

The Standard Bearer

A Reformed Semi-Monthly Magazine • February 15, 2013

CONTENTS

<i>Meditation</i>	The Confidence of the Lord's Children REV. JAMES SLOPSEMA	218
<i>Editorial</i>	Herman Witsius, Baptism, and Covenant Seed (2) REV. KENNETH KOOLE	220
<i>Believing and Confessing</i>	Resurrection Benefits REV. RODNEY KLEYN	224
<i>Things Which Must Shortly Come to Pass</i>	Postmillennialism (22) PROF. DAVID ENGELSMA	226
<i>Church and State</i>	Our Psalter: 100 Years of Praise (3) REV. DAVID OVERWAY	229
<i>A Word Fitly Spoken</i>	New REV. BILL LANGERAK	233
<i>All Around Us</i>	Another Dreamer REV. NATHAN LANGERAK	234
<i>Bring the Books...</i>	Book Review REV. DOUG KUIPER	237
<i>Reports</i>	Classis East Report MR. JON HUISKEN	238
<i>News From Our Churches</i>	Activities MR. BENJAMIN WIGGER	238

The Confidence of the Lord's Children

In the fear of the Lord is strong confidence: and his children shall have a place of refuge.

Proverbs 14:26

Our life is a journey through the valley of the shadow of death. Many evils befall us as we make our way through this dark and treacherous valley. We must deal with loss of loved ones, health issues, financial struggles, wayward family members, and the list goes on and on. This makes the valley of the shadow of death also a valley of tears.

In the proverb that we consider for this meditation we are instructed that the Lord's children have strong confidence as they face the many evils of this life. Their confidence is rooted in the most wonderful truth that they shall always have a place of refuge. However, they enjoy this confidence only as they live in the fear of the Lord their God.

This is God's wisdom for His beloved children!

We do well to understand and heed it!

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



The Lord and His children!

The name "LORD" is "Jehovah," which means "I AM." It is a name that emphasizes God's power and sovereignty. No one else can say "I AM," only "I was created." Jehovah, the great I AM, is the eternal, sovereign God who creates, upholds, and rules all things.

The name "Jehovah" is also connected to the covenant God has with His elect people. It is His covenant name. God's covenant is the bond of friendship that He establishes with His people in Jesus Christ. In that covenant, God brings salvation to His people, dwells with them, provides for all their needs, and protects them from all their enemies. The name "Jehovah" emphasizes God's faithfulness to His covenant.

This passage also speaks of the children of Jehovah. Jehovah God makes His elect people His children. They are not His children by natural birth. By nature they are the children of the devil on account of the fall. However, God makes them His children in Jesus Christ and does so in two ways. First, He adopts them as His children on the basis of Christ's perfect payment for sin. Then He transforms them into His image by a

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

Postmaster: Send address changes to the *Standard Bearer*, 1894 Georgetown Center Dr., Jenison, MI 49428-7137.

Reprint Policy

Permission is hereby granted for the reprinting of articles in our magazine by other publications, provided a) that such reprinted articles are reproduced in full; b) that proper acknowledgment is made; c) that a copy of the periodical in which such reprint appears is sent to our editorial office.

Editorial Policy

Every editor is solely responsible for the contents of his own articles. Contributions of general interest from our readers and questions for the Reader Asks department are welcome. Contributions will be limited to approximately 300 words and must be signed. All communications relative to the contents should be sent to the editorial office.

Editorial Office

Prof. Russell J. Dykstra
4949 Ivanrest Ave. SW
Wyoming, MI 49418
dykstra@prca.org

Business Office

Standard Bearer
Mr. Timothy Pipe
1894 Georgetown Center Dr.
Jenison, MI 49428-7137
PH: 616-457-5970
tim@rfpa.org

Church News Editor

Mr. Ben Wigger
6597 40th Ave
Hudsonville, MI 49426
benjwig@juno.com

United Kingdom Office

c/o Mrs. Alison Graham
27 Woodside Road
Ballymena, BT42 4HX
Northern Ireland
alisongraham2006@
hotmail.co.uk

Rep. of Ireland Office

c/o Rev. Martyn McGeown
Apartment 10, Block D
Ballycummin Village
Limerick, Ireland

Subscription Price

\$21.00 per year in the US, \$30.00 elsewhere
New eSubscription: \$21
eSubscription for current hardcopy subscribers:
\$10.50.

Advertising Policy

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. Announcements should be sent, with the \$10.00 fee, to: SB Announcements, 1894 Georgetown Center Dr., Jenison, MI 49428-7137 (e-mail: mail@rfpa.org). Deadline for announcements is one month prior to publication date.

Website for RFP: www.rfpa.org
Website for PRC: www.prca.org

new birth in the power of Jesus' resurrection. This is necessary in order to bring them into His covenant and to live with them as friends.

One of the outstanding characteristics of the children of Jehovah is that they fear Him.

We must understand the nature of this fear.

Obviously we are not talking about the fear of unbelief. This is the fear that the citizens of Jericho had when the army of Israel approached—as it was reported to the spies by Rahab (Josh. 2:9, 10). Theirs was the fear of Jehovah's wrath and judgment.

The fear of the children of Jehovah is the fear of faith. It is a fear of loving adoration and of reverence for the Lord as He reveals Himself in the works of His hand. The works of God are marvelous. Out of nothing He created this grand universe in which we live, and by His power He rules all things. How awesome! But especially awesome are the works of salvation in Jesus Christ. In Christ, Jehovah God saves a people who are hopelessly lost in sin. He covers their sin by the blood of His own Son. He transforms them into His own dear children and lives with them in eternal bliss. In this work of salvation all the wonderful virtues of God are brilliantly on display. The fear of faith is a loving adoration and holy reverence of the Lord for these works.

This fear also generates grateful service of the Lord.

This fear is the distinguishing mark of the children of Jehovah. This is because the children of Jehovah have tasted these works of salvation. Those who know that work of salvation in their lives will necessarily fear him.



Strong confidence!

Many evils await the children of the Lord as they make their pilgrimage through life.

There are the difficulties that face mankind generally as he lives on the earth dominated by the curse. These include such things as financial struggles, sickness and debilitating illness, marriage and family problems, loss of loved ones....

In addition, there are the attempts of the powers of darkness to destroy their faith and to rob them of their

inheritance. The devil comes with the pleasures of sin to lure them away from God. The devil also comes in times of adversity to discourage them so that they will rebel against God. In turn, the more they reveal themselves to be the children of the Most High, the more the world hates and opposes them. And it appears as though the time for the world to tolerate the Lord's children is running out.

As they face these things, the children of Jehovah have strong confidence.

Confidence has the idea of secure and firm hope for the future. Confidence is the certainty that all is well, regardless how bad the present is or the future looks. The present evils will not overcome us. And there are good things coming in the future.

This idea is strengthened by the word "strong." This proverb is not speaking of some uncertain, hesitant hope. It speaks of a sure and confident hope for future good.

And this confidence is what the children of Jehovah have.

Take some of the worst-case scenarios. Your loved one is dying, or has died, leaving you alone. Or you are suffering a lingering, debilitating illness. Or you are out of work and will lose your house. And it could be worse. Think of Job and the misery he suffered. If you are a child of Jehovah, you can have good confidence. You can be confident that these things will not destroy you. Good things are just ahead.

The children of Jehovah have this strong confidence because they shall always have a place of refuge.

When trouble threatens, confidence is possible only when there is a place of refuge. A place of refuge is a safe place. In Bible times, refuge from the enemy was a hiding place, a hilltop, or even a fortress from which to defend oneself. A place of refuge can also be a person who will stand at your side to keep you safe. Only when we have such a place of refuge can we have confidence in the face of danger or trouble.

The children of Jehovah shall always have such a place of refuge. And that place of refuge is Jehovah Himself. This is repeatedly emphasized in the Psalms. "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble" (Ps. 46:1). "I cried unto thee, O LORD: I said, Thou art my refuge and my portion in the land of the living" (Ps.

142:5). "I will say of the LORD, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust" (Ps. 91:2).

Jehovah is our refuge in Jesus Christ.

As our covenant God, Jehovah sent His Son into our flesh to bear the punishment of sin and to secure the eternal salvation of His elect church. Jehovah also exalted Jesus to His own right hand of power, so that Jesus might bestow upon His children the blessings of salvation and keep them safe from all harm. Our exalted Lord keeps them safe by limiting what the powers of darkness can do to assail them, by strengthening them to overcome temptation and walk in the way of the covenant, by leading them to the cross to find forgiveness when they falter, by causing all things to work for their good, and finally by destroying all the powers of darkness.

And because the Lord's children have such a place of refuge in their covenant God, they have good confidence for the future.



This strong confidence is enjoyed only as one lives in the fear of the Lord.

Those who fear the Lord stand in awe of Him for His great works of salvation. They are in awe of His work in Jesus Christ to cover their sins in order to reconcile them to Himself. They are in awe of His great works to preserve them and keep them safe throughout history. They believe and stand in awe of His promises to provide for His own at all times and even make all things work for their good.

In that fear they know that there is safety with their covenant God and in Jesus Christ His Son. They also flee to Jehovah God for safety so that they have confidence. They flee to Jehovah for safety when they are tempted, when they in weakness fall into sin, when they are persecuted, and when evil of any kind comes. This is the nature of the true fear of Jehovah.

And, finding a place of refuge in Jehovah, they are confident for the present and the future.

Let us fear Jehovah our God.

It is the nature of a child of Jehovah to fear Him. However, because the works of grace are not finished in us, we do not fear Him as we ought. We are often so busy with other things that we do not take the time to reflect on the great works of God. Due to our own neglect we often fail to enjoy these blessings of salvation as we could. The result is that we do not fear Him as we ought.

And when our fear of the Lord is lacking, we often do not flee to the Lord for refuge. Nor is our confidence in the Lord strong.

So let us grow in the fear of the Lord. Let us do that by turning to His Word, which reveals His great works and promises. Let us turn to Him in prayer to seek the greater riches of His salvation.

Then we will find in Him a place of refuge during the storms of life and have good confidence for the future.

This is the wisdom of God!

To do anything else is sheer folly! 

EDITORIAL

REV. KENNETH KOOLE

Herman Witsius, Baptism, and Covenant Seed (2)

Previous article in this series: February 1, 2013, p. 197.

As stated in our previous editorial, it is our intention (eventually) to offer a brief critique of an article found

in the *Mid-America Journal of Theology*, volume 22, 2011 (MAJT 22) entitled "Calvin's Treatment of the Offer of the

Gospel and Divine Grace,” by J. Mark Beach, a professor in Mid-America Seminary. An article of interest to us as much for the subject matter, Calvin and the Free Offer, as for the fact that the Protestant Reformed perspective and the name of H. Hoeksema loom rather large in the article.

We will return to this in time.

But first, we want to finish commenting on that little (translated) treatise written by the venerable Herman Witsius (1636-1708) entitled *On the Efficacy and Utility of Baptism in the Case of Elect Infants Whose Parents Are Under the Covenant* (found in the *MAJT 17, 2006* issue).

This is an important historical document, not only because of the high esteem Witsius had both in the Reformed and Presbyterian circles of his day, as well as the conclusions he reached on matters related to controversies surrounding infant baptism, but also because, as stated in the foreword to this treatise, Witsius “...exposes modern readers to a host of erudite and gifted Reformed theologians of an earlier era (though no longer well-known today)...” (*MAJT 17*, p. 125)

For Witsius and his contemporaries the question of baptism’s efficacy arose in large part because there were some Reformed who, in the interests of retaining it as a *sacrament* and guarding against turning baptism into a mere ritual, insisted that it had to convey something to every child baptized if it were to be maintained as a meaningful means of *grace*. And so,

according to these theologians, the efficacy of baptism for infants is that at the time of baptism it was used by God to work some kind of spiritual benefit in baptized infants. For some this meant in *all* the infants baptized, for others, only in the *elect* infants. But according to both views, newness of life waited upon an infant’s baptism.

In other words, regeneration hinging on one’s baptism.

Shades of Rome!

Such is one side of the errant view of infant baptism that Witsius addressed and refuted.

We explicitly raise this issue in light of that heresy that is so bedeviling Reformed covenantal thinking today, namely, that of the Federal Vision. As though this perspective is something new. Many loose on Reformed pulpits and in seminaries today would have us look at the Federal Vision perspective that way, as if its proponents are bringing to the fore something new—new biblical, covenantal insights into how we are to view baptism and infants and what the Reformed view of baptism should be, namely, *it conveys a covenantal grace (though not necessarily of a lasting, saving sort) to all to whom it is applied*.

And because this view is so *new*, it should be viewed as a development of biblical, Reformed covenantal thinking, and not as an old notion or old heresy revived.

Nonsense.

Witsius’ treatise makes plain that this *new* teaching loose today is as old an errant view as the sev-

enteenth century, one addressed and dismissed by good covenantal theologians centuries ago.

As Witsius makes plain, this was a perspective loose in his day.

There are not wanting, I admit, theologians even of the highest name who give a somewhat different account of these matters [what baptism means for infants—kk], maintaining that a certain kind [!] of regeneration and justification is not only signified but bestowed upon all [!] the infants of covenantal persons without exception, although it may not be infallibly connected with salvation inasmuch as they may fall [!] from it by their own sin after they have grown up. (*MAJT*, p. 132)

Whereupon Witsius mentions some theologians with quotes from their writings to demonstrate this was their view, namely, a certain *kind* of regeneration and of justification, which, though for a time it saves a person, one may lose later in life as he breaks and falls out of the covenant into which he was once put by baptism.

Federal Vision error and denial of the preservation of the saints all over again.

And this is to be distinguished from Arminianism as rejected by Dordt how?

Of particular interest to Witsius was the name of John Davenant.

Concerning him Witsius writes:

But of all the expositors of these opinions, the most acute is John Davenant, a one time deputy of the English Church to the Synod of Dort..... In a letter [to an Angli-

can Bishop]...he contends that the blood of Christ is so far applied in every infant [!] duly baptized that original sin is remitted—whence he teaches that all such infants are in a certain sense [!] not only adopted and justified, but also regenerated [!] and sanctified. But the justification, regeneration, [and] adoption that he grants as suited to baptized infants is not altogether the same with that justification, regeneration, adoption, which, in the question of the perseverance of the saints, we [of the Canons of Dort vintage] maintain to be at no time lost. [For Davenant] [i]t only avails so far as to place them in a state of salvation conformably with their infantile condition...[which later] *in consequence of coming short of their baptismal engagements* [emphasis mine—kk] ceases to be sufficient for their salvation as adults (pp. 133-4).

For the words we italicized above one might just as well substitute the words “*in consequence of coming short of their conditional covenantal works and obligations,*” and then sign the name of some Federal Vision adherent to it.

The Federal Vision men are simply teaching a view as old as J. Davenant—a baptismal regeneration for all born to covenantal parents (but not necessarily of the same caliber as the one that abides in those eternally elect), a regeneration of the Spirit that can be lost.

Certain saints do not persevere unto eternal life.

In other words, for some, a sovereign election unto and into Christ’s grace is only *temporary!*

In the name of what is Reformed, try wrapping your mind around that one once.

Welcome once again to the land of paradox.

Significantly, already back in the 1600s a theologian of the stature of Witsius rejected this view.

He writes:

Who can deny that these are the acute and learned discussions of very erudite men? To me, however, if I may be allowed to give an opinion, they seem not altogether sound, and indeed the whole of these excellent men come to this: that while they get rid of certain difficulties, they involve themselves in others not less serious (p. 134).

As mild as Witsius’ above remarks are in distancing himself from such men and their view, what follows these remarks are three pages of shrewd, sharp refutation. Beginning with:

For, in the first place, by what word of Scripture can they prove that an application of the blood of Christ is made to any man in the remission of original sin, even to the effecting of a certain [!] justification, regeneration, and adoption—such an application as may suffice for his salvation in a certain condition of life—while that man has not been given to Christ by the eternal destination of the Father...? (pp. 134-5).

And then, in the course of his refutation of this covenant view, Witsius makes a most interesting and significant statement:

Nor must we omit to observe what is here of no small consequence, that the promises of the covenant, including everything it embraces, are not conditional [!] but absolute. For in the covenant God promises to bestow even those *qualifications that are to be regarded as the prerequisites* [emphasis ours—kk] of its ultimate and complete fruition (Jer. 31:32, 33; 32:39, 40) (pp. 136-7).

How interesting. Qualifications that are commonly considered prerequisites of the promises of the covenant. What qualifications and prerequisites does he have in mind? What else but faith and obedience of life? But now not as conditional to the promises (something outside of what is promised by the promise), but as part of that which is promised.

Faith, then, not as a condition to the promise received, but as part of what God by covenant in the Old Testament promised to work in the New Testament kingdom age. Read the Jeremiah passages.

Sound familiar?

And then Witsius goes on to speak of “[Christ] who has merited for his people not only eternal life, but likewise all those benefits [!] without which that life could not [even] be obtained.”

This back in the 1600s.

How consistent Witsius was when it came to working out this statement in his larger work, *The Economy of the Covenant*, is not our concern here. What is significant is that Witsius realized that in order to deal effectively with the Davenant-type error, the truth as

stated above was vital to his refutation of it.

The point is, what we as Protestant Reformed Churches have been maintaining over against the contemporary conditional covenant view (as sharpened by our covenant controversy of 1953) is not something new. It has been an integral part of the controversy over the centuries.

And this brings us to the point that we in our February 1 article indicated we intended to demonstrate in this article, namely, proof of Witsius' position on how believers are to view their covenant seed, namely, as recipients of grace and spiritual life from little on, beginning already in the womb.

Witsius wanted nothing to do with the notion that elect infants are to be viewed as unregenerate and unsaved until they are old enough to give a credible confession of faith. Old school Princetonian Presbyterian he was not.

His position is clear.

I proceed: Not only is it in the freedom of God to bestow the grace of regeneration upon elect infants prior to the rite of baptism, but it is to be believed that this is the course he usually [!] pursues (p. 147).

And then a bit later, this most interesting quote:

There can be little doubt that this doctrine of the regeneration of infants...is the received view of the Belgic church, in whose baptismal liturgy the following question is put to parents when

they present their children for baptism: "Do you acknowledge that our children, though conceived and born in sin and therefore subject to all manner of misery, even to condemnation itself, *are sanctified in Christ, and therefore as members of his church ought to be baptized?*" [emphasis Witsius']. To this question an affirmative answer is required, and this they set forth as the opinion of those who hold that the initial regeneration of elect infants under the covenant precedes their baptism. I acknowledge that with those who maintain this opinion I am so far at one (pp. 150-1).

Why, you ask, is what some long-dead Dutch theologian wrote on this issue centuries ago of any importance to us?

Because one of the charges that have been regularly thrown our way is that the view of the Protestant Reformed Churches on the covenant is somehow novel to the Reformed church world, an extreme position of a certain theologian dominated by scholastic tendencies—logic, logic, logic, with no room for paradoxes and certainly not well "nuanced."

And let us state here already that the word "nuanced" is fast becoming, we are convinced, the new word replacing "paradox." You are faced with a doctrinal position that differs from yours, and an argument that logically seems airtight, and hence difficult to refute? Well, that may be, but it can yet be dismissed on the grounds that it is not "well nuanced"! As if that is now the final word in theological debates: Who has shown himself to be the best nuanced?

Peter, Paul, James, and John were nuanced? That's what the apostles strove to be?

Nuanced?

Clarity is what comes to mind. Not, "Here is the gospel and its truths. Now let's find how finely we can nuance it to the everlasting perplexity of generations to follow us."

Now, where was I?

Oh, yes, those identified with the supposedly novel ideas of this theologian governed by scholastic tendencies, namely, a man named Hoeksema. And then the calumny that follows: therefore, those who have continued to promote such views are to be dismissed as of a sectarian spirit, because they have adopted the views of a theologian whose extreme covenantal views cut him and his adherents off from the thinking of the church and mainline Reformed theologians of the past.

With the recent translation of Bavinck's *Dogmatics*, it is coming to light that that is not the case.

At least it should be.

And this little treatise by Witsius simply underscores that fact.

We commend the *MAJT* for their reprinting it.

Next time we will reflect on some interesting treatments and readings of Bavinck's covenantal views found in recent *MAJTs*. 

Resurrection Benefits

Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 17

Question 45. What doth the resurrection of Christ profit us?

Answer. First, by His resurrection He has overcome death, that He might make us partakers of that righteousness which He had purchased for us by His death; secondly, we are also by His power raised up to a new life; and lastly, the resurrection of Christ is a sure pledge of our blessed resurrection.

This Lord's Day brings us to the first of the four steps of Christ's exaltation. Following His humiliation on account of our sins, Christ arose from the grave, ascended into heaven, presently sits at God's right hand, and will come again to judge this world. He is the exalted Lord over all, and God has put all things under His feet.

A Historical Bodily Resurrection

It is common today to view the resurrection of Jesus Christ as symbolic or mythical. Jesus' living on in the memories of His followers is said to be His resurrection. People, following science rather than Scripture, will say it is impossible for a human body once dead, to rise again, so they will try to find some other explanation for the resurrection.

But every true believer takes Scripture at its word, believing that Christ physically and literally arose from the grave, and that His body, which was dead, came back to life. We believe that the resurrection really

happened. The proof of the resurrection is found in the Word of God. His resurrection was prophesied in the Old Testament; Jesus Himself spoke of being raised again the third day; the Bible records many appearances of the risen Lord to His disciples; and there are eye-witness accounts of His resurrection recorded in Scripture. In the days, weeks, and months following Jesus' resurrection, it was an undisputed fact, so much that the Jews had to fabricate a cover-up story.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is essential to the message of the gospel. This was the gospel message that the apostles preached (I Cor. 15:1, 4; Acts 2:24-27; 10:40-42; 13:30). By the resurrection, God sealed that Jesus was indeed His Son (Rom. 1:4) and that His saving work was sufficient and complete (Acts 17:31).

If Christ is not risen, if this is only a myth or a memory, "we are of all men most miserable," are "yet in our sins," and have no hope for ourselves or for any who die in the Lord (I Cor. 15:17-19).

And so, to be saved, we must believe in our hearts that God has raised Jesus from the dead (Rom. 10:9). Our full confession is that our Savior both died and rose again (Rom. 4:25; 14:9).

Rev. Kleyn is pastor of Covenant of Grace Protestant Reformed Church in Spokane, Washington.

He Gives Us What He Earned

The power of the resurrection of Jesus Christ extends far beyond His own bodily resurrection. It reaches into the twenty-first century, into the hearts and lives of believers today. This Lord's Day focuses on the benefits that come to us from the resurrection of Jesus Christ. There are three of them mentioned here.

The first is that we become partakers of the righteousness that He purchased for us by His death. By His death He earned our righteousness, paying the price for our sins. In His resurrection, He both proves that the payment for sin was sufficient and applies that righteousness to us.

We must remember that all our righteousness is in Jesus Christ. We are not acceptable and righteous before God on account of any work or worth that comes from us. We must not dig into our own souls, or strive in our own lives, to make ourselves acceptable to God. We are accepted and acquitted only through trusting in what Christ has accomplished for us. The resurrection tells us that God receives us. The resurrection is a declaration from God concerning Jesus, and so also concerning us who believe in Him. He "was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification" (Rom. 4:25).

We Are Raised Up to a New Life

The second benefit is that by the power of Christ's resurrection, we are raised up to a new life. The important word here is "are." It puts the emphasis on the present. Not we "shall be" raised up to a new life, but "we are!" One English translation of the Catechism says, "We are *already now* resurrected to a new life." This is the idea.

The new life spoken of here is the life of the Holy Spirit that comes into us at regeneration. Through the work of the Spirit we are united with Jesus Christ our Savior, and His work and His life become ours. Romans 6 says we are buried with Him, and raised with Him to newness of life. This is the new life of sanctification—a life separated to serving the Lord in godliness and obedience.

It is the privilege and joy of every believer to possess this new life of Christ in his soul. Because of this life, we are victorious as Christians. Sin is not dead alto-

gether. No, it will not be abolished until our physical death. Meanwhile, it wages war against our souls and the life of Christ in us. But, in Christ, we are more than conquerors. We have victory! We confess, that is, we declare, our victory over sin, and then we go to war. "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body" (Rom. 6:12).

Apart from the life of Christ, we are dead, and can never take on the enemy of sin.

The Pledge of Our Blessed Resurrection

"I know that my Redeemer liveth and that...in my flesh shall I see God" (Job 19:25-26). Job said these words. He knew that he would die. And yet, believing that his Redeemer lives, he knew that his flesh would also live someday to see God. His confession is essentially the same as ours in this Lord's Day.

Jesus is risen as a pledge, or guarantee, that our bodies will also be raised. Here there is a double promise, a promise that works both ways. A little of our humanity, represented in the human nature of Jesus Christ, is already raised and living with the Father in heaven. Colossians 3:3 says that our "life is hid with Christ in God." The risen Christ is called "the firstfruits of them that slept" (I Cor. 15:20). A little of the earth is taken to heaven, to show that more will follow. At the same time, a deposit of the blessed and eternal resurrection life of Christ is left here with us. A little of heaven is put into our hearts and experienced in our lives. We have the "earnest of the Spirit" (II Cor. 5:5).

How blessed the resurrection day will be! The living Christ will come on the clouds. He will issue a powerful, effective wake-up call to all who are in their graves. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, we shall be changed. The dead will be raised, incorruptible. And death will forever be swallowed up in victory.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the answer to man's ultimate problem, the problem of death. It removes the curse of eternal death from me. It overcomes death in my nature. It assures that my dead body will be raised to be with the Lord.

Faith in the resurrection of Jesus Christ assures this for me.

Questions for Discussion

1. How do some contemporary theologians use the word “resurrection”? What does the Bible mean by this word?
2. Why is the reality of Christ’s resurrection essential to true Christianity?
3. What does God say about Jesus in the resurrection?
4. How is Jesus’ resurrection related to our justification?
5. How are we “already” raised up to a new life? What does this mean for our present lives? (cf. Romans 6:1-13).
6. How is the resurrection of Christ a pledge or guarantee of our future bodily resurrection?
7. What happens to our bodies after we die? How does this demonstrate the wonder and power of the resurrection?
8. Using a concordance or Bible dictionary, find out what is meant by “the first resurrection” and “the second resurrection” in Scripture.
9. Discuss the “hope” that is ours because of Jesus’ resurrection, by completing this sentence with your own thoughts. “Without the resurrection of Jesus Christ, we would....”
10. Comparisons have been made between the work of creation in the beginning and our resurrection. How are these two similar? 

THINGS WHICH MUST SHORTLY COME TO PASS

PROF. DAVID ENGELSMA

Chapter Four

Postmillennialism (22)

The Reformed (Amillennial) Critique of Postmillennialism (cont.)

In my critique of postmillennialism, I am examining the alleged biblical basis of the doctrinal error. I have considered the Old Testament prophecies, especially Isaiah 65 and Matthew 24.

Romans 11:25, 26

Yet another passage of Scripture that is important to the postmillennial doctrine is Romans 11, especially verses 25 and 26:

Verse 25: For I would not, brethren, that ye should be

Prof. Engelsma is professor emeritus of Dogmatics and Old Testament in the Protestant Reformed Seminary.

Previous article in this series: January 1, 2013, p. 151.

ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.

Verse 26: And so all Israel shall be saved; as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob.

The importance of Romans 11 to postmillennialism is that, on the postmillennial reading of the chapter, Romans 11:26 predicts a dramatic historical event in the future, prior to the second coming of Christ. This event is thought to be the conversion to Jesus Christ of large numbers of Jews. This prediction, therefore, is a kind of concrete, biblical warrant for the postmillennial dream of the future conversion of a majority of the

human race and the resultant transformation of the world into the glorious (earthly) kingdom of Christ. If large numbers of the Jewish race and nation are to be converted, the postmillennial teaching of the conversion of large numbers of the entire race does not seem so biblically suspect as otherwise would be the case.

The postmillennial explanation of Romans 11, especially verses 25 and 26, is as follows. At some time still in the future, prior to the second coming of Christ, the Spirit of Christ will convert large numbers of Jews, likely the vast majority. This will be a restoration of the “nation of Israel.” Many postmillennialists have supposed that this mass conversion will involve a restoration of the Jews to the land of Canaan.

This conversion of the Jews is viewed as the beginning of the millennium, or “golden age”—the perfection of the Messianic kingdom. For the conversion of the Jews in large numbers will signal, and somehow serve to realize, a similar conversion of the majority of the entire human race. Because the majority of mankind will become Christians, the Jews leading the way, they will dominate all of earthly life over all the world. With the Christian church in power, earthly peace will settle upon all nations and peoples, and earthly prosperity will be enjoyed by all. The conversion of the Jews will betoken and commence the (earthly) reign of King Jesus in and over the world for a thousand years.

Murray and the Puritans

Iain H. Murray presents, and advocates, the doctrine of the Puritans regarding the large-scale conversion of Jews and its significance for the millennial kingdom of Christ.

For the Puritans of the seventeenth century, “the future of the Jews had decisive significance...because...with the calling of the Jews there will come far-reaching blessing for the world.”¹ The Puritans expected “a large and visible addition of Jews to Christ’s church” and looked “to Romans 11:25-26 for their chief authority.”²

On Puritan thinking, the passage prophesies a “famous, notorious, universal calling of the Jews,” so that

¹ Iain H. Murray, *The Puritan Hope: A Study in Revival and the Interpretation of Prophecy* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1971), 59, 60.

² *Ibid.*, 61.

“the body of the Jews [is] received again” at some time in the future.³ Murray, an enthusiast for revivals, explains: “There is a great revival predicted here.”⁴ The Jewish revival will bring “Israel as a mass into the Church.”⁵

With appeal to Romans 11:15 (“What shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead”), Murray and the Puritans propose that the revival that will convert the Jews will “bring revival to the world.”⁶ That is, the conversion of the majority of Jews will somehow lead to the conversion of large numbers of Gentiles.

And this will be the onset of the millennium for which postmillennialists, including Iain Murray, dream, and argue. “Vast numbers of the natural descendants of Abraham will own and serve their Redeemer”—“*in the latter day glory.*”⁷

In arguing for the “latter day glory” of postmillennialism, Murray takes note of Herman Hoeksema’s objection, that the Bible foretells the very opposite of peace and prosperity for the church before Christ’s coming. Murray responds by asserting that much of the biblical prophecy of tribulation, for example, Matthew 24, has already been fulfilled, in the destruction of Jerusalem. Regarding the crucially important matter of the interpretation of the biblical warnings of apostasy and tribulation in the last days, immediately preceding the coming of Christ, Murray shows himself a preterist, as all postmillennialists are compelled to be. “The great tribulation predicted for the Jews [*sic*] on account of their apostasy has been fulfilled.”⁸

In II Timothy 3, another passage prophesying hard times for the church, “Paul was thinking primarily of his own time!”⁹

³ *Ibid.*, 68.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 66.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 77.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 70, 71.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 78; emphasis added.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 79. The faithful reader of this series will remember that preterism is the false interpretation of the biblical passages that foretell tribulation for the people of God that explains these passages as having been fulfilled *in the past* (“preterism” means ‘past’), mainly in AD 70 in the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans. Therefore, according to preterism no tribulation, particularly no Antichrist, will confront the church in the future. This opens the way to the bright and cheerful forecast for the church of postmillennialism.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 80.

But preterism does not solve all of postmillennialism's problems with New Testament prophecy concerning the last days. Especially the book of Revelation casts dark shadows on the rosy picture of the future painted by Murray and other postmillennialists. Despite his preterist interpretation of many passages of Scripture that forewarn of troubles and tribulation for the church in the future, Murray must acknowledge that the "Scriptures seem to indicate a time of serious declension immediately preceding the advent."¹⁰

The final solution is to "faturize" these Scriptures. That is, all such predictions of apostasy and tribulation refer to the period *after* the millennium. Between the "golden age" and the coming of Christ, many of the Jews and Gentiles who professed faith in Christ and showed themselves saints will fall away from Christ and become hostile to the church.

Thus, the earthly power, peace, and prosperity of the millennium are secured. Whatever threatens the millennium is either thrust into the past or projected far into the future. Nothing in Scripture may jeopardize the millennium.

But this solution does imply that the victory of Christ in the millennial kingdom—an *earthly* victory, according to postmillennialism—leaves much to be desired. It is not a lasting victory. In fact, in the end the millennial kingdom will be defeated, and broken up, in history. And this is a heavy, if not fatal, blow to postmillennialism, driven as it is by the conviction that Christ must have an earthly victory within history.

Christian Reconstruction

Christian Reconstruction postmillennialism is in agreement with the Puritans regarding the conversion of the Jews as the start of the millennium. With appeal to Romans 11, David Chilton has written that "some-day a *majority* among ethnic Israel will be saved. The people of Israel, as a whole, will turn back to the faith of their fathers and will acknowledge Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior."¹¹ This conversion of the Jews will usher in the millennium: "The conversion of Israel will result

¹⁰ Ibid., 81.

¹¹ David Chilton, *Paradise Restored: A Biblical Theology of Dominion* (Tyler, Texas: Reconstruction Press, 1985), 126.

in an era of great blessings for the entire world.... This is when the Biblical promises of the Kingdom's earthly blessings will reach their highest and most complete fulfillment."¹²

à Brakel

Also the Dutch Reformed postmillennialist Wilhelmus à Brakel understood Romans 11 as teaching "the conversion of the entire Jewish nation" prior to Christ's coming. The conversion of the Jews will be followed by "the glorious millennial state of the church upon earth."¹³ The proof of this expectation, "we derive from Romans 11."¹⁴

What this future conversion of the Jews will entail, Brakel indicated: "Jerusalem would be rebuilt and be further expanded, and also the unclean places in Jerusalem would be removed.... The Jewish nation will once most certainly be converted, and be re-established in her country."¹⁵

This conversion of the "Jewish nation" will be the occasion of the conversion of the Gentiles on a large scale, and basic to the realization of the millennium. "The general conversion of Israel...will bring about much more blessing, light, life, and zeal among the Gentiles."¹⁶ In his untranslated "Explanation of the Revelation of John," Brakel wrote:

The entire Jewish nation shall acknowledge our Lord Jesus to be the true and only and their promised Messiah, shall be converted to Him, [and] shall love, honor, and glorify Him uniquely.... The knowledge of the Lord Jesus, the love to Him, the zeal for Him, the holiness of life, [and] the glory shall be so great in the Jewish nation that the Gentiles shall flow to them and to faith in Christ.¹⁷

For this conception of the conversion of the Jews and

¹² Ibid., 131.

¹³ Wilhelmus à Brakel, *The Christian's Reasonable Service*, vol. 4, tr. Bartel Elshout (Morgan, PA: Soli Deo Gloria, 1995), 348.

¹⁴ Ibid., 511.

¹⁵ Ibid., 529.

¹⁶ Ibid., 516.

¹⁷ Wilhelmus à Brakel, *Redelijke Godsdienst* [English translation: *Reasonable Service*], 2nd ed., vol. 2 (Leiden: D. Donner, 1893), 323. Translation of the Dutch is mine.

its significance in ushering in the millennium, Brakel appealed to Romans 11:15.¹⁸

Indicating a grievous theological error in the thinking of Brakel and others concerning a future conversion of the “nation of Israel” is Brakel’s application of the Old Testament prophecies of the future salvation and glory of Israel to racial Jews today—not to the New Testament church. Ezekiel 37, Isaiah 62, Zechariah 14, and many more Old Testament prophecies, according to Brakel, refer strictly to physical descendants of Abraham. For Brakel, the church is not the New Testament reality of Old Testament Israel. Brakel also refused to explain the blessings promised in the Old Testament as spiritual, that is, as the blessings of spiritual salvation.

Brakel *denied* that the Old Testament texts mentioned above “speak of the glorious state of the church of the New Testament” and that the promises of blessedness and glory refer “to spiritual matters, rather than to the conversion of the Jews and their restoration to Canaan.” Rather, Brakel insisted, “With every text we have shown emphatically that they speak of Israel and what would befall them according to soul and body.”¹⁹

This doctrine smacks of the gross error of dispensa-

tionalism, which sees Old Testament Israel and the New Testament church as two different peoples, rather than as the one church of Christ.

It is fundamental Reformed doctrine that Old Testament Israel was not merely an earthly nation of racial Jews, but the immature form of the church of believers and their spiritual seed. It is fundamental Reformed doctrine that the New Testament church of believers and their children out of all nations and of all races is the fulfillment—*the mature reality*—of Old Testament Israel. “What dost thou believe concerning the Holy Catholic Church? That out of the whole human race, from the beginning to the end of the world, the Son of God by his Spirit and Word, gathers, defends, and preserves for himself unto everlasting life, a chosen communion in the unity of the true faith....”²⁰

The Reformed faith rejects the notion that there will one day be a “restoration of the nation of Israel” in any manner and the notion that such a “restoration” will involve a return of the Jews to the earthly Canaan, the rebuilding of Jerusalem, and the renewal of even some of the ceremonies of the Old Testament. ☞

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ à Brakel, *The Christian’s Reasonable Service*, 533.

²⁰ Heidelberg Catechism, Q&A 54, in Philip Schaff, *Creeds of Christendom*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1966), 324, 325.

GUEST ARTICLE

REV. DAVID OVERWAY

Our Psalter: 100 Years of Praise (3): The Value of Singing the Psalms

Singing the Psalms as we have them in our Psalter is of immeasurable value to the child of God. This is not surprising if we bear in mind what

Rev. Overway is pastor of the Protestant Reformed Church in Doon, Iowa.

Previous article in this series: December 1, 2012, p. 113. This series of articles on the Psalter is based on a speech originally given at the Spring 2012 Ladies’ League meeting in Doon, IA.

was brought out in the first article of this three-part series of articles on psalm-singing. In our first article we demonstrated that God has called His church to sing the Psalms. He gave us the Psalms as part of the inspired Scriptures and then, in those same Scriptures, commanded us to sing them. The Lord calls His church only to those things that are of spiritual value and benefit to her. Therefore we can conclude that if the Lord instructs His church to sing Psalms, it is because He

knows the great value of this activity for His church and calls her to this wise practice in order that she may enjoy the multifaceted benefit of psalm-singing.

Throughout her history, the church has recognized her calling to sing the Psalms and has obeyed that calling, faithfully singing the Psalms her Lord has given her. This historical reality we demonstrated in our second article. And in the way of her singing the Psalms, the faithful church has also known and enjoyed the many benefits of psalm-singing.

But there have always been those who have not appreciated the value of psalm-singing for the church and have raised objections to this practice. Objections are certainly raised today. Many have been persuaded by these objections or have been unable or unwilling to answer them, with the result that other songs have replaced the Psalms in most churches today—to the detriment of those churches.

Especially in light of this powerful trend in the church-world today, we need to be able to answer these objections when we encounter them. We need to be able to answer them, whether they arise from without our own churches, or even within our own minds. We answer some of these objections to psalm-singing in this article.

But our goal is not purely negative, nor even primarily negative, but primarily positive. Our main goal is to remind ourselves of the great value of singing the Psalms. It is not a lofty goal to stand for psalm-singing simply for the sake of psalm-singing. But our goal is, following our Lord's calling, to sing the Psalms for the many positive benefits they afford us. So before we go on to answer some objections to psalm-singing, we will first consider several benefits of singing the Psalms.

The Psalms teach us rightly what to *believe*. The life of the Christian is a life of faith, a life of believing right doctrine for the comfort of his soul, for guidance for his life, and for the glory of God. And the Psalms are right doctrine. When we sing versifications of them we sing

what is true, we sing sound doctrine. As we sing from the heart, contemplating the meaning of the words, we learn. We are taught by the Psalms what rightly to believe. Songs that are frequently used for worship, but are not based on the inspired Scriptures, as the songs in our Psalter are, often suffer from doctrinal error and at least suffer from a lack of doctrinal depth. Often these songs are shallow, simplistic, and repetitive and therefore do not serve to instruct the singers of them in good doctrine, as the Psalm-based songs in our Psalter do so superbly.

The Psalms also teach us how to *pray*. Look through the book of Psalms and notice how many are prayers, or include prayers, of the inspired psalmist to God. If one desired to do a study of Scripture to learn how to improve his prayer-life, he would be well-advised to spend a good deal of his time in the Psalms, studying the examples of the psalmists' prayers. One could learn much about prayer from the Psalms, but the same is true of our Psalter as it puts these prayers to music. As we thoughtfully sing from the Psalter, we pray to our God with song. And we lift up good prayers to Him, prayers that He Himself gave to us to offer back to Him again. But as we do so, using, as it were, these form prayers, we also learn better how to lift up before the Lord our spontaneous prayers in the various and ever-changing situations of our lives.

Another value of psalm-singing is that when we sing Psalms we sing songs that are *God-centered*. This is not an unimportant point. The Scriptures are God-centered, the Reformed faith stands out as a God-centered system of theology, and the child of God is commanded to live a God-centered life by the "first and great commandment" of Matthew 22:37-38. Then the favored songs of the Christian must be God-centered. But this is not the

norm today. Much modern religious music is man-centered. As we live in a world in which the Antichristian kingdom of MAN continues to rise in power with ever-increasing speed, let us recoil from any unbiblical

*Another value of psalm-singing
is that when we sing Psalms
we sing songs that are
God-centered.*

emphasis on man and wholeheartedly sing the God-centered Psalms.

To say that the Psalms are God-centered is also to say that they are *Word-centered*. To emphasize the Word of God is to emphasize God Himself. The Psalms, too, then, are Word-centered. One way in which this is manifest is the high regard for the Word of God that is expressed in the Psalms, especially as the Word is praised for its gracious, saving power. Specific examples of this would include Psalms 1, 19, and 119, to name only a few, but this is a general theme that is woven throughout the Psalms. When we sing the Psalms, we sing praise for the Word that instructs us, guides us, and quickens us. And at the same time we are reminded of the importance of holding that Word of God in highest esteem in all of our life.

It follows that if the Psalms are God-centered and not man-centered, they teach a *proper perspective of man*. This, perhaps more than a lack of God-centeredness or Word-centeredness, is what is most conspicuously lacking in religious music that is not based on the Psalms. So many songs invented by men do not mention man's sin, his temptations, his enemies, his weakness, the frailty and brevity of his life, the trials on his earthly pilgrimage, and his constant need as entirely dependent upon God. The Psalm-songs, on the other hand, speak poignantly of these matters and put them upon our lips. By singing the Psalms, then, we are reminded of the true reality of our situation, kept humble before our God, and enabled to cry out to the Lord, our only strength.

Despite these great benefits of Psalm-singing (among others), there are objections raised against singing the Psalms. One of these objections is that the Psalms are simply obsolete, outdated, not well suited for today's worship by today's Christians. This general idea may come to be expressed in several different ways.

One objection that is raised against singing Psalms is that the Psalms are outdated as to their *content*. One might object that the Psalms are too cold, dead, and doctrinal, and not emotional or expressive enough for today's Christian. We respond by pointing out that the Psalms are, in fact, incredibly expressive and that they express every emotional state of the child of God. John Calvin has called the Psalms "the anatomy of all

parts of the soul." Just as a med-school anatomy book contains descriptions of all the physical parts of the human body, so the Psalms do for man's emotional life. About this aspect of the Psalms Calvin writes, "There is not an emotion of which anyone can be conscious that is not here represented as in a mirror. Or rather, the Holy Spirit has here drawn...all the griefs, sorrows, fears, doubts, hopes, cares, perplexities, in short, all the distracting emotions with which the minds of men are wont to be agitated" (Preface to Calvin's Commentary on the Psalms).

We should point out in this connection that here again we see the value of singing the Psalms. Not only are they valuable in that they give us words whereby we can express every emotion of our hearts, but they are also valuable in that they provide a guide and measure for these emotions. How do I know what to express to the Lord? How do I know how to respond to the various emotions that course through my soul? How do I know what is *holy* Christian experience? We turn to the Psalms and sing them, letting them shape our experience and give holy voice to our experience as the part of God's Word that is perfectly adapted to that purpose.

Many also dislike the Psalms because they are *antithetical*. They claim that it is not fitting for the New Testament Christian to sing of God's anger against sin, and of His righteous judgments upon unbelievers; nor, certainly, is there any place for us to sing the Psalms' imprecations against our enemies. They argue that these belong to the more severe Old Testament and do not reflect the spirit of the more gentle, peaceful, and kindly New Testament.

To this kind of thinking we must give no place. First of all, Scripture is one. The same antithetical spirit is found as much in the New Testament as in the Old Testament, as any careful, honest study of Scripture clearly reveals.

Secondly, both Old Testament and New Testament saints are called to be holy. To be holy means not only to be consecrated to God in love, but also to be zealously opposed to all that stands opposed to God. To be holy, then, is to be antithetical. The antithetical Psalms are fitting songs for the holy New Testament child of God.

Third, as follows out of his calling to be antithetical, the New Testament saint is called to be militant. We are called to fight, to engage in warfare against our three-fold enemy: our sinful nature, the ungodly world, and the devil (e.g., I Tim. 6:12; II Tim. 2:3, 4). So long as she remains in this world, the church is engaged in warfare. She must then be characterized by a militant spirit. This is no less true in the New Testament than it was in the Old Testament. The Old Testament Psalms, full of the energy and zeal of the warrior, are perfect for the New Testament saint engaged in the battle of faith.

Some of the greatest benefits of singing the Psalms are found in that they are antithetical and militant. As we sing the Psalms we are reminded that we are in the midst of a battle, which, sinfully, we are always so prone to forget. We are taught to be holy, to be antithetical. We are energized to continue to fight the daily battle, and we are given courage and emboldened by the promise of victory and the assurance that we go in the strength of the Lord. In fact, even as we sing the inspired Psalms, we fight. We fight by taking into our hearts and upon our lips the Word of God, which is the weaponry and armor of our spiritual warfare (Eph. 6:11ff.). Singing the Psalms helps to keep us militant, antithetical, and holy.

One of the most common objections to singing the Psalms is that we do not sing of *Christ* in the Psalms. The idea is that Christ is not spoken of in the Psalms, therefore we who now know of Christ through the New Testament Scriptures ought to create songs by which we can sing of Him.

But this is ignorance of the Scriptures. Christ is spoken of throughout the Psalms. Jesus Himself said so. In Luke 24:44, Jesus speaks of the things “which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me.” One who holds that the Psalms do not speak of Christ must be instructed to grow in his understanding of Old Testament prophecy, types, and shadows. He must be taught that the Psalms are the very Word of Christ that, we are told, dwells in

us richly when we sing them (Col. 3:16). That the Psalms are the Word of Christ is true of all the Psalms, but it is undeniably evident for example in Psalm 22:1: “My God, my God, why has thou forsaken me?” and in Psalm 31:5: “Into thine hand I commend my spirit,” where we find the very words our Savior spoke as He suffered and died for us. When we sing the Psalms, we sing of Christ.

And yet some might say: “But what of evangelism?” Won’t those who visit one of our church services lose interest in our church when they discover that we don’t have solos, praise bands, or at least sing familiar hymns? Won’t they lose interest in us when they see us engage in old-fashioned congregational singing—and that, the singing of Psalter numbers? Does not our singing of Psalms stand in the way of our doing effective evangelism?

There is no reason it cannot be today as it was with the French exiles who came to Geneva in Calvin’s day, so that perhaps the most striking (and attractive) thing to a visitor to one of our congregations’ worship services

might be our congregational singing. Especially should this be true today when a visitor may expect some musical “performance” at the front of the auditorium or a congregation struggling halfheartedly through yet another unfamiliar new hymn. Instead, upon visiting one of our churches, let a visitor find himself in the midst of a congregation heartily singing the Psalms together, from the young child to the oldest saint, each one meaningfully and sincerely joining his full-throated praise to a

united crescendo of unashamed adoration of the God whom they love, the God who has saved them. Visitor or not, let this be an accurate weekly description of our psalm-singing.

Let us sing the Psalms as God has commanded. Let us sing the Psalms with the church of the ages. And let us sing knowing the great value of singing the Psalms.

Our Psalter has served well the saints who have used it to sing the Psalms these past 100 years (1912-2012). May it be, if the Lord should tarry, that it serves us and our generations as well for the next 100 years. 

*As we sing the Psalms
we are reminded
that we are in the midst of a
battle, which,
sinfully, we are always
so prone to forget.*

New

As a new year begins, the old must pass away. Scripture says much about things old. Some good things about old age, old ways, old commandments, and old times. Some bad things about the old man, old wives' tales, old leaven, and getting old. Strikingly, Scripture has even more to say about things new. And, contrary to a supposed principle of biblical conservatism, little it says about things new is bad. Rather, Scripture sets forth new as a word pregnant with good hope, possibility, development, blessing, and life.

Nothing is completely new. God is never new. His mercies are new every morning (Lam. 3:23). He does new things (Is. 43:19). He declares new things (Is. 42:9). But from everlasting to everlasting He is the same, even while the creation waxes old (Ps. 102:36). And the preacher assures us there is nothing new under the sun (Eccl. 1:9). By grace, however, things can be new in terms of quality, experience, growth, or goodness. More astounding is that almost every good new thing proceeds from the old. Such is God's grace, life, and the blessings of life by that grace.

Scripture mentions favorably many new things. New offerings, new bottles, new houses, new garments, new fruit, are a few. But some new things are outstanding. One regards singing. While told to walk in old paths, retain old landmarks, and honor old men, when it comes to singing, Scripture recommends new songs. Frequently. Sing a new song unto the LORD (Is. 42:11), skillfully with loud noise (Ps. 33:3), on instruments (Ps. 144:9), with all the earth (Ps. 96:1), and in the congregation of the saints (Ps. 149:1). And to do so because He has done marvelous things (Ps. 98:1) and puts such a new song in our mouth (Ps. 40:3). Not entirely new songs, of course. But the same old psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs of truth, praise, and honor to God as we experience Him new every day, in every place, and in every way.

Also exalted are the new glories of the new covenant. The old promise of God was to make a new covenant with His church (Jer. 31:31). Not entirely new, but

the same old God, promises, maintenance, essence, and fulfillment by a new administration—not now by earthly picture, sacrifice, and ordinance, but directly by Jesus as Mediator of this new testament (Heb. 9:15). New because it is not of the letter, but Spirit (II Cor. 3:6). New because it also includes the whole world of Gentiles, for, abolishing in His flesh the old ordinances, He made from two peoples one new man in Himself (Eph. 2:15). And new because by shedding His new covenant blood, He made for us a new and living way through the veil of His flesh into the holiest place of God (Heb. 10:2).

A feature of this new covenant is God's work sanctifying us by His Spirit so that we produce new works of righteousness. Anyone in Christ becomes a new creature whereby old things pass away and all things become new (II Cor. 5:17). He gives us a new heart and puts a new spirit within us (Ezek. 11:19). He instructs us so that as a householder we bring forth things old and things new (Matt. 13:52). He teaches and makes us to purge out the old leaven, that we may be a new lump (I Cor. 5:7), to put off the old man and put on the new man created in righteousness and true holiness, and renewed in knowledge after His image (Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10). He gives us a new commandment, that we love one another as He loves us (John 13:34)—again, a commandment not entirely new, but given from the beginning, only now with new power and meaning (II John 1:5).

The blessedness of things new is perfected in the new creation. Truly, the blessedness of that creation will be that it is all new. A new form of heavens and earth from the old, a new quality of life that remains forever (Is. 66:22), wherein dwells righteousness (II Pet. 3:13), and mountains drop new wine (Joel 3:18). There is a new Jerusalem, the church living with her husband (Rev. 21:2). We will have new fellowship with God face to face (I Cor. 13:12), each be given a new name (Is. 62:2), live in new bodies, have new strength, learn new things (Rev. 14:3), and sing new songs with the whole new creation (Rev. 5:9; 14:3). No new creature in Christ should ever disparage things only, or even partly, because they are new. Behold, the Lord promises, old things are passed away and forgotten; all things are become new (II Cor. 5:17). 

Rev. Langerak is pastor of Southeast Protestant Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Another Dreamer

Two years ago at the thirty-seventh meeting of the North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council (NAPARC) W. Robert Godfrey spoke about his “Reformed Dream” of a supersynod of Reformed denominations as an expression of Reformed unity in the spirit of Jesus’ prayer in John 17.¹

The dream is Godfrey’s. It is not Reformed.²

At the thirty-eighth meeting of NAPARC, held November 13, 2012, Rev. Daniel Hyde, of the United Reformed Church (URC), spoke on “From Reformed Dream to Reformed Reality: The Problem and Possibility of Reformed Church Unity.” He developed Godfrey’s dream and significantly advanced his ideas.³ Rev. Hyde candidly stated the problem as he sees it, proposed the way forward, and shed light on some fundamental issues that he apparently is willing to sacrifice in order to achieve his dream of unity.

The problem, he says, is that “Reformed churches are hopelessly divided in the spirit of Corinth.” “Let me press this deep into your hearts by saying something that I trust shocks you. We are so divided that we cannot have a Synod of Dort or a Westminster Assembly today.” The reason is that “we are too carnal and insufficiently spiritual for such an assembly.” He speaks of our “sins of arrogance, pride, and stubbornness.”

¹ Godfrey’s original article “A Reformed Dream” can be found at <http://www.modernreformation.org/default.php?page=article&var1=ArtRead&var2=123&var3=authorbi>.

² See my analysis of Godfrey’s dream in *SB* 88 (April 1 and 15, 2012): 301–04; 322–24.

³ A written version of Hyde’s speech can be found at <http://theaquilareport.com/from-reformed-dream-to-reformed-reality-the-problem-and-possibility-of-reformed-church-unity/>. All quotations are from this version.

Rev. Langerak is pastor of the Protestant Reformed Church in Crete, Illinois.

The carnal, unspiritual activities that earn his rebuke include “holding up ‘distinctives’ as virtually inerrant,” “revel[ing] in famous dates in our respective histories,” “hold[ing] up our church polity issues as being passed down from the Jerusalem Council,” and “infighting over preaching.” He pejoratively points out that Reformed men “bicker” over “creation days, the historicity of Adam, the relationship between justification and sanctification....” He exhorts the churches to be more like Dordt, where differences existed

on...how to express the extent and intent of Christ’s satisfaction.... Some said Christ died for the elect—period.... Others said...Christ’s intent was not to save the whole world, however his death has an infinite and intrinsic value sufficient in extent to save the whole world. And there were even a few who affirmed an even broader sufficiency, saying that Christ died efficiently with intent to save the elect, but that he also died sufficiently for the whole world, with the intention of establishing a conditional covenant of grace such that everyone who believes will be saved.

At the same time he savages as “our own [Reformed] version of *ex opera operato*” the idea that “as long as we have the confessions, as long as we preach orthodoxy, as long as we have the means of grace, as long as we stick to the old forms—that somehow our bare external conservatism...makes us a true church.” *Ex opera operato* is the Roman Catholic teaching that the sacraments give grace regardless of the activity or faith of the recipient.

Over against this, he urges his listeners to pray for “the Spirit to bring revival,” for “the Spirit to cause us to devour the Word as in the days of our forefathers.” He calls for “reformation,” a work of the Spirit that we can see “in the church in the confession of the truth” and the evidence of which is found “in our confessional docu-

ments.” He desires “reconciliation,” by which the Spirit will lead us “to acknowledge our already existing unity on the basis of our publicly confessed faith.”

He points his audience to the Trinity as the pattern of our unity: “That the one true God is triune helps us to see that just as there are distinctions between the Persons, in the same way we are one, although with real distinctions that do not obliterate the union.”

This must have been an incredibly grating speech—intolerable—for any man with a Reformed bone in his body sitting at NAPARC. No Reformed man could agree with this proposal for unity, because it involves sacrificing confessional doctrines on the altar of pseudo-Reformed ecumenicity.

In the pursuit of this unity, Rev. Hyde pays lip service to the confessions as the means of unity. The issues about which he says churches “bicker” are not simply “distinctives,” but confessional matters. The days of creation are confessional for every Presbyterian, because the Westminster states unequivocally that God created “in the space of six days.”⁴

The “historicity of Adam” is Hyde’s allusion to the row in Reformed churches that allows ministers to deny the infallible history of creation in Genesis 1–3, and instead to argue about the historicity of Adam. By that phrase they do not mean the creation account of man recorded in Genesis, but simply that a man named Adam existed at one time or another, but came from hominoid ancestors, who came from monkeys, which came from a slime pit. The argument about the “historicity of Adam” is simply the latest line drawn in the doctrinal sand by ineffectual defenders of creation in churches that long ago sold out the historicity of Genesis 1–3.

The first issue is not the historicity of Adam, but whether Adam was created from the dust on the sixth day, as God’s Word says and as the confessions maintain. “We believe that God created man out of the dust of the earth.”⁵

Both issues of the days of Genesis and the historicity of Adam stem from the root of distrust—unbelief—

of the word of God in Genesis, and thus from a denial of the infallibility and inspiration of Scripture, writings that the confessions call “holy and divine Scriptures,” as free from error and from man’s criticism as God Himself.⁶

Rev. Hyde’s reference to the “relationship between justification and sanctification” is curious, because that relationship has been settled in Reformed churches for nearly 500 years. These are his subtle code words for the Federal Vision heresy. Reformed churches are treating the Federal Vision as though it were almost exclusively a heresy about justification—a debate, mostly friendly, about the relationship between justification and sanctification. Almost to a man, they ignore the root of the Federal Vision in the heretical conditional covenant doctrine of universal covenant grace to every baptized child. This issue touches the fundamental Reformed doctrines of grace and the covenant. Fighting against it is fighting for the very life of a church. Hardly could it be construed as bickering.

NAPARC has been dead silent on the Federal Vision and tolerates in its membership denominations that exonerate and shelter Federal Vision teachers such as PCA minister Rev. Craig Higgins, who sat at NAPARC as a delegate. John M. Otis of the RPCUS wrote an excellent piece on Higgins, in which Otis demonstrated that Higgins’ teachings align perfectly with the Federal Vision, and in which Otis called for an investigation of his views.⁷

In the same vein, Hyde’s reference to Dordt as exemplary in tolerating differences is absurd because the extent of Christ’s atonement is not a minor point of doctrine. It is also ridiculous to suppose that the Canons of Dordt can be read as supporting three incompatible positions on the extent of Christ’s atonement, when they teach, “Christ effectively redeem[ed]...all those, and those only, who were from eternity chosen to salvation.”⁸ Dordt convened to deal with such intolerable differences in the churches. By its formula of subscription Dordt bound Reformed officebearers not to tolerate such differences, but to uphold the creeds and

⁴ Westminster Confession of Faith 4, in Philip Schaff, ed., *The Creeds of Christendom* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998), 3:611.

⁵ Belgic Confession 14, in *ibid.*, 3:398.

⁶ Belgic Confession 3, in *ibid.*, 3:385.

⁷ See <http://theaquilareport.com/discerning-roman-catholic-tendencies-among-professing-reformed-churches/>.

⁸ Canons of Dordt 2.8, in *Creeds*, 3:587.

so doing to promote unity. How to express the “extent and intent” of Christ’s satisfaction is not an open question for a Reformed man.

While upbraiding his audience for bickering about substantive issues, Rev. Hyde did not chastise his audience for bickering over women in office. This issue was the cause of his own denomination’s tumultuous separation from the CRC—one of the largest splits in the Reformed churches in recent memory—and the ground for NAPARC’s expulsion of the CRC in 1997.

The question for Rev. Hyde is this: Is women in office worth bickering about and important enough to justify the separate existence of the URC as a denomination that differs not one whit in principle doctrine from her estranged mother? If it is not, those churches should repent, confess the sin of schism, and return to the CRC, and NAPARC should issue an apology to the CRC and invite her back.

The issues that Rev. Hyde censures Reformed churches for bickering over—creation, salvation by grace, and the covenant—are far more fundamental than the issue of women in office. If it came down to hard choices, I would rather have a woman teach me the truth about the creation days, Adam, justification and sanctification, grace, and the covenant, than to have a dishonest minister teach me that the days in Genesis 1 mean long periods of millions of years, that justification comes after sanctification on the basis of works, or that the covenant is conditioned on my faith. I would take Deborah over some false prophet.

Rev. Hyde’s *ex opera operato* statement about the preaching and the sacraments is astounding for a man who calls himself Reformed. True, he says we need preaching and the sacraments along with our reliance on the Holy Spirit, but the question is where can a Reformed believer find a true church where Christ and His Spirit are operating?

The Belgic Confession tells him. “If the pure doctrine of the gospel is preached therein; if she maintains the pure administration of the sacraments as instituted by Christ; if church discipline is exercised in punishing sin.... Hereby the true Church may be certainly known.”⁹ Rev. Hyde calls them “our bare external con-

servativism.” The confession calls them the “marks of the true church.” In such a church the Spirit brings revival, reformation, and reconciliation. This is also *how* the Spirit brings revival, reformation, and reconciliation. There never will be any reformation without sound doctrine, pure preaching, properly administered sacraments, and discipline.

Rev. Hyde’s statement about Dordt and Westminster intended to shock his audience is, therefore, not shocking at all. This is not because of division, but because of lip service to, or open contempt for, Dordt and Westminster that have created the division. The censurable arrogance is that of men who cast aside Dordt and Westminster, of churches that stubbornly refuse to discipline the heretics who proudly introduce novelties and false doctrine, and of the stubborn refusal of both to repent.

Rev. Hyde’s dream is the old nightmare of unity at the expense of the truth. His proposed unity at the expense of the truth is not Christ’s. Christ never prayed for this kind of unity. He does not work for this kind of unity. He is opposed to it and opposes, in the spirit of I Kings 22:17–28, those who promote it.

This unity is not based on the Trinity either, as Rev. Hyde suggests. He co-opts the Trinity to support a unity with real, significant, and fundamental doctrinal differences, as though the Father, Son, and Spirit hold different opinions on the extent of Christ’s atonement, the days of Genesis, Adam’s historicity, and the relationship between justification and sanctification, but peacefully coexist together.

Is NAPARC serious about the confessions that are the stated basis of its unity, or have they become window dressing for unity at the expense of the creeds? Did NAPARC issue a rebuke to Rev. Hyde for his speech? Did anyone at NAPARC speak up and say what a Reformed church thinks about these issues and about a Reformed minister who speaks this way about them?

The speech is proof that if one is enamored of this kind of unity—not Christ’s, Scripture’s, and the creed’s—he simply will not allow the truth to stand in the way of attaining it. 

⁹ Belgic Confession 29, in *Creeds*, 3:419–20.

By the Vision of Another World: Worship in American History, ed. James D. Bratt. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2012. 221 pages. Paperback. \$25.00. ISBN 978-0-8028-6710-0. Reviewed by Douglas J. Kuiper.

The heart of this book consists of seven essays, each of which explores worship in a particular time in American history, and by a particular subculture. The first essay focuses on the worship of the Puritans in the 1500s and 1600s; the second on worship in American Methodism in the 1700s; the third on the worship of Our Lady of Guadalupe by the San Antonio Texans in the 1800s; the fourth on worship of African Americans in Georgia during the Jim Crow era; the fifth on how the National Catholic Rural Life Conference affected Romish Liturgy in the early to mid 1900s; the sixth on a comparative history of Park Congregational Church and Eastern Avenue Christian Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, MI, from the mid 1800s to the present; and the seventh on American Catholicism since the 1950s, noting some of the changes made by the Second Vatican Council. The essays appear in a generally chronological order.

The book's final section consists of three more essays, each a commentary on the seven historical essays.

This book is part of the Liturgical Studies series of books put out by the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship. The series includes some valuable books. I do not consider this particular book to be one of them.



Anyone reading a compilation of essays will find some chapters more interesting than others. I was most interested in those regarding Puritan worship, and the

comparative history of Park Congregational Church and Eastern Avenue CRC. But even the general point of the latter chapter was not gripping to me. Within the fabric of the history of these congregations, James Bratt kept weaving the subtheme of how both congregations produced conservative political leaders for the Grand Rapids area and in the state and federal legislature. And this underscores that all seven of the historical essays have “worship” only as their starting point; they mean to show that worship affected the lives of the people in every area—from planting crops to fighting wars to running for political office.

Another thing: if the *Calvin* Institute for Christian Studies, a nominally Reformed thinktank, were to publish a history of American worship, I would fully expect it to include chapters about the worship of Methodism and Roman Catholicism, and I would expect to read the book with profit. However, this book is not a “history” of “worship,” but is about “worship” in “history”—that is, each of the seven main essays is just one snapshot of worship in one denomination or subculture. One has to be interested both in worship and in Puritanism, or Methodism, or Roman Catholicism, to want to pick up this book. And *three* of the *seven* essays are devoted to worship in the Romish tradition, while *five* of the *ten* authors appear to be Roman Catholic—yet nary a word of negative evaluation of the worship of Rome is to be found in this book.

For an evaluation of Rome's worship, and instruction for the Reformed believer regarding worship that pleases God, it appears that one cannot turn to various books put out by the Calvin Institute for Christian Studies; but one could turn to various chapters of Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion*.

And that, dear readers, would be a better use of your time. ☺

Rev. Kuiper is pastor of the First Protestant Reformed Church of Edgerton, Minnesota.

January 9, 2013
First Protestant Reformed Church, Grand Rapids

Classis East met in regular session on Wednesday, January 9, 2013 at the First PRC, Grand Rapids. Each church was represented by two delegates. The session was chaired by Rev. Jonathan Mahtani, a first for him.

Classis dealt with two discipline cases. In both cases classis advised the consistory to proceed to the second step of discipline for their members. This according to Article 77 of the Church Order.

Much of the January meeting time is spent in voting. Elected to serve as delegates to synod are the following: Ministers: *Primi*: G. Eriks, K. Koole, W. Langerak, J. Slopsema, R. VanOverloop; *Secundi*: N. Decker, M. DeVries, C. Haak, A. Spriensma, M. VanderWal. Elders: *Primi*: G. Kaptein, N. Kleyn, G. Kuiper, B. Pipe, J. VanBaren; *Secundi*: G. Boverhof, R. Faber, J. Lanting, J. VanUffelen, B. Wigger. Rev. K. Koole and

Rev. C. Haak were elected to serve as church visitors, with Rev. R. VanOverloop and Rev. M. DeVries as alternates. Rev. C. Haak was elected to serve a three-year term as *primus* delegate *ad examina*; Rev. G. Eriks was elected to serve a three-year term as *secundus* delegate *ad examina*. Rev. K. Koole was elected to serve a three-year term on the Classical Committee.

Subsidy requests for 2014 were submitted by the Kalamazoo PRC (\$34,000) and by the Wingham PRC (\$41,000 Canadian). These requests were approved and will be forwarded to Synod 2013 for approval.

The church visitors reported that they found peace and unity among the churches, for which they gave thanks.

The expenses of classis amounted to \$24.00. Classis will meet next at the Faith PRC on May 8, 2013.

Respectfully submitted,
Jon J. Huisken,
Stated Clerk 

Congregation Activities

Again remembering the Word of God found in I Timothy 3:15: "...the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth," we call your attention to the anniversary of the Faith PRC in Jenison, MI, organized on February 22, 1973.

Speaking of Faith, we are reminded that on Sunday, December 30, during their evening service, they had an uninvited guest make an appearance. A bat decided that then was a good time to make several fly-overs of the

congregation. This bat also seemed to have a special attraction to Rev. Nathan Decker, who was filling a classical appointment at Faith that evening. After several failed attempts to remove the unwelcome and uninvited visitor, the bat was persuaded to leave. The entire episode makes one wonder about the old saying of churches having bats in their belfries.

In early January, the consistory of the Peace PRC in Lansing, IL approved a request from the faculty of our Seminary that they oversee the internship of Seminarian Joshua Engelsma. The Lord willing, this internship will begin on July 1 of this year and run through December 31. Rev. Clayton Spronk, along with the

consistory and congregation of Peace, look forward to the time when they can welcome Seminarian Engelsma and his wife, Courtney, and their children, Calvin and Charlotte, into their fellowship.

Once again this year, members of the Lynden, WA PRC are joining together at the Christian Health Center for their monthly time of singing. Lynden's congregation sings at the Center the third Tuesday of each month, and all those able to make it were heartily welcomed to join together as they rejoiced with the aged saints in praise through song.

The Men's Bible Study of the First PRC in Grand Rapids, MI met together Saturday morning, January

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

19, at 8:00 A.M., preceded by breakfast at 7:30 A.M. Discussion centered on the subject, "Developing Godly Characteristics for Leadership in the Home."

There was a reminder in a recent bulletin from First, GR that it was not too late to join one of the two Bible-reading groups started there in January. One group is doing a reading of the New Testament with Psalms and Proverbs, and another doing the entire Bible in a year.

On Sunday evening, January 20, in the nearby Covenant Christian High School gymnasium, the Hope PRC in Walker, MI presented a short picture/video program of their recent trip to visit the Myanmar PRC. A collection was taken to support that work.

Sunday morning, January 6, several of our churches initiated changes to their worship services. The Kalamazoo, MI PRC began having an announced silent prayer in unison following the prelude at their worship service, and the congregation of First PRC in Edmonton, AB, Canada began standing to sing the Psalter number before their congregational prayer.

The members of the Southeast PRC in Grand Rapids, MI were invited to take an active part in a combined Christmas/Talent Concert on January 6 at their church. A light supper was provided by the Young People after the evening worship service, followed by the concert. A collection was taken to help fund Southeast's participation in this summer's Young People's Convention.

Mission Activities

Wednesday evening, January 16, Rev. Wilbur Bruinsma, missionary

pastor of the PR Fellowship of Pittsburgh, PA, began an Old Testament Bible Class in Cranberry, a suburb of Pittsburgh, in the Cranberry Township Municipal Center. There were 17 registrants signed up from Cranberry, joining members of the Pittsburgh Fellowship for what was an interesting and exciting evening and class.

Young People's Activities

The young people of the Randolph, WI PRC were reminded in a recent church bulletin of a planned rock-climbing activity followed by a stop afterward for dinner. Evidently the organizers of the rock climbing had enough confidence in the abilities of their young people to climb, that they planned for supper afterwards.

The Young People of the Lynden, WA PRC continued their topical study of the book of Proverbs, January 6, with a look at what Proverbs has to say about money and riches. Young people go to school (in part, anyway) so that they can get a good job someday, maybe even a career, and

earn a living. It's a fact of life that we all need money, and if we're honest, we'd have to admit that we would like riches too! But what does Proverbs, and the rest of the Bible, say about money and wealth and riches. What does the writer of Proverbs mean when he says, "There is that maketh himself rich, yet hath nothing: there is that maketh himself poor, yet hath great riches" (Prov. 14:7). Sounds like the potential for a good discussion!

The Young People of First PRC in Holland, MI invited their congregation to join them at Heritage Christian School in Hudsonville, MI for a Mexican Family Night fundraiser on Saturday, January 19.

Minister Activities

Rev. David Overway, pastor of the Doon, IA PRC, received the call from the vacant Hope PRC in Walker, MI to serve as their next pastor.

Rev. Allen Brummel declined the call extended to him from the Randolph PRC in Wisconsin. ☺

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Resolution of Sympathy

■ The Women's Wednesday Morning Bible Study of Southwest PRC expresses its Christian sympathy to present and former members, Pam Cleary, Angie TenBrock, and Sheila VanDonselaar, in the death of their mother,

MRS. BEULAH DE ZWARTE, of Pella, Iowa. May our covenant God continue to comfort them in their loss by His Word and Spirit. "The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms" (Deuteronomy 33:27a).

Rev. A. denHartog, Bible leader
Evonne Kreuzer, Secretary/Treasurer

Teacher needed

■ Adams Christian School in Wyoming, Michigan is seeking a part-time 6th grade teacher for the 2013-2014 school year. Please inquire with the school principal, Rick Mingerink, for more information and application requirements. Please contact Rick at school (616) 531-0748 or rickmingerink@gmail.com.

Wedding Anniversary

■ With great thankfulness to God, we would like to announce that our parents, **NICHOLAS and INA KLEYN**, celebrated their 50th Wedding Anniversary on February 1, 2013. We are thankful for their godly example all these years, in taking seriously their responsibility to train up their children in the way they should go. God has been merciful and gracious and blessed them abundantly. "Yea, thou shalt see thy children's children, and peace upon Israel" (Psalm 128).

- * Cornelis and Rebecca Kleyn
Rachel, Abbie, Kelsie, Justin, Jared
- * Rev. Daniel and Sharon Kleyn
- * Nicholas and Deb Kleyn
Lynette, Peter, Susan, Sharon,
Brenda, Valerie, Denise, Nicholas
- * Arthur and Andrea Kleyn
Ruth, James, David, Daniel
- * Rev. Rodney and Liz Kleyn
Sarah, Alyssa, Matthew, Aaron,
Anna
- * Steven and Sarah-Lynn Kleyn
Samuel, Luke
- * Steve and Maria Lotterman
Davinia, Kristen, Marielle, Brett,
Connor
- * Phillip and Kristin Kleyn
Zachary, Ethan, Seth, Tyler
- * Wally and Nikki Kleyn
Jerry, Miranda, Katie, Hamish, Toby
- * Michael and Heidi Klaassens
Jessica, Calvin, Quinten, Karisa,
Simon, Brianna
- * Joe and Heidi Kleyn
Makayla, Caleb, Hannah, Levi, Will
- * Tim and Betsy Kleyn
Julia, Evan, Libby
- * Lydia Kleyn

Grand Rapids, Michigan

Classis West

■ Classis West of the Protestant Reformed Churches will meet in Lynden, WA on Wednesday, March 6, 2013, at 8:30 A.M., the Lord willing.

Rev. D. Kuiper, Stated Clerk

Wedding Anniversary

■ With thankfulness and praise to God, we rejoiced with our parents, **MINARD and CORA VAN DEN TOP**, as they celebrated 65 years of marriage on February 6, 2013. We are thankful to God for the love they share with each other but also shown to us their children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren. May the Lord continue to bless them throughout this life to the glory of His name. "I will make thy name to be remembered in all generations: therefore shall the people praise thee for ever and ever" (Psalm 45:17).

- * Jerry and Karen VanDenTop
- * John and Judy Bouma
- * Duane Netten (Beverly in glory)
- * Marlene VanDenTop (Henry in glory)
16 Grandchildren
30 Great Grandchildren

Hull, Iowa

Call to Aspirants to the Ministry

■ All young men desiring to begin studies in the Theological School of the Protestant Reformed Churches in the 2013-2014 academic year should make application at the March 21, 2013 meeting of the Theological School Committee.

A testimonial from the prospective student's consistory that he is a member in full communion, sound in faith and upright in walk, and exhibits the qualities and personality necessary for a gospel minister; a certificate of health from a reputable physician; and a college transcript must accompany the application. Before entering the seminary, all students must have earned a bachelor's degree and met all of the course requirements for entrance to the seminary. These entrance requirements are listed in the seminary catalog available from the school.

All applicants must appear before the Theological School Committee for interview before admission is granted. In the event that a student cannot appear at the March 21 meeting, notification of this fact, along with a suggested interview date, must be given to the secretary of the Theological School Committee before this meeting.

All correspondence should be directed to the Theological School Committee,

4949 Ivanrest Avenue SW
Grandville, MI 49418.

Jon Huiskens, Secretary

* * * * *

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