Word on the mission field. He stands not only as a representative of Christ, but

also of the churches by whom Christ sent him. Thus it is *our* work as churches, not simply *his* work in which he is engaged.

The commission embraces also the promise that, as faith comes by the hearing of the Word preached

(Rom. 10:13-17), so the labor shall be fruitful, in God's sovereign grace, to accomplish its purpose. It contains the assurance that God's Word does not return to Him void. God's Word declares that "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; and he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16:16). This word of Christ that immediately follows the commission to preach to every creature is a word of promise. It is also a sobering word concerning the authority of the preaching and its twofold fruit. For mission's preaching both saves and hardens. In that work we have the assurance that, as Christ prayed to the Father for the disciples and their labors, so also He is interceding for us in all the labor of the gospel and for the sheep with whom we labor. "As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world.... Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word" (John 17:18, 20). Christ saves His church and will build it through missions.

The consciousness of God's calling and sending in His sovereign wisdom is also spiritually necessary for the laborer in God's field. The sower goes forth to sow the seed of the gospel, often with tears and in the midst of trials.

Many pass by heedless of the gospel, some hostilely oppose themselves to it, when we would desire to see positive fruit. While this is true in the labor of all the offices, and the ministry in particular, *the missionary* labors often very alone, far from

extended family, friends, and the life of the churches. A clear spiritual perception of his calling of the Lord and the promises accompanying it are necessary. He must labor not in his own strength but in the power of the Lord and His

The missionary must labor in the consciousness that it is the Lord who directs the work, that it is the Lord who gathers whom He will, that the goal of that labor is God's own glory.

Spirit. He must labor in the consciousness that it is the Lord who directs the work, that it is the Lord who gathers whom He will, that the goal of that labor is God's own glory.

This makes mission work, both for the missionary and the churches, a matter of walking by faith in the Word and prayer. For the calling church also this is an important matter. We consider the missionaries often times, yet perhaps forget what it is to be a calling church. It is a privilege in God's sovereign wisdom to serve the Lord as a calling church, but, along with the missionaries, it carries also a heavy responsibility. The same is true for the committees of the churches that oversee the work. The calling churches, and particularly the officebearers, have many responsibilities in their own congregations and yet are, together with the missionaries, con-

cerned with the spiritual welfare of the fields, the families on the field and the laborer. The elders in our calling churches have an added measure of spiritual responsibility. They are called, for example, to do family visitation at home and on the mission fields. They have a level of demands and cares that other elders do not have. The calling churches and their families likewise, especially those of the officebearers, make sacrifices for the work. They are to be included in our prayers for the work of missions.

To be sure, there is also a great joy in such labor on the part of the missionary, calling church, and the consistories who labor in the work, but it comes in the way of humbly walking with the Lord in His sovereign wisdom in the way He leads the work. It is a privilege to see the hand of the Lord as He gathers

His church on the mission field, to see the joy of those who have been brought into the riches that are in Christ and are growing under the Word. But there are also a multitude of trials and sorrows that accompany that work, of those who do not believe, of those who walk for a season in the gospel and depart, and of disappointments when much labor is bestowed and there is limited fruit. This too is under the sovereign hand of God and a matter of saying, "Thy will be done."

It is important therefore that we labor also as before God's face, not seeking the praise of men but seeking to serve the sovereign God who alone calls and sends laborers into His field. It is vital that we walk in the consciousness of His sovereignty in missions, for His ways are higher than our ways. It is ultimately His work of grace that we serve. 

When Thou Sittest in Thine House

Abraham Kuyper

Account of Income and Outgo

Means of Management

However spiritual the note that from God's heaven is sounded in the everlasting gospel, it never went so high but that in Holy Scripture the very prosaic "account of income and outgo" also could come to its own (Phil. 4:15, Dutch Version).

Altogether different from what you find with visionary people.

With them it is said that writing books of *poetry* and *keeping ac-*

count of one's finance cannot go together.

To keep book, to write down everything, to plan in advance and in the end examine results, is deemed proper for ordinary souls that do not rise above the prose of life. But it will not do for freer spirits, for men of larger talent, for those who drink the cup of poetry, and while they do not eat the bread of the mighty, yet eat the bread of ideals.

To count and keep book is fit for the grocer. It is the flat art of the miser. But he who has wings and learned their use, and who on mountaintops has breathed other air than that of the dull marshes, feels heartily averse to dealing with

stiff figures and keeping troublesome accounts.

No, he who lives in higher spheres despises ledgers and takes no part in bookkeeping. Or if he does keep book, he outwits the evil spirit of figures by making entries as he likes and somehow making totals agree. But real bookkeeping, *precise* according to right and truth, accurate and painstaking bookkeeping, such an higher spirit does not.

He leaves this to others. He leaves this to his inferiors. He spends, so long as he has money in the bank or in the house. When it is gone, he begs or borrows, and pays back or not, as suits his convenience. Or he does not borrow,

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but buys on credit, and lives on the money of his creditors, and when they dare to dun him for what is coming to them, he calls them cruel.

In this way, from the old, lived the men of art, students at the academy, thinkers and philosophers, men of the sword and of the pen.

Not infrequently women in these circles took part in this guilty slovenliness of life.

And they who also at times, and *this is the worst*, took part in this, were mystically-minded Christians who deemed earthly cares too unspiritual to concern their soul about.

History even relates of *spiritual leaders* who fell into this same error.



This sin also is rebuked by the Word of God, and punished afterward by much financial *loss*, if not by financial *ruin*, of which the slovenly handling of money is oftentimes an unavoidable result.

God's Word teaches us to attach value to money, not because gold glitters with such yellow brightness, not because money buys almost everything, but because it is a talent, entrusted to us of God, primordially *His* property, put into our hands but *for a time*, obliging us, not to use it in *our service*, but in *His* service, once to give to Him an account thereof.

This is the first foundation on which a Christian's financial structure must rest.

In addition to this is the second, that God's Word demands accurate, strict *honesty*, and condemns all dishonesty as despicable sin. He to whom it belongs is *master of the money*, and Holy Scripture calls *theft* every act of yours by which you prevent money from going back to its master. Prompt payment on the day, punctual return of what is borrowed, never postponement of payment of wages or of what has been guaranteed. On these three depends the right of

your *expenditure*. And in addition to this, equally sternly demanded with respect to your account of income, the other commandment, that under no circumstances at any time anything may flow into your bank or purse that has been gained by lottery, by unrighteous dealings, or by dishonest practices.

As a third foundation comes this, that according to the demand of God's Word you shall manage and direct your expenses, not as you desire, but according to God's will. Not for sinful use, but for what is expedient. Divided with respect to the present and to days that are to be, even when wife and child are here and you are gone. Also, that with your account of income and outgo, as with everything else, you shall "love God *first* and then yourself and your neighbor"; and thus *not* say: *first* for all earthly needs, and, if anything is left, a bagatelle for the cause of God. No, *first* the gift for the cause of your Lord, and after that for your own needs. Think of the poor widow, she gave all *her living*, and thereby won the approval of the Lord.

Finally, to these three foundations there is added still this fourth, that Scripture demands *order and rule* in all things, and for this reason claims from every one who has money at his disposal that the account of income and outgo be at all times so accurately in order that, should you die this very day, everything would be found accurately recorded and in perfect correspondence.

The fathers in our Reformed churches have always insisted in practical matters that is it not spiritual, but *overspiritual* and therefore *unspiritual*, when in his accounts

of income and outgo one does slovenly work.

It should not be the *soul* for God and the *purse* for self.

Soul and purse must both be God's.

So punctiliousness, preciseness, tenderness of conscience demands it.



Scripture designs least of all to be hard. She defies you to find tenderer compassion for shortage in income than she offers.

To see expenses increase by sickness or accident or dearness of food, and then to learn that income does not suffice, yea, in times when there is no work to be had, is for those who must themselves live and carry the care for others a bitterness of soul; and which cannot be borne when you feel your faith give way, your faith in Him who has numbered the hairs of your head, and in the love which He awakens in the brother-heart.

With respect to such trying conditions you never find in God's Word one hard expression. On the contrary, words of tenderest compassion.

What Scripture condemns is every life lived at random; every

Scripture claims from every one who has money at his disposal that the account of income and outgo be at all times so accurately in order that, should you die this very day, everything would be found accurately recorded and in perfect correspondence.

expenditure in advance of money that has not yet materialized; prodigality in expectation of inheritances still to come; use of capital laid up against the rainy day; the so-called stopping up of one hole with another; r e c k l e s s l y

spending without forethought or care; wasting money as long as it lasts, that, when it is gone, one may live on the good graces of another.

And what is no less condemned, and in which so many err, is spending *more* than one receives, not because one cannot live on it,

but because he says he cannot live on it according to his *imagined rank* or his imaginary needs.

House, clothes, and food are indispensable, and when the income does not suffice for this, seeking help incurs neither loss nor shame. Then indeed you may call in help. Then according to God's will you *must* be helped.

But to what is above and beyond this, when God does not give it to you, does not put it at your disposal, does not send it to your house, you are not entitled.

You cannot fit your income to your outgo, you must direct your outgo according to your income, and he who did this punctiliously and strictly from his youth up has never come to want and has never felt himself poor.

One must cut one's coat according to one's cloth.



A merchant must practice regular bookkeeping, because human law demands it. But every Christian also must keep book, because the law of his God lays it upon him, and that presently the name of his God be not slandered on account of his dilatoriness.

So must the man do as head of

his family, and the wife in her housekeeping, and the servant in the kitchen, and every child of his small earnings.

Always keeping count, and never allowing carelessness.

You have to put this into practice yourself, and instill it into your children, so that with the coming generation the flabbiness of life go no further, and still more pitiful victims be sacrificed.

For do not forget that that very light-hearted dealing with account of income and outgo has already brought many a family first trouble and sorrow, and then ruin in the end.



And what you should not forget either is that, in the last instance, all account and responsibility are one.

Therefore our Confession and our Catechism have so much to say about the account we have with our God.

Spiritual flabbiness has made a mockery of the idea that with God you should mention payment, since His love is far too exalted and His compassion far too infinite than to apply the flat idea of *payment* to your relation to the Holy One. But does not Scripture itself

speak of a *ransom*?

And these two hang together. He who makes light of this accounting and paying among men, as a rule does not take his account with God seriously. He wants indeed to be pious and mystical and holy, but God's *righteousness* has no hold on him. And what it is to be *justified* by faith he does not understand. But by this very emphasis which our fathers put upon that *justification*, they have strengthened the *right*, have deepened the *sense of right*, among men, and have advanced *righteousness*.

And, therefore, do not deem that account of income and outgo a light matter. For whether you come to tenderness and compunction of conscience; to standing just before your God; to the payment for you of the ransom that saves you eternally; or to the account of your income and outgo among men—all is at heart governed by only one all-decisive question, namely: Whether you are your own lord and master, or whether *you stand under God*, and as such have to reverence *His* ordinances, and owe *Him* an account.

He who is truly pious keeps account of his money in the first place *for God.* 

Report of Classis West

March 7-8, 2007

On Wednesday, March 7, Classis West convened at the Doon PRC in Doon, Iowa.

On the day previous, an officebearers' conference was held. The conference dealt with the truth of the Holy Spirit under the theme "Pentecost and Pentecostalism." Four speeches covered the history and work of Christ in the outpouring of the Spirit on Pentecost, an overview of Pentecostalism, a defense of the truth that the special gifts of the Holy Spirit (miracles, tongue speaking, and prophecy)

were only temporary gifts during the apostolic age, and a treatment of the work of the Spirit of Christ in the hearts and lives of God's people in this present life.

Classis convened at 8:30 A.M. on Wednesday. Rev. D. Lee began the meeting with a meditation on Proverbs 27:17 and a prayer for God's blessing and the guidance of the Spirit of Christ in its labors. When Classis was declared constituted, Rev. J. Mahtani chaired the meeting, while Rev. Lee served as clerk.

Classis treated the regular reports of the stated clerk, of the Reading Sermon Library Commit-

tee, of the Church Visitors, and of the Classical Committee. The Reading Sermon Library Committee proposed that the committee be terminated, but Classis did not approve that recommendation. As a result, the committee will continue to oversee the collection of reading sermons from our ministers and to oversee their publication and availability on the website of Rev. G. VanBaren (www.prca.org).

Classis treated and rejected two appeals against actions and decisions of the appellants' consistory. Classis treated three different requests from three of the churches.

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First, Classis received a request from the Consistory of Edgerton PRC for the denomination to assist in the remaining international moving and immigration expenses of Rev. D. Lee and his family from Singapore. Classis approved this and forwarded the request to Synod for approval. Secondly, Classis received a request from Hull PRC for classical appointments for their potential daughter congregation. There are about 35 families currently worshipping together in the auditorium of the Boyden-Hull School in Hull, IA. Classis granted this request and adopted a classical appointment schedule through September 2007. Finally, Classis treated in closed session a request from the Council of Peace PRC for the dismissal of her pastor, Rev. S. Houck, according to Article 11 of the Church Order. After careful deliberation, Classis approved this request, and this approval received the concurrence of the delegates *ad examina* of Classis East. The Council of Peace PRC has since announced in the churches that she has dismissed Rev. Houck from service in the congregation and has declared him eligible for a call in our churches. In view of this vacancy in Peace, Classis adopted a classical appointment schedule for her through September 2007.

Classis treated three overtures from Rev. Douglas Kuiper, pastor

of the Randolph PRC. The first two overtures deal with the procedure of discipline with non-confessing but baptized members in our churches. The third overture proposes that a procedure be followed by our consistories when dealing with those who, under discipline, especially silent censure and the first announcement, request their dismissal papers. Classis approved the first two overtures and will forward them to Synod for approval. However, Classis did not approve the third overture.

Classis conducted its annual elections. First, synodical delegates were chosen as follows: Ministers—Revs. A. Brummel, S. Key, D. Kuiper, R. Miersma, R. Smit. Elders—Messrs. George DeJong (South Holland), Jim Regnerus (Doon), Fred Tolsma (Edmonton), Gysbert VanBaren (South Holland), Ron VanVoorthuyzen (Redlands). *Secundi* delegates are: Ministers—Revs. D. Lee, J. Mahtani, J. Marcus, D. Overway, M. VanderWal; Elders—Messrs. Keith Bruinsma (Peace), Pete Brummel (Hull), Leon Griess (Loveland), Victor Solanyk (Loveland), and Leon Uittenbogaard (Hull). Second, Classis appointed Rev. S. Key to serve another three-year term on the classical committee. Third, Rev. D. Kuiper (*primus*) and Rev. S. Key (*secundus*) were elected to three-year terms as delegates *ad examina* for Classis West. Finally, Classis elected Revs. A. Brummel, S. Key,

R. Miersma, and R. Smit as church visitors for 2007-2008, with Revs. D. Kuiper and R. Hanko as alternates.

Regarding matters of finance, Classis approved 2008 subsidy requests from Bethel (\$32,000), First-Edmonton (\$22,588 CAD; \$19,200 USD), and Immanuel-Lacombe (\$11,410 CAD; \$9,699 USD), and these requests were forwarded to Synod for approval. The total of the expenses for the two-day Classis was \$9,990.57.

Having completed all of its work, Classis adjourned on Thursday at about 2:00 P.M.

Classis West plans to convene in its next regular session on September 5, 2007, in the Lynden PRC in Lynden, WA, the Lord willing. The congregation of Hope in Redlands, CA, is planning to host the March 2008 regular meeting.

Finally, brethren, pray for our churches in Classis West, particularly Rev. S. Houck and the Peace congregation. It is our sincere prayer for them that “the God of all grace who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered awhile, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you. To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.... Peace be with you all that are in Christ Jesus. Amen” (I Pet. 5:10-11, 14).

Rev. Richard J. Smit,
Stated Clerk 

News From Our Churches

Mr. Benjamin Wigger

Denomination Activities

In early March, the Doon, Iowa PRC hosted a meeting of Classis West. The day before that meeting, March 6, the delegates to

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

Classis, as well as any past and present officebearers, as well as all interested people, were invited to attend an Officebearers' Conference. This particular conference took an in-depth look at the whole area of Pentecost and Pentecostalism. Rev. Martin VanderWal, pastor of Hope PRC in Redlands, CA, delivered the keynote address, speaking on the theme, “The Out-

pouring of the Spirit: Pentecost and Its Effect on the Church.” That speech, given at 9:00 A.M. was followed at 10:30 A.M. with Rev. Dennis Lee, pastor of First PRC, Edgerton, MN, speaking on the subject of “Pentecostalism: An Overview.” After lunch Rev. Steven Key, pastor of Hull PRC, Hull, IA, took the podium to speak on “Signs of an Apostle: The Tem-

porary Gifts of the Holy Spirit," and the conference came to a close after Rev. John Marcus, pastor of First PRC, Edmonton, AB, spoke on "Filled With the Spirit: The Evidence of the Spirit's Work in the Christian." What an opportunity to hear some of the ministers of our denomination, to fellowship with fellow saints, and to hear God's Word on the important topic of the Holy Spirit.

Mission Activities

Due to pressure from homosexuals in Limerick, the Limerick Youth Service withdrew permission for the Covenant PRC of Ballymena, NI, and their pastor, Rev. Angus Stewart, to use their hall for a lecture on March 23 on the subject of "Homosexuality: What Does the Bible Teach?" Covenant was looking for another venue in Limerick to hold the lecture.

Covenant also reports that their web site (<http://cprf.co.uk/languages.htm>) now has almost 400 pieces in 59 different languages. Additions include ecumenical creeds in Albanian, Arabic, Icelandic, Irish, Macedonian, Scottish, Gaelic, and Tamil; the Heidelberg Catechism in Indonesian and Korean; the Belgic Confession in Tagalog; a Ukrainian translation of H.C. Hoeksema's pamphlet *The Marks of the True Church*, and a much lengthened Italian translation of Prof. H. Hanko's *The Covenant with Believers and their Children*.

The PR Fellowship of Fayetteville, NC will be hosting a series of lectures-discussions this spring on the subject of "Answering Postmodernism." Various of our pastors, including our eastern home missionary, Rev. Wilbur Bruinsma, will be conducting these seminars. The first lecture of this series was held at the Wingate Inn Conference Room, March 9, with Rev. Bruinsma. His topic for that first lecture was, "Who Determines Right and

Wrong?" In preparation for that lecture, Fayetteville advertised by way of flyers, radio, and newspaper. Let us pray for the witness of the gospel through these seminars and also through the saints at Fayetteville.

On March 16th a delegation from the Domestic Mission Committee, consisting of Rev. James Slopsema and Elder Dave Moelker, visited with the PR Fellowship in Pittsburgh, PA. Pittsburgh Steering Committee met with the delegates on Saturday afternoon, and Rev. Slopsema preached for the Fellowship on Sunday evening.

Minister Activities

Rev. Rodney Kleyn, pastor of the Trinity PRC in Hudsonville, MI, received the call to serve as our denomination's next missionary to the Berean PRC of the Philippines.

Congregation Activities

Rev. Audred Spriensma was installed as the ninth pastor of the Kalamazoo, MI PRC on Sunday morning, March 11. Prof. Herman Hanko led the service, preaching from Colossians 4:17, under the theme, "An Admonition to Take Heed to the Ministry." The Kalamazoo congregation enjoyed a time of fellowship together over lunch and an opportunity to introduce themselves to the Spriensmas after the service.

The Kalamazoo congregation also took the occasion of Rev. Spriensma's installation to thank Prof. H. Hanko for his faithful labors to them this past year. Kalamazoo was indeed blessed with his Heidelberg Catechism preaching and his leadership in their Adult Bible Society. Their prayer was that God continue to bless and sustain Prof. and Mrs. Hanko. They will be missed very much in Kalamazoo.

The Hull, IA PRC is laboring toward the starting of a daughter congregation. Recent information indicates that there are over 35

families from Hull that have expressed a willingness to join. In anticipation of that organization, the members of Hull recently voted to help their daughter congregation financially by giving them a gift of \$150,000 at organization and \$50,000/year for the following 6 years. To help pay for all of this, Hull also increased their budget, effective immediately, about \$6 a week.

The Consistory of the Lynden, WA PRC proposed to their congregation that they begin each service with congregational silent prayer, to be done on a two-month trial basis, beginning Sunday, March 4. Their grounds for this decision were briefly, 1) The spiritual principle of sanctifying oneself before coming into the Lord's presence (1 Sam 7:3); 2) To teach the entire congregation, including children, to pray before worship; 3) For quiet, uninterrupted prayer; 4) To prepare to worship with proper reverence.

School Activities

Church bulletins have included a long list of teacher-vacancies this spring. It seems as if all our Christian schools are in need of a teacher or two.

But did you notice a new school on that list? The Genesis PR School Society in Lacombe, Alberta, Canada is planning, the Lord willing, to start a new PR school in September of this year. They are currently seeking applicants to fill the positions of Grades 1-3, and Grades 4-6. No small task for a group of men who draw their support from a congregation of around 100 members. Remember that cause in your prayers too.

The students of the Northwest, Iowa PR Christian School presented their All-School program entitled "The I AM's of Christ" on March 16. 

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Announcements

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

On the passing into glory of
MR. ARNOLD BLEYENBERG,
the consistory and congregation of First
PRC of Edgerton MN extends Christian
sympathy to his wife, Charlotte, his father,
Art, his brothers and sisters, and his chil-
dren and grandchildren.

We pray that they may receive com-
fort in the words from Psalm 16:8, 9: "I
have set the LORD always before me: be-
cause he is at my right hand, I shall not be
moved. Therefore my heart is glad, and
my glory rejoiceth: my flesh also shall rest
in hope."

Rev. Dennis Lee, President
James VerHey, Clerk

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The council and congregation of Hull
PRC wishes to express their sincere sym-
pathy to Alvin and Betty Bleyenbergh and
Art and Mary Bleyenbergh following the
death of their sister,

ETHEL STEENSTRA.

May they find their comfort in God's
Word "Precious in the sight of the LORD is
the death of his saints" (Psalm 116:15).

Rev. Steven Key, Pres.
Ike Uittenbogaard, Asst. Clerk

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The council and congregation of the
Hull PRC wishes to extend their sincere
sympathy to Mrs. Tom DeJong and Mrs.
Frank Vogel and their families following the
death of their sister,

TINA LAUSINK.

May they be comforted with the church
of all ages by the words of Psalm 62:7:
"In God is my salvation and my glory: the
rock of my strength, and my refuge, is in
God."

Rev. Steven Key, Pres.
Ike Uittenbogaard, Asst. Clerk

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On April 7, 2007, our parents,
JOHN and KAY WIERENGA,
celebrated their 35th wedding anniversary.

We, their children and grandchildren,
are thankful that the Lord has granted them
these many years together. It is our prayer
that the Lord will continue to uphold them
and bless them in the years to come.
"Blessed be the LORD God of Israel from ev-
erlasting to everlasting: and let all the people
say, Amen. Praise ye the LORD" (Psalm
106:48).

- * Brian and Regina Wierenga
Christina, Kaitlin, Ian, Darin, Kari, Matthew
- * Rodney and Kristi Wierenga
Lanae, Mackenzie, Jayden
- * Paul and Melonie Linker
Audrey, Nathan, Samuel
- * Gaylene Wierenga
and fiancé Martin VandePol
- * Nathan and Charlene Gallagher
Austin
- * Michelle Wierenga
and fiancé David DeBoer
- * Maria Wierenga
- * Philip Wierenga
- * Jonathan Wierenga
- * Kayla Wierenga

Lacombe, Alberta Canada

NOTICE

The Genesis Protestant Reformed
School Society of Lacombe, Alberta,
Canada, is planning, the Lord willing, to
start a PR school beginning in September
2007. We are currently seeking applicants
to fill the positions of Grades 1-3 and
Grades 4 - 6. Interested applicants should
contact Board President, Mr. Hilgard
Goosen, at 403-598-6477, or e-mail
hilgoosen@shaw.ca for more information.
Deadline for application is May 31.

NOTICE!!!

Classis East will meet in regular ses-
sion on Wednesday, May 9, 2007 at the
Grace Protestant Reformed Church.

Jon J. Huiskens, Stated Clerk

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The council and congregation of
Grandville PRC express Christian sympa-
thy to fellow elder Bill Joostens, his wife,
and family in the death of Bill's father,

GEORGE JOOSTENS.

May they find comfort in the words of
Psalm 23:4: "Yea, though I walk through
the valley of the shadow of death, I will
fear no evil: for thou art with me, thy rod
and thy staff they comfort me."

Rev. Kenneth Koole, President
Jack Brands, Clerk

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The consistory and congregation of
the PRC in South Holland express their
Christian sympathy to Mrs. Bertha
DeYoung, Mr. and Mrs. Joe Postma, Phil
Postma, and the VanBaren family in the
death of their husband, father, grandfather,
and brother-in-law,

MR. ANTHONY DE YOUNG.

"Let not your heart be troubled: ye
believe in God, believe also in me" (John
14:1).

Rev. Allen Brummel, President
Gysbert VanBaren, Clerk

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

We are thankful to God for His faith-
fulness in giving our dear parents and
grandparents,

HENRY and LOIS BRANDS,

60 years of marriage on April 17. We pray
that God may continue to bless and care
for them in the years to come.

"For his merciful kindness is great to-
ward us: and the truth of the LORD endureth
forever. Praise ye the LORD (Psalm 117:2).

- * Dave and Karen Saliers
- * Rog Brands
- * Jack and Brenda Brands
8 grandchildren
3 great grandchildren

Grandville, Michigan