

The Standard Bearer

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Jehovah's Name Revealed

And he said, I beseech thee, shew me thy glory. And he said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy.

Exodus 33:18-19

When Israel blatantly disregarded God's holy law in the matter of the golden calf, God, through His appointed officebearers, slew three thousand of those who had not repented. Now, in light of Israel's great sin against God, the question in Moses' mind was, will God's goodness and mercy continue with us or not?

In order to be assured of that, Moses asked God to reveal His glory, to which request God responded by revealing His glorious name. In light of our great and many sins, we too need to know whether God will continue with us or not. Wonderfully, God also reveals His name to us.

Rev. Marcus is pastor of the First Protestant Reformed Church in Edmonton, Alberta.



Knowing that Israel had sinned a great sin, Moses, a type of Jesus Christ our Mediator, prayed to God seeking Israel's forgiveness. "Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin—; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written" (Ex. 32:32). Already here, when Moses asked God to blot him out in Israel's place, we see something of a recognition that God would require a substitute to pay for the sins of His people.

In response, God made it clear to Moses that He could not simply overlook sin: "Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book..." (Ex. 32:33). Immediately following this, God told Moses, "I will not go up in the midst of thee; for thou art a stiffnecked people: lest I consume thee in the way" (Ex. 33:3). In themselves, Israel did not deserve God's presence.

Understandably, Moses, the typical mediator, was concerned for Israel. It was not enough that God would be favorable to Moses; Moses wanted to know whether God would be favorable to *Israel* and continue to count *them* as His people (cf. Ex. 33:13). Moses must know

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whether God would go with Israel or not: “And he said unto him, If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence. For wherein shall it be known here that I and thy people have found grace in thy sight? Is it not in that thou goest with us? So shall we be separated, I and thy people, from all the people that are upon the face of the earth” (Ex. 33:15-16).

Whereupon God told Moses that He would go with Israel. But Moses wanted to be absolutely sure; so he asked God, “I beseech thee, shew me thy glory” (Ex. 33:18). As if to say, “Show me that which is a manifestation of Thy glorious and favorable presence with us.” Although Moses did not have the same level of understanding we have today, ultimately his request boils down to this: Show me the Christ, who is the brightness of God’s glory and the express image of His person (cf. Heb. 1:2-3). Show me who will go with Israel to bring them to the promised land! We know from I Corinthians 10:4 that Christ, the spiritual Rock, did indeed go with Israel.

Is that not what all of us ought to pray as we make our way through this world? “Show us Thy glory. Lord, we dare not go through this wilderness without Thy presence. If Thy presence go not with us, then our journey to the promised land cannot prosper. If Thy presence go not with us, then carry us not up from here.” How many people imagine they can journey through life without Jesus Christ! How many imagine they can get into the promised land by themselves! But the truth remains, Jesus Christ is the only way. Miserable is that soul who thinks he can make it on his own. With Moses, we ought to pray, “Lord shew me thy glory. Show me that Thou art favorable towards me and all Thy people.”



In response to that request, God promised to reveal Himself to Moses: “And he said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy” (Ex. 33:19). Jehovah’s name, of course, is not just some letters on a page; rather, His name is the sum total of the revelation of God’s being and nature. So when God promised to make His goodness pass

before Moses, that very act would amount to a proclamation of Jehovah’s name.

Up on the mountain, just as He had promised, God revealed His glory to Moses: “And the LORD descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the LORD” (Ex. 34:5). And a glorious name it was! What was the content of God’s name revealed? “And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin...” (Ex. 34:6-7).

This is the name that Moses needed to know in light of Israel’s great sin. This is the revelation we need to know when our sins rise up against us and accuse our consciences. Israel needed to know about the LORD God (Heb. *Jehovah El*, referring to the great I AM, who is the mighty God). Israel needed to know about the I AM who does not depend upon us for His faithfulness, the God who is able to deliver His people from their misery.

What must Moses know about this glorious God? He is a God of mercy, truly moved to care for us according to His deep-seated compassion. He is a God of grace, showering us with favor despite our sinfulness. He is longsuffering to us-ward, slow to anger, not willing that any of us, His people, should perish. He is abundant in goodness and truth, overflowing with goodness far beyond measure toward undeserving sinners, ever true to His promise.

His goodness and truth are revealed in the fact that He keeps mercy to thousands of generations, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin. That is to say, He forgives all sorts of offenses: He forgives the iniquity of our crooked natures; He forgives us for our rebellion in transgressing His law; and He forgives us for missing the mark of His perfect holiness.

Strikingly, part of the revelation of God’s goodness includes the revelation of His justice: “And that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and upon the children’s children, unto the third and fourth generation” (Ex. 34:7b). If someone sins, God cannot pretend there is no guilt. Rather, He will punish the guilt of sin from one generation to the next.

Although God's mercy and His justice might appear to contradict each other, they are in fact in complete harmony: When God forgives, He does not ignore justice in the least. Instead, He fulfills His perfect justice *in order that* He might show mercy towards His people. Exodus 34 makes it clear that God's goodness embraces all of His attributes, including His mercy and justice.



As soon as we look at God's mercy and justice together, we are led to the most glorious manifestation of God's name.

What is the name that Jehovah revealed to Moses? It is the name according to which God would be gracious to whom He would be gracious and be merciful on whom He would be merciful. God's glorious name is revealed in His grace and mercy manifested towards His elect through Jesus Christ. When Moses needed to know whether God would continue faithful to Israel or not, God revealed that His grace and mercy are unconditional: He will be gracious to whomever He wills. He will be gracious in Jesus Christ.

How can God be gracious and merciful to forgive us our sins? Through the blood of the Lamb, Jesus Christ,

who fully satisfied God's justice by taking the guilt of our sins upon Himself and suffering in our place.

The most glorious manifestation of God's name, therefore, is found in Jesus Christ. "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high..." (Heb. 1:1-3). Jesus being the brightness of God's glory, it is impossible that any mere creature could show forth God's glorious mercy and justice like He does.

Will God go with sinners such as we are and bring us to the heavenly Canaan? If God will not go with us, then truly our plight is hopeless. Thankfully, God has revealed Himself in Jesus, whose name is Immanuel, "God with us."

When Moses saw the revelation of God's name on Mount Sinai, he made haste, and bowed his head toward the earth, and worshiped. We have the most glorious revelation of Jehovah's name. How do we respond?



EDITORIAL

REV. KENNETH KOOLE

Calvin, Hoeksema, and the Free Offer (3)

As stated at the conclusion of our June editorial, we intend with this article to conclude our response to various articles found in the *Mid-America Journal of Theology (MJT)* of the past few years. What is so trou-

Previous article in this series: June 2013, p. 388

bling about these articles is that they make clear that their authors (who represent where most of Reformed theology is at these days, we fear) are committed not simply to promoting common grace and the free offer of the gospel, but to promoting these two doctrines as *defining faithfulness to historic Calvinism* in the twenty-first century.

And, as noted, running through

these articles is a common refrain, namely, sharp criticism aimed at H. Hoeksema for his (and, by implication, the PRC's) steadfast rejection of these two increasingly popular doctrines—which rejection is to be counted as the definition of hyper-Calvinism. So they say.

And all this over against the undeniable reality that, over the century past, mainline Presbyterian

and Reformed churches have diminished numerically, theologically, and spiritually—the world has come in like a flood. Sanctuaries that once housed thriving Calvinistic congregations stand all but empty; or, worse, they house preachers promoting doctrines that can only be labeled biblically profane. And now we are to believe that this has occurred because in the Reformed church-world over the past hundred years or so, there has been *too much* emphasis on God's sovereign particular saving grace, along with the call to the antithetical, Christian life? And *not enough emphasis* on Kuyperian common grace and its related doctrines? That is what went wrong in the Netherlands? And in 'darkest' England? To say nothing of what we see happening to North American Protestantism these days?

One is left shaking his head in bewilderment.

None are so blind as those who refuse to see.

We realize that the 'higher-critical' assault of the late 1800s against Scripture's trustworthiness is much to blame. But let no one forget, it is exactly the theory of common grace that has loaned itself again and again to Protestant theologians adopting the views of unbelieving scientists in their denials of various sections of Scripture. Why no six-day creation, no Adam or Eve, no universal flood, or even a virgin birth? Because, according to common grace, the Holy Spirit has given insight to godless scientists into these things, even when their conclusions contradict the scriptural accounts.

Modern-day assaults from within the church against biblical teaching after biblical teaching have everything to do with Kuyper and his theory of common grace. A legacy he did not want to leave—but consistent with his theory for all of that.



That said, it is on the issue of the free or well-meant offer of the gospel (FOG or WMO) that we wish to make some concluding remarks.

Significantly, from the outset, when the CRC Synod of 1924 drew up its well-known "three points of common grace," its stalwart critics, taking special note of that reference in its *first point to the call of the gospel* as an evidence of a grace of God that was common to all, shrewdly designated it as *Het puntje van het eerste punt*, that is, "The little [but most significant] point of the first point." Already then the WMO, with its general grace that cut against God's particular saving grace, was making its invasive presence felt. Common grace posits a general love of God for all men in common things, and the free offer enthrones that general love on the pulpit.

And now common grace is tied in with the grace that finds its roots in the cross and the atonement.

That has huge implications.

That said, we begin by lifting a couple of brief quotes from Calvin.

We do this to underscore the assertion made towards the conclusion of our previous *SB* article (June 1), namely, that Calvin, unlike the free-offer theologians, was

not a theologian who maintained a double will in God. He was not of a mind that, when it comes to the salvation of mankind, there are in God two wills, one of a discriminating, electing sort, and another of an 'indiscriminating love' and desire for the 'salvation of all' sort. Calvin was committed to the truth of God's one, sovereignly-free, decretal will.

A couple of quotes lifted from *Calvin's Calvinism* should suffice to show this.

Both quotes come from Calvin's response to Pighius, a Roman Catholic theologian who attacked Calvin for his emphasis upon God's sovereign, discriminating will—in love predestinating some to salvation, and in eternal wrath reprobating others to condemnation. Pighius condemned such a teaching about God as being monstrous. Pighius insisted not only that Scripture taught the free will of man but also that there was in God a will that all be saved.

Calvin would have nothing of this. Calvin pointed out that if such was God's desire and part of His will, He would have made sure every man ever living had opportunity to hear the gospel. But, as Calvin reminded Pighius, in the whole history of the world, in both the Old and New Testament ages, God never did this. And so, states Calvin:

Now let Pighius boast, if he can, that God willeth *all men* to be saved! The above arguments, found in the Scriptures, prove that even the external preaching of the doctrine of salvation, which is very far inferior to the illumination of

the Spirit, was not made of God common to *all men* (p. 104).

And again, in a later section:

Our Lord [Jesus] declares that the preaching of the gospel and miracles would have produced more fruit among the people of Nineveh and Sodom than in Judea (Matt. 11:23). How came it then, that if God would have all to be saved, he does not open a door of repentance for the wretched, who would more readily have received grace? Hence we see that the passage [Ezekiel 18:32] is violently wrested, if the will of God, which the prophet mentions, is opposed to his eternal counsel, by which he separated the elect from the reprobate (pp. 205-6).

For a more extended treatment of Calvin's response to Pighius and others of that mentality, the interested reader can read Prof. D. J. Engelsma's book *Hyper-Calvinism & the Call of the Gospel* (chapter 6—"Calvin's Doctrine of the Call").

Second, we point out that Hoeksema and the PRC have not stood alone in their opposition to the well-meant offer of the gospel. We state this lest we give credibility to the oft repeated allegation that the PRC are absolutely unique in their opposition to the WMO, and, therefore, to be dismissed as a historical oddity, deserving to be labeled as "hyper-Calvinists."

If our opposition to the WMO warrants that charge, then a man of no less academic and confessional stature than the late Dr. John Gerstner must be so labeled as well. It was Dr. Gerstner who in his "Fore-

word" to Engelsma's book refuting the free-offer declared:

As a Calvinist [!]...I feel it absolutely necessary to hold with [the tiny Protestant Reformed denomination] here where she stands, almost alone today, and suffers massive vituperation and ridicule from Calvinists (no less) for her faithfulness at this point to the gospel of God.

And, ironic as it sounds, you can add to that list of opponents of the WMO the name of Abraham Kuyper, who, for all his 'fathering' of the contemporary infatuation with common grace, was an adamant foe of the WMO, with its positing of a double, paradoxical will in God, labeling it as a flat-out contradiction. Kuyper went so far as to label those who took his common grace teaching and applied it to the preaching of the gospel as another evidence of a general love of God for all as "zealots [!] of common grace," that is, as extremists. In the name of particular grace he pleaded that they not apply the non-saving grace of common grace in this way.

But the seed was planted, and Kuyper was powerless to prevent the logical consequences of his own teachings from taking deep root.

Nonetheless, a Calvinistic theologian of no less confessional stature than Kuyper sharply opposed the free offer, seeing clearly what it implied and what it would do to preaching that ought to have at its 'marrow' particular and saving grace with its sovereign, irresistible power.

And, as we stated in a previous

article, those whom we know as the "Liberated," at least early on, added their salvos against common grace and the free offer, standing in basic agreement with Hoeksema and the PRC's contention that to enlist Calvin's name in support of the contemporary 'inflated' view of common grace and the WMO was simply not sustainable. As Dr. Beach himself acknowledges, concerning one of their older theologians:

J. Douma is another writer who does not detect in Calvin's thought "a dogma of common grace." To be sure, notes Douma, Calvin speaks of "common grace," but never as a "dogma" or a "doctrine." It is not even a "theme" he addresses formally. Calvin knows but one divine grace. This one grace, however, can be distinguished with regard to its *extent* and *effect*. As for its extent, this grace reaches both within and beyond the church; as for its effect, it leads some to repentance and proves non-*efficacious* for others. All grace is directed to the knowledge and praise of God. Thus, even the heathen are invited to the knowledge of God, though none of them attain salvation without Christ. For Douma, it is harmful to speak of Calvin and the doctrine (*leer*) of common grace. Douma's concern is polemical in spirit, wishing to set off sharply Calvin's use of the idea of common grace from the doctrine developed by Abraham Kuyper in the Netherlands at the turn of the century, a development Douma views as a perversion of Calvin's teaching (*MJT* 22, 2011, p. 60-1).

With this perspective we are in

basic agreement. What Douma has in mind by his reference to the “extent” of grace would need some clarification, but with his calling Kuyper’s doctrine of common grace a perversion of Calvin’s teaching we wholeheartedly agree.

The third observation that needs to be made is that the language of the WMO with its “God desires and yearns for the salvation of every one of you, etc.” is not apostolic. It is contrary to *their* Calvinism, that is, to their preaching a sovereign, predestinating God, and to their gospel summons to all and sundry in Christ’s great name to come unto Him and be saved.

Our evidence for this?

The apostolic sermon specimens found in the book of Acts, sermons that were promiscuous to Jew and Gentile alike and to whoever happened to be in their audience that day. They offered (that is, presented) to all and sundry Christ in all His truth, and glory, and graciousness. “He is a saving Lord of great sinners!”

We maintain that the gospel offer is found in these sermons.

Surely no promoters of the WMO would want to dispute that. How can they, when they insist that, when it comes to preaching (and in missions especially), the offer of the gospel is “the very marrow of divinity”, that is, the choicest, fullest expression of the Spirit moving a man to preach the great gospel summons. Are we to suppose that what belongs to what has been called “the very marrow of divinity” was absent in these great, pattern sermons preserved for the

ages? What is called the “marrow of divinity” is absent from the sermons of the apostles Peter and Paul, the two greatest missionaries of all time?

Surely, such is unthinkable.

We contend that whatever it is that properly belongs to the “marrow” of the gospel-preaching honored by the Holy Spirit is sure to be found in the great specimen sermons of the apostles recorded in the book of Acts.

There are a number of seminal examples of mission preaching in the book of Acts. Two especially stand out, the one being Peter’s sermon found in Acts 10 to the household of Cornelius; the other, Paul’s sermon in Antioch of Pisidia, found in Acts 13.

In accordance with the language that we find both in the Canons and in the Westminster Confession, we maintain that the apostles *offered Christ* sincerely in these sermons.

What is striking about those two pattern sermons is how the offer was phrased. It is almost identical in both.

In Acts 10 Peter concluded his sermon to Cornelius with these words: “And he [Christ] commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he who was ordained of God to be the judge of the quick and dead. To him give all the prophets witness, that *through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins*” (vv. 42, 43).

Take special note of the words we italicized and highlighted—because this is the language of the *apostolic, biblically-defined* gospel offer.

And in Acts 13 Paul concluded his sermon before the Jews in Antioch of Pisidia in words strikingly similar. “Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man [Jesus, crucified for sinners and raised by God again as prophesied] is preached unto you *the forgiveness of sins. And by him all that believe are justified from all things*, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses” (vv. 37, 38).

Again, note the words italicized and highlighted.

Other specimens from parts of other sermons by the evangelical-minded apostles could be quoted. All we want to point out is that these are God-approved sermons. These are words that the Spirit Himself spoke through the apostles. Strikingly, in neither is there a whisper of the language that is part and parcel of the well-meant offer.

We challenge any to find anything in these sermons that has free or well-meant offer language—“God loves you all, God yearns for the salvation of everyone whom I am addressing today.” Or “Christ is dead for everyone of you to whom I am speaking!”

Not a whisper.

We say it pointedly: we challenge any to deny that Christ was fully and sincerely ‘offered’ to all in these non-*free-offer* sermons! What is the promiscuous offer language of great-hearted preachers who were being moved powerfully by the Spirit Himself? This: “*Whosoever believeth in him* [that is, in this Christ Jesus set forth (PRESENT-ED) as the fulfillment of the Scrip-

tures and as the God-approved sacrifice for sin and sinners] *shall receive remission of sins.*"

Again we say, a universal, promiscuous call and summons (or 'offer,' if you prefer) to all and sundry!

But not a whisper of the free-offer language.

Accordingly, we challenge any to charge those who preach Christ this way, and offer Him on these terms and on these terms only, with being HYPER-Calvinists!

You may, of course. But we assert you might as well also then charge the apostles with being the original hyper-Calvinists.

The apostles in the Acts did not FOG the gospel call with "God desires, yearns for the salvation of everyone who hears these words. God has a love for every man." Or "Christ died for everyone of you, both Jews and Gentiles hearing these words." In the whole book of Acts one does not read *that* content in the apostles' addressing all and sundry with the call to repent and believe. They simply presented what God in and by Christ had accomplished for the payment of the sins of all mankind (meaning, not only those of Jewish extraction), calling *everyone* to repent and believe, assuring all

that heard ("Yes, even you uncircumcised idolaters!") that everyone who repented and believed would be forgiven and saved.

If that is hyper-Calvinism, so be it. We will have to live with the charge.

But whether it is justified is another matter entirely.

Evidently, what the free-offer men label as a deficient brand of preaching, caricaturing it as "mere announcement of truth," the apostles themselves were quite satisfied with and practiced.

With that we are content.

We repeat, the evidence is, if the preaching that is devoid of *free-offer* language puts one in the camp of the hyper-Calvinists, then the apostles themselves were the first residents of that *particular* camp!

All things considered, not such bad company to be in. We can think of worse.

In conclusion, we say again: our purpose in taking issue with what we have read in the recent MJTs is not simply to engage in controversy for controversy's sake, nor is it to defend the name of a man, much maligned though he be.

Nor is it so we can have the satisfaction of saying we are right, and others wrong.

The issue is so much larger these days.

Whatever our disagreement with others of Reformed vintage, on this there can be no disagreement—something is terribly amiss in the Reformed and Presbyterian church world of our day. Some virus vitiating its (her) very spirituality is loose. Who can disagree on the symptoms?

Now the great question must be put to the Doctors of Divinity (and to us all): what is the proper diagnosis of the cause and source? Worldliness, you say. Fine. But what is it that has rendered it so defenseless to the deadly virus of worldliness and apostasy these days?

Hoeksema's (and Bavinck's) covenant view? But not Kuyper's (and Bavinck's) common grace view and its attendant doctrines? Are you sure? Will you stake your patient's life on it? That of Christ's own church?

We ask again, could it be that Hoeksema and old Ophoff's analysis of common grace and its predicted consequences was right after all?

On the basis of the historical record, we would plead with what is left of the Calvinistic church world to reconsider. Once again! 

LETTERS

Your recent article ("Calvin, Hoeksema, and the Free Offer (1)"—May 1, 2013) came in a timely manner. I had just finished my dissertation on "Providence" and wrote in the "Further Research" section that providence must be recovered over and against common grace. As an ex-Arminian, I too agree with the EPCA's rejection of common grace and the well-meant offer on the grounds that it is the seedbed for Arminianism, and I wrote this [section in my dissertation] in response [to that reality].

Nancy A. Almodovar, Newburgh, IN

(Ed. Note: Mrs. Almodovar's letter was slightly edited. In correspondence, in which she told us of her interesting spiritual pilgrimage from Baptist Arminianism to the "Dutch" Reformed faith set forth in the Three Forms of Unity, Nancy informs us that she is working on a PhD in Apologetics at Trinity Theological Seminary (Newburgh, Indiana). Her dissertation is entitled Faith Seeking Unspeakable Consolation. Nancy and her husband staff an online counseling ministry called the Silent Cry Ministries.)

A Confessional Ministry: Seminary Graduation 2013 (2)

A Defense of Being Creedal

Being creedal is not contradictory to the Protestant rejection of Roman Catholic tradition. Some might suppose that, as heirs of the reformation that rejected Roman Catholicism, we must trumpet: “Tradition OR Scripture,” “Man-made documents OR God’s Word,” “Church tradition OR the supremacy of Scripture.” Not so! First, Protestantism’s rejection of Roman Catholic tradition was a rejection of their *mistaken* tradition, tradition *contrary* to Scripture: the immaculate conception, purgatory, etc. Second, Protestantism rejected the *view* of tradition held by Rome that elevated tradition to a position equal to or above Scripture, rather than being subject to Scripture. Protestantism rejects *that* tradition and *that* view of tradition. Our creeds themselves make that confession, trumpeting as it were: “Nothing we believe may contradict Scripture! Everything we believe comes from Scripture!”

Besides, *not* to be creedal—to adopt the theme “no creed but Christ”—is not only impossible, it’s fatal. As one faithful Lutheran theologian said over 200 years ago, as he was battling to maintain the historic Lutheran confessions: “Experience teaches us that those who reject a Creed, will speedily reject the Scriptures themselves.”¹

The safety of the people of God *requires* that the church they join be a creedal church.

¹ vonAmmon of Dresden, quoted in Schmauk and Benze, *The Confessional Principle and the Confessions...* Philadelphia: General Council Publication Board, 1911. 685.

Prof. Gritters is professor of Practical Theology in the Protestant Reformed Seminary.

This is the second part of the graduation speech—slightly modified for publication—given on Thursday evening, June 13, 2013, at Hudsonville PRC, in the presence of synod, the church, and the family and friends of Mr. Erik Guichelaar. First installment can be found in the July 2013 issue, p. 418.

That is not to say there are no dangers associated with being creedal—real dangers with which the devil tempts orthodox, creedal churches, *our* churches!

There is a danger—real danger!—of imagining that creeds are *automatic guarantors* of truth preservation (which is dead orthodoxy).

There is the danger—real danger!—of embracing creeds as though they are the conclusion of all dogmatic study, the climax and end of all biblical enquiry, as though no development of truth is needed or even possible beyond them.

There is the danger—real danger!—of teaching the creeds without making clear their biblical basis.

Related, there is the danger—real danger!—of allowing creeds to supersede the Bible in any way, even practically. That is, that we use them more than we use the Bible, and the people of God come to know them and love them more than they know and love the Bible. I may teach the young people how to view the creeds in their proper relationship to the Scriptures, but if my *practice* in catechetical instruction contradicts what I tell them, I have misused the creeds.

And there is the real danger of having them but not using them; of keeping them as valuable antiques hardly to be touched, much less put into use; of preserving them as something to be looked at and admired, but not properly utilized.

That reminds me of the father of one of my boyhood friends who had tools, it seemed, for the sake of having tools. His tools occupied his garage walls like fine china—to be seen but hardly ever touched. Tools! He would buy another pliers, not because he needed more pliers, but because he liked pliers. Tools! He was so enamored of tools, and how clean his tools were, that his life seemed miserable—at least his son’s did. He spent his time cleaning tools that never got dirty

because they never had anything to fix. In contrast to my father's rather cluttered tool assortment, where they were always dirty and often missing because they were being used, to fix bikes that we rode hard on our paper routes and to fix lawn-mowers that we used to buy motorcycles that we rode even harder. We used the tools for what tools are meant for.

Some people value creeds like my friend's father valued tools.

Mr. Guichelaar, *be careful* how you exercise your confessional ministry! Value creeds because they are useful, and then use them.

The Blessings of a Creedal Ministry

There are rich blessings in a creedal ministry.

First, the blessing is *theological*. Creeds serve the important purpose of *defining* and *defending* theological orthodoxy. If you trace the history of the creeds, you will find almost without exception that they are the fruit of the Spirit in the church when the church faced heretics, and the people of God were threatened with denials of the fundamental doctrines of the Word of God, *by men who claimed to believe the Scriptures!* Because "every heretic has his text," the faithful church was compelled to confess truth over against the misuse of the Scriptures.

These creeds then served the great purpose, over the centuries, of defining and helping defend theological orthodoxy. This is what our confessions are for us today. To put it differently, confessions serve, as Carl Trueman recently put it, as "instruments of exclusion."² Creeds are like walls, keeping out those who do not belong.

You must not be offended by an attitude of exclusivity and this excluding function of the creeds, for every church—even the most liberal—is exclusive, though most will not admit it. The liberal will exclude from his pulpit any conservative! Evolutionists lock out creationists from writing responsibilities in the church periodicals. And anyone who believes that women are to submit to their husbands and be silent in the church will be unwelcome in the gatherings of egalitarians. It's not just confessional Christians who are exclusivists.

Our creeds have that role: They define orthodoxy

² *The Creedal Imperative*, 44, 184.

and defend truth against those who would threaten to undo it, by excluding heretics from membership and especially from teaching positions.

Second, the blessing of creeds is *historical*. This is the main point we have been making, but let me highlight that benefit here. Creeds connect us to the church of the past. Christianity is rooted in history. Having confessions honors the church-directing work of Christ's Spirit in that history, as Jesus promised He would provide in John 14-16. Being creedal is the way in which we "walk in the old paths where is the good way" and "hold the traditions which [we] have been taught." It is towering arrogance to act as though we are the first ones in the long history of the Christian church to read the Scriptures.

Thus, being creedal helps us to think historically. Or (as I often put it) to "ask the question of history."

That is, whenever a question is faced, first ask, "How has the church in the past answered this question?" I try to train the students in seminary, whether that's in church government, liturgy, or missions, to ask: "How have our fathers answered this question?"

In my reading of one of the Reformed church magazines, I have been struck by the approach taken by the editor of the Q&A rubric. Such a writer has a very responsible position in leading a denomination. But for the past few years (I confirmed this recently by re-reading these columns carefully), almost every answer he has given has made no appeal to the creeds and no references to the church's position on the matter in history. Although his answers may have been correct, his method of answering is not a good Reformed method. There were questions regarding Sabbath observance, congregational meetings, free will, church unity, Christian discipline, Old Testament prophecy, and more. By taking that approach, the author is failing in a fundamental respect—to teach the people of God to think historically!

Recently I was asked about the PRC position on marriage, divorce, and remarriage. The question was asked in a hospital waiting room, a location not conducive to opening Scripture to defend and explain our position biblically. But I would not have started there even had it been possible. Instead, I said, "Let's meet for coffee some time to look at the scriptural evidence. But

I want you to know that this strict position is not the invention of the PRC. The teaching on marriage that the PRC now hold—for the most part—not so long ago was the position of your churches. It is what your fathers believed.”

It is my conviction that every hard question Reformed Christians face must be answered in that way. Being “creedal” puts us in that mindset. Studying history inoculates the people of God against diseases of heresies past. Being creedal keeps the people of God from loving novelty, from adopting the Athenian philosophy that if it is new, it must be good (see Acts 17:21).

Brother Guichelaar, be a confessional pastor!

Third, their blessing is *practical*, and let us not minimize the practical.

Credo identify us, as churches. That’s why creeds are often called “standards” or “banners.” We fly our creedal “flag” so that everyone knows who we are and what we stand for. If you are inclined to join the “Community Church” down the road, which has no creed to identify it, how will you know whether Pastor Bob will preach pre-millennial eschatology or post-millennial, Arminian or Calvinistic soteriology, Trinitarian theology or Socinianism? Or whether the elders will have an untrained member preaching, or the young people leading the next worship service? But to anyone who visits your *confessional* church you can say: *this* is what we believe and *this* is how we behave in worship.

Being creedal is good for our pastor, and our relationship to him. It makes very clear what we expect of him. It does not allow him to be a lord of the church whose sermons are unpredictable; but it compels him to be a servant of the church whose sermons must always be within the bounds of the confessions.

And who will ever minimize the practical importance of teaching the children? The practical benefit of creeds is pedagogical. What will the church teach our children? The instruction of the youth has always been an essential part of the church’s purpose with creeds. The ecumenical creeds were intended to be memorized. The Lutheran catechisms were designed for children. One of the deep-felt goals of Elector Frederick, when he commissioned Ursinus and Olevi-

anus to write the catechism of Heidelberg, was to teach the youth. And one hardly needs to be Presbyterian to know that, for Presbyterians, the Shorter Catechism is aimed at children.

So we teach the creeds to the children as soon as they have the capacity to learn them.

Already in 8th grade, at age 12 or 13, they begin memorizing the church’s confession. When they finish the Heidelberg they go on to the systematic approach of the Belgic Confession. And when they complete their study of Reformed doctrine’s essentials, they advance to a study of the Canons or the Church Order of Dordt, or one of the liturgical forms.

I thank God that we are creedal churches!

Fourth, the blessing of confessions is *doxological*.

Theology and doxology may never be separated. Confession is worship. Our “I believes” are intended for the sanctuary. As Calvin emphasized, proper theology has as its goal proper worship—doxology! Worship is extolling the great *worth* of God, magnifying the blessed *name* of God, and the worth and name of God are extolled and confessed collectively in the creeds! Worship is confessing that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father, that He saved us by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone—as a work of the triune God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. You recognize these as essential themes of our creeds.

Thus, our confessions are not only boundary markers—instruments of exclusion—important as that function is. They are instruments of praise, which praise is expressed with doctrinal precision, sometimes even polemically, but from a redeemed and glad heart.

Remember, too, that the central element of Reformed worship is preaching, in which truth is spoken and God is praised by that truth-speaking. So, if the confessions are the churches’ delineations of and defenses of *truth*, the confessions are the delineations and defenses of proper *worship*. We may never separate confession from praise!

That is the function of creeds among us. We explain the Heidelberg Catechism in public worship. We recite the Apostles’ Creed in public worship. Lengthy as is the Athanasian Creed, I love the use of it in special worship services as a beautiful and memorable confession of the

Trinity. The liturgical forms all are used for the public gatherings of the church.

For this reason reciting or reading an article of the Belgic Confession in public worship after the church recites the Apostles' Creed would be a wonderful way to utilize this beautiful creed.³ What better place than in public worship, among believers of like faith, to say with Article 1, "We all believe with the heart, and confess with the mouth, that there is one only simple and spiritual Being, which we call God; and that He is eternal, incomprehensible, invisible, immutable, infinite, almighty, perfectly wise, just, good, and the overflowing fountain of all good." Worship!

For the sake of God-glorifying worship, be a creedal pastor.

Powerful Forces Working Against Being Creedal Ministers

There are powerful forces in society and in the church against holding such instruments of praise.

Modern culture is not good soil in which to promote creedal Christianity. Consumerism promotes that Athenian philosophy—it must be new! Pragmatism declares the goodness only of that which is useful.

³ Although I believe the churches ought to adopt liturgical changes denominationally.

The wildly popular emergent churches—the newest species of mysticism—emphasize Christianity as a way of life rather than a set of teachings, belonging rather than believing. The emergent movement has no use for creeds, which one of them characterized as "brickianity" rather than Christianity. In the culture where proof is exclaiming, "I just know it in my heart," and "It's true for me even if it isn't for you," and "The Lord showed it to me," creeds cannot survive. For mysticism like this, the standard for truth and life will certainly not be some institutionally adopted statement of faith.

Behind these forces is unbelief. Sweeping, devastating, rank unbelief. Confessions are statements of *faith*. *Creed*, remember, means "I believe...." Thus, the force behind anti-creedalism is unbelief itself.



Brother Guichelaar, if you commit to being a creedal pastor, then by God's grace you will be a great blessing for the faith of the people of God. God will use you as an instrument in His hand to bless the Protestant Reformed Churches with well-grounded members, God-centered members, that is, with members who with their hearts believe, and with their hearts confess, to God's glory. 

Subduing the Earth

Before our Lord ascended into heaven, He gave us a mandate. He called us to go forth and make all nations disciples of Christ, teaching them to observe everything that Christ has taught us.

Constantly we are to be doing this. Centrally on Sunday by means of the official proclamation of the gospel, but also throughout the week, we are to be busily engaged in this work that our Lord has given

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us. Together we are to seek to learn all that Christ has taught us, applying it to our own lives, instructing our children, and bearing witness to others as the Lord opens up the door.

This is our mandate, our commission. Together we are to devote our efforts to glorify God by engaging in this work of great importance.

Yet many today would direct our attention to some other "mandate." This mandate, they say, is to go out and "subdue the earth." They then point us to the command given to Adam before the fall:

And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth (Gen. 1:28).

The church must not forget, they say, that fallen man is still called to subdue the earth. This mandate, then, they often place alongside the mandate to preach the gospel, as though there are two mandates that God is calling us to heed.

But what does it mean to subdue the earth? Many will say that it means to do things such as building better computers, constructing better bridges, and developing better healthcare programs. They often call this work “developing culture,” and the command to subdue the earth is commonly referred to as the “culture mandate.”

The last article considered what culture is. This article will take a look at Scripture’s use of the phrase “subduing the earth.”

Subduing the earth/land

Many err by taking this command to Adam and deciding on their own what it means. To understand this commandment and how it might apply to us today, we must look to Scripture for the interpretation.

The subject of subduing the earth comes up elsewhere in Scripture. Moses spoke of this when addressing the Israelites before they crossed the Jordan. He said that the Israelites were to go forth: “every man armed to battle, before the LORD, and the land shall be subdued before you” (Num. 32:29).

The word translated “land” here is the same one translated “earth” in Genesis 1:28. In other words, the work spoken of here can be referred to as either “subduing the earth” or “subduing the land.”

So what did Moses mean here by subduing the land?

Moses was talking about Israel’s calling to conquer the Canaanites and take possession of the promised land. When Israel went into the land of Canaan, they were to fight against their spiritual enemies, and set up the true worship of God in the land. When the enemies were defeated, and the tabernacle was set up, then the land would be said to be subdued.

We see this in the following quotation from the book of Joshua: “And the whole congregation of the children of Israel assembled together at Shiloh, and set up the tabernacle of the congregation there. And the land was subdued before them” (Josh. 18:1).

Israel subdued the land by fighting a spiritual battle of faith. Just as God had promised, they were victorious over these enemies, and set up the true tabernacle of God. This is how Israel, by God’s grace, subdued the land.

Christ: the King who subdues the land

The conquest of Canaan pictures how Christ, typified by Joshua, leads His people in battle, subduing their enemies, and establishing the true worship of God in every nation. Christ, after all, is the one who subdues all things.

Like Joshua, Adam also was a type of Christ. The command in Genesis 1 came to Adam as the head of the human race. Christ, the second and last Adam, is the head of the *new* human race. To Him comes the calling to subdue the land, and to this calling He has been perfectly obedient.

Christ has defeated all the foes at the cross, and now He is going forth to set up the true worship of God in every nation. This is what Christ is doing now from His throne in heaven. He is performing this work in and through His people, as they heed the great commission He gave to them before He ascended.

Thus there are not two mandates, but one. Just as Israel fought spiritual foes to set up the true worship of God in Canaan, so we are to go forth into all nations, seeking to establish the true worship of God in the different nations of the world.

We are to do this as Christ leads us. Just as Joshua was to look to God to direct him in this warfare, so are we to look to our Lord to show us where to go and how to fight. Submitting to our Lord’s command, we are to go forth and disciple all the nations, teaching all men everywhere to observe everything that Christ Himself has taught us.

This is truly our mandate, the one great commission.



The Reformed Worldview: Truth and Its Consequences (3)

The History of the Concept *Worldview*

I have defined *worldview* simply as a comprehensive view of the world and how we ought to live in and relate to this world.

As we give our attention to the historical development of the concept of a worldview, we can acknowledge that there has been some attention given this subject—though not called *worldview*—throughout the history of the church.

We should not overlook the fact that already in the Old Testament, God's people were set apart as a peculiar people, holy unto the Lord their God. "For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God, and the LORD hath chosen thee to be a peculiar people unto himself, above all the nations that are upon the earth" (Deut. 14:2). This was rooted in God's eternal decree of election in Christ, "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love" (Eph. 1:4).

The way in which God would have His people express their holiness is seen in the significant truth of the antithesis.

We do not hear much in today's church world about the antithesis. The very life of the antithesis has been lost in churches overcome by worldliness. But so important has been that truth that God set it before Adam immediately in the first paradise. No less important is that truth today.

Only by a clear understanding of the truth and the significance of the antithesis, and a will to live it, are the waves of worldly corruption kept out of the church and our own families. If we deny our antithetical calling

either in doctrine or life, then worldliness will sweep over us, engulfing and destroying us.

What is meant by the word *antithesis*? While not a biblical word, it expresses a biblical truth. The word *antithesis* comes from two words—*anti* which means *against*, and *thesis* or *that which is set forth*. The antithesis, therefore, is a contrasting position, one characterized by holiness unto the Lord over against all that which would oppose Him.

Already in the first paradise God set apart two trees (Gen. 2:9), placing them before Adam and proclaiming that those trees—the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil—demonstrated a fundamental truth of man's life. Our life and calling in the midst of this world is to be characterized by a sharp contrast in positions.

The positive side of Adam's existence was to eat of the tree of life, to enjoy the life and fellowship of Jehovah God. He was to live as God's king-servant in the midst of God's creation, subduing the earth and exercising dominion over all things and in all relationships of life to God's glory and in God's service. Living in obedience to the calling God had given him, Adam would enjoy the favor of His covenant God. That favor was signified in a special way in the tree of life. As a sign of God's favor, the tree of life was at the same time a sign of that higher aspect of Adam's life that consisted in the knowledge of and enjoyment of God's love and fellowship.

Life for Adam implied the favor and fellowship of God his Creator. But the holiness of God requires that for man to enjoy God's favor, man must faithfully obey God. That truth, with application to the tree of life, is set before us in a different context in the very last chapter of the Bible. We read in Revelation 22:14, "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter in

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through the gates into the city.” Adam had to know the contrast between life and death. Life is to abide under the favor and in the fellowship of the living God.

To emphasize that truth, and to demonstrate the reality that to live apart from God is death, God also placed the contrasting tree in the midst of the garden, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Concerning that tree God said to Adam, “This tree is off limits to you.” “But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die”—or literally, *dying thou shalt die* (Gen. 2:17).

That tree of the knowledge of good and evil represented to Adam this aspect of his calling, that there is always a negative side that sets man’s positive calling in clear contrast. Man must not only positively carry out the calling God has given him, saying “yes” to God; but man must also say “no” to what God forbids.

God has revealed Himself as the God of light, in whom is no darkness at all (I John 1:5). In revealing Himself to Adam as man’s covenant God, taking Adam into His own fellowship and bestowing His love upon him, God determined to reveal Himself as He is—the God of infinite perfections, of perfect holiness. But God also determined that the revelation of His glorious Being would best be shown against the background of darkness, even the darkness of sin and death. Man must understand that life cannot be sustained but by the Word of God’s particular grace, the Word that proceeds from God’s mouth (Deut. 8:3), the voice that proclaims His love and fellowship.

So God would have His people learn to express that antithesis in all their life. We must learn to live antithetically, the life of pilgrims and strangers, even while carrying out our daily callings. That truth is expressed this way in I Peter 2:9: “But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.”

That antithesis has become much more sharp and much more difficult to maintain in this world that comes under the consequences of Adam’s fall and our guilt and sin. But from the time of the placement of the two trees in the garden, through the giving of the law to His people, and through all His dealings with His

people in the Old Testament, God made clear to them that they were to be a people “set apart.” Their entire worldview was to be distinctive, different from those around them. It was to be distinctive because the entire perspective of God’s people was to be God-centered. Life itself is to be found in God’s fellowship, the fellowship of God’s own covenant life. In that light the people of God would confess with the psalmist, “Because thy lovingkindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee” (Ps. 63:3). Knowing God in that way is to see that all of life falls under God’s authority. Every aspect of life is to be carried out in His service and to His glory. That is the privilege of being numbered with His people!

But that fellowship with God and the joy of living to His glory would be possible in only one way. The Messiah, Jesus Christ, had to come to reconcile unto God those who had been hopelessly separated from Him by the fall. So God also gave the law as the schoolmaster to bring His people to Christ (Gal. 3:24). The law made clear to the church of the Old Testament that fellowship with the Holy One could not come by human works. It could not come by obedience to the law, even though the requirements of the law stood. The total depravity that consumed man as a consequence of the fall meant that salvation could come only by One, the Messiah, Jesus Christ the Righteous, God become flesh to save His people from their sins.

The life of the antithesis, therefore, will be seen only in those who have been made holy in Christ, who have been made *new creatures* (II Cor. 5:17). So it was seen throughout the Old Testament that only those who laid hold of the promised Messiah by faith, only those who were the true children of Abraham, brought to expression the life of the antithesis.

That was exemplified in the many saints named in Hebrews chapter 11. For even while they carried out their wide variety of daily callings in faithfulness to God, they “confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth” (Heb. 11:13). They lived, striving to walk in faithfulness to God according to the law that He had given them. That law, while pointing them to their need for Christ, also set before them exactly how holiness was to come to expression in every aspect of life. By the law the Old Testament children of God were taught, not that religion is a separate part of life

involving the worship of Jehovah, but that all of life is religious. They were to testify, "Jehovah, He is God. He is the Creator. He is also Lord over all things." They were to testify of that truth even in their eating and drinking. What God spelled out explicitly for His Old Testament church, He would spell out for His Spirit-filled New Testament church this way: "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (I Cor. 10:31).

The worldview of the Old Testament saints, there-

fore, not only took into account the instruction of God for their relationships, work, daily callings, moral behavior, civil life, legal matters and economic transactions, and so on. But their worldview was guided by the promise of God that pointed them to the Messiah. And through the Messiah God pointed them to the city that has foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God (Heb. 11:10). For that they looked. For that they longed—even while living as God's servants in this temporary dwelling place. 

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

MR. DON DOEZEMA

Upon This Rock (10)

Robbing Christ of His Honor (4)

As the above title suggests, we have still to conclude a short series of articles exploring why a false worship of God by Jews in the old dispensation can be characterized as a robbing *Christ* of His honor. In doing so, we continue to lean rather heavily, as we indicated before, on a series of articles by the late Rev. George M. Ophoff in the *SB* back in 1926 and 1927.

Genesis 3:15, as we mentioned last time, was gospel to the *ear* of our first, fallen parents, while Genesis 3:21 was gospel to the *eye*. We return, now, to our reflection on the latter—gospel to the eye.

Genesis 3:21 says only that "unto Adam also and to his wife did the Lord God make coats of skins, and clothed them."

Not one word of explanation. Nor any hint as to Adam and Eve's reaction. Just the bare facts: coats of skins, for Adam and Eve, provided by God Himself.

The symbolism is such that it jumps right out at *us*, of course. And we can be sure that it was not lost on Adam and Eve. Their Teacher, after all, was *God*. He had opened their eyes (3:7), in preparation, indis-

pensable preparation, for the instruction that was to follow.

Were there limitations to their comprehension of that instruction? To be sure, there were. Given the fact that they were beholding the very first of what would be many Old Testament picture prophecies of the person and work of the Messiah, we can be sure that they did not have the same level of understanding as would a Moses some 2,500 years later. And certainly they did not have the insights of an Isaiah. But they grasped the connection between their sin, its threatened penalty, and the dead animal at their feet.

As to the substance of their knowledge, we might expound it this way: Having been touched by the immediate operation of regenerating grace (opening of their eyes), these two fallen creatures perceived the need of the hour to be peace with God, whom they had so grievously offended. The justice of God required atonement. For reconciliation there must be expiation. And since fallen man is of himself unable to effect that expiation, the atonement must be vicarious.

That, I say, is how we might expound it. The beauty of God's instruction to Adam and Eve was that He didn't give them a single one of those theological terms. He taught them spiritual-ethical truth—at their level...

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by a picture. And they 'got' it. How true it is that in time past God revealed truth "in divers manners" (Heb. 1:1)!

What, then, was the great object lesson in God's provision of coats of skins for Adam and Eve? It was this, that sin must be atoned for, and that there can be no remission of sin without the shedding of blood.

That much, we believe, can be taken for granted. And then also this, that Adam and Eve must have understood that God's killing of animals, for provision of covering for these two sinners, was not intended to be a one-time demonstration of the great principles of sin and redemption. Whether by explicit instruction or by clear implication, the rite of expiatory sacrifice had its beginning right here. How else could we explain Abel's offering of "the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof" (Gen. 4:4) and God's "respect" for it, and then of God's rejection of Cain's offering of the fruit of the ground? "Heaven's own finger," writes Fairbairn in his *Typology*, had pointed out "the way for obtaining relief to [their] guilty consciences."

But what exactly was that "way of finding relief" to which heaven's finger pointed? Was it the carcass of an animal? Or was it Christ? That brings us back to the question with which we began this short series. Was Cain's transgression 'merely' a trifling with a divine prescription for worship...or was it a robbing Christ of His honor?

"Were the devout, so it is asked, capable of looking beyond the lamb to behold Christ?" (Rev. Ophoff). Ophoff's answer, as we indicated earlier, was that this "is a matter of conjecture." Fairbairn says the same: "How far Adam and his immediate descendants might be able to descry, under their imperfect forms of worship, and the accompanying intimations of recovery, the ultimate ground in this respect of faith and hope for sinful men, can be to us only a matter of vague conjecture or doubtful speculation."

What the two authors (Fairbairn and Ophoff) were acknowledging is that nowhere in the Old Testament Scriptures are we able to find explicit evidence of the extent to which believers were able to grasp the typology of the old dispensation. We are left therefore with conjecture. There are, however, biblical principles that shed light on the matter, and, though Fairbairn and

Ophoff were in basic agreement on what those were, they did draw somewhat different conclusions.

Fairbairn speaks repeatedly, and insightfully, of the limitations of the Old Testament saints' comprehension of the meaning of the types, which were intended to be only, and of necessity, *preparatory*.

From Fairbairn, this:

...the realities of the gospel, which constitute the antitypes, are the ultimate objects which are contemplated by the mind of God, when planning the economy of successive dispensations. ...to prepare the way for the introduction of these ultimate objects, He placed the church under a course of training, which included instruction by types, or designed and fitting resemblances of what was to come....

Accordingly, the church of the Old Testament is constantly represented as having been in a state of comparative childhood, supplied only with such means of instruction, and subjected to such methods of discipline as were suited to so imperfect and provisional a period of her being....

...One truth in both—but that truth existing first in a lower, then in a higher stage of development; in the one case appearing as a precious bud embosomed and but partially seen amid the imperfect relations of flesh and time; in the other, expanding itself in the bright sunshine of heaven into all the beauty and fruitfulness of which it was susceptible....

With all of that, Ophoff would have been in full agreement. It was only when Fairbairn began to quantify the believers' grasp of Old Testament typology that Ophoff took exception to his views. From Fairbairn, concerning the rite of expiatory sacrifice, there is this:

That this [the sacrifice of animals] was typically or prophetically symbolical of the death of Christ is testified with much plainness and frequency in the New Testament Scripture. Yet, independently of this connection with Christ's death, it had a meaning of its own, which it was possible for the ancient worshipper to understand, and, so understanding, to present through it an acceptable service to God, whether he might perceive or not the further respect it bore to a dying Savior.

Ophoff did not deny that the expiatory sacrifice had "a meaning of its own." Surely it did, for it spoke, sym-

bolically, of the awful reality of sin and of the need for reconciliation. What Ophoff objected to was any notion that the believer could render acceptable service to God, through the sacrifice, *independent of its connection with Christ's death*.

What Fairbairn claimed was not "strictly required" and could not "ordinarily be expected of the ancient worshiper," Ophoff claimed to be in fact *required*, were the worship to be acceptable to God and were the worshiper thereby to obtain relief from a guilty conscience.

For proof, Ophoff turned first not to the Old but to the New Testament. He looked to Hebrews 9:9, which says, concerning the sacrifices that were brought by the people of God in the old dispensation, that they "could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience." What does that mean for the matter at hand? It means, first of all, this, that when Abel brought an offering of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof, he did so because of a burdened *conscience*. Burdened, he was, by the weight of his *sin*. He turned, for relief, to the God-appointed way, the bloody sacrifice. And he found...none.

That's right, he *found none*. "Having scrupulously attended to the prescriptions of the law," writes Ophoff, "the troubled one would discover that he was as ill at

ease as ever." God, according to Ophoff, "could not permit the worshiper to rest in the sacrificial victim." God therefore, as it were, *compelled* the worshiper to look beyond the sacrifice by "refusing to grant him relief until the worshiper had learned to expect nothing from the ancient sacrifice and absolutely all from Jehovah."

In a word [writes Ophoff], the believer of the old covenant was taught and empowered to lay hold on that which constitutes the very heart and core of the economy of redemption, viz., Jehovah and blood. But whose blood? He had been taught to expect nothing from the blood of the sacrificial animal.... Hence, he was compelled to conclude that Jehovah Himself would provide. Jehovah and blood—these two constituted the mystery of redemption upon which the believer of the old covenant pondered and attempted to penetrate.

"Jehovah and blood"—"the very heart and core of the economy of redemption."

Whose blood? Not that of the sacrificial animal, but....

More must be said about that. We will try to conclude our study of it in the next article. Our hope is that you find this subject as intriguing, even thrilling, as does this writer.

... to be continued. 

CHURCH AND STATE

MR. BRIAN VAN ENGEN

Corporations and the Free Exercise Clause

The First Amendment to the United States Constitution provides that "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof..." We all recognize this language as the legal basis for the freedom of religion we enjoy in the United States. But does this protection extend to corporations? At first blush we might quickly answer "no," since corporations

are not like individual believers in that they do not worship God. Corporations manufacture things and invest money and engage in other "secular" activities, so why would anyone be concerned about whether Constitutional protection of the free exercise of religion extends to them?

As the world changes around us and becomes more hostile to "traditional" Christian values and teachings, this issue could also grow in importance. This issue could have an impact not only on those entities that we typically think of as corporations, but also our

Mr. VanEngen, a member of Hull Protestant Reformed Church of Hull, Iowa, is a practicing attorney.

churches and schools, which are generally organized as non-profit corporations under the laws of the state. We will look at the potential impact on believers in light of some of the recent developments on this issue.

Business Corporations and Free Exercise

A corporation is defined by *Black's Law Dictionary* as "an artificial person or legal entity created by or under the authority of the laws of a state or nation...."¹ In the eyes of the law, a corporation is a separate legal entity just like a person. A corporation can own property, buy, sell, sue, or be sued. People set up corporations for many reasons. Corporations provide protection from liability for lawsuits. The tax code often provides incentive for individuals to incorporate their business. Corporate ownership involves individuals owning shares of the corporation rather than owning the individual assets used in operation of the business. Because of this, a corporate structure may make it easier to pass a family business to the next generation, since shares can be sold or given to children rather than giving the assets controlled by the corporation. Many, if not most, small, family-owned businesses are corporations.

With non-profit corporations such as churches or schools, groups of like-minded believers can join together to own church or school buildings, operate schools, and many other things that they could not practically do without the collective ownership of a corporation. For instance, if a church were not operated as a corporation or similar legal entity, the title to the church building would have to be held in the name of every member, and the title would have to be changed whenever a member joined or passed away.

The issue of whether corporations have Free Exercise Rights has recently come into the spotlight as a result of new mandates in connection with health insurance reform. The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) has issued mandates specifying what type of coverage employers must provide to their employees. Among other medical services that must be covered by the insurance, the mandates require that employers must provide coverage for payment for abortive "morning after" and "week after" contraceptive pills.

¹ *Black's Law Dictionary*, Revised 4th Edition, 1968.

Some businesses, such as Hobby Lobby, have objected to the mandate on religious grounds. Hobby Lobby is a national chain of craft stores operated by the David Green family, which has sought to incorporate Christian principles into its business model, including closing its 500 stores on Sundays. The Green family is opposed to providing the coverage for the abortive drugs that violate their religious beliefs. If Hobby Lobby does not supply the mandated coverage, their fines could be up to \$1.3 million dollars per day. Hobby Lobby has filed a federal lawsuit to prevent enforcement of the HHS mandate.

The government has argued that as a corporation, Hobby Lobby cannot assert a Free Exercise claim. The argument does make sense in that a corporation cannot "exercise" religion. The corporation cannot attend church or worship.

But viewing the argument from the other side, a corporation is made up of individual shareholders who may have religious convictions. If those shareholders are required to do things through their corporation that violate their religious beliefs, they do not enjoy the same freedom of religion as other individuals. The shareholders would lose their freedom of religion simply because they chose to use a corporate format to operate their business, for one of the many reasons previously discussed.

On November 19, 2012 a federal court denied Hobby Lobby's request for an injunction, and the case is now on appeal. We will have to wait for the appellate court's decision, but some relatively recent jurisprudence supports a finding that a corporation enjoys First Amendment rights. In 2010, the United States Supreme Court struck down a state law limiting corporations from campaigning for or against candidates within 60 days of a general election.² The Court basically ruled that a corporation has rights to political speech even though it is not a natural person. By the same token, the Court could find that a corporation has First Amendment freedom of religion, at least to some degree. It's also possible that the courts could carve out an exception for closely held corporations that provides a greater degree of Free Exercise protection for those corporations. Closely held

² *Citizens United v. Federal Election Comm'n*, 130 S.Ct. 876, 897 (2010).

corporations are those with a limited number of shareholders, such as family-owned businesses.

When we evaluate these encroachments on Free Exercise of religion from a legal point of view, we cannot focus on the particular facts of a particular law or case. Instead we must focus on the precedents being established and on the gradual erosion of our ability to live in accordance with our beliefs. The world is changing around us, and behavior that was once widely condemned as sin becomes accepted and even protected. Today the issue is forced subsidy for abortive medications. In the future the government could mandate that all corporations providing medical services, including the local hospital in a Reformed community, must perform abortions. Or perhaps the government would mandate that businesses be open on Sunday or could tax those that are closed on Sunday.

More and more, the world will demand that Christians participate in practices that we find objectionable. The power of the government is restrained by the Constitution, the First Amendment, and the Free Exercise Clause in particular. If the government can avoid the restraint of the Free Exercise Clause by applying restrictions or mandates to corporations rather than individuals, the results could be profound.

Non-Profit Corporations

But what about non-profit corporations, especially those organized for religious purposes such as our churches and schools? The government and courts have always been fairly quick to carve out exceptions for religious organizations because of the potential conflict with the Free Exercise clause. The HHS mandate for contraceptives initially included an exemption for “religious employers,” which were defined as meeting the following criteria:

- 1) The purpose of the organization is the inculcation of religious values.
- 2) The organization primarily employs persons who share the religious tenets of the organization.
- 3) The organization primarily serves persons who share the religious tenets of the organization.
- 4) The organization is a nonprofit organization [as defined in the Internal Revenue Code].³

³ C.F.R. sec. 147.130(a)(iv)(A)-(B)).

Such criteria could also serve as the government’s basis for determining whether an organization is a “religious organization” for purposes of other laws as well. Applying these criteria to our churches, it would appear that they would qualify for exemption. It is interesting to note that a separately incorporated evangelism committee probably would not meet these narrow criteria, because its focus would be on those outside the church, and therefore would not meet the third criteria of serving those “who share the religious tenets of the organization.”

However, with regard to our schools, whether they meet the criteria that “the inculcation of religious values is the purpose of the organization” could be debatable. The government could argue that the primary purpose of our schools is for education, not teaching of religious values. We would, and must, argue that the two are inseparable, and that educating in all subject areas *is* inculcating religious values. The organizational documents of our schools and other organizations must show that the religious instruction in all areas is preeminent.

Finally, a word about the fourth criteria, that the organization is a nonprofit under the Internal Revenue Code. This criteria is somewhat disconcerting in that it conditions the exemption for religious organizations on another criteria that is within the government’s control. In other words, if the government changes the definition of a nonprofit so that a church no longer qualified, the church would also no longer be a “religious” organization exempt from laws such as the HHS mandate, employment laws, or other laws that exempt religious organizations.

Consider that organizations that discriminate based on race are excluded from being recognized as public charities. Many advocate that discrimination against homosexuals should be prohibited in the same manner as discrimination based on race. Following this logic a church or school could be denied religious organization exemption based on a stance against homosexuality.

Conclusion

The problem we face is twofold. First, governments today, including the United States government, are socializing more and more services and providing them

through the government. Conflict arises when some individuals want services such as abortive measures under the guise of “health care,” which the rest of society is required to pay for. Second, the government and the law of the land fail to see that the God we worship is a Sovereign God, who rules over all aspects of our lives, including our business dealings. Often it seems that, in the eyes of the laws of the land, one’s religion is some-

thing practiced only on Sunday at church. The laws fail to take into account that our beliefs permeate every area of life and every subject taught in our schools. Our practice of our beliefs is infringed upon by laws affecting other spheres of life such as businesses and corporations. We must continue to set out and explain clearly our worldview in the face of these developments.



STRENGTH OF YOUTH

REV. MARTIN VANDER WAL

No

A few months ago, in a hospital waiting room, God’s providence brought to my attention the last broadcast of the Oprah Winfrey Show. In the segment I saw she was talking about the success of her show over the years. Its success was due to one factor: “Women want to be affirmed.” I would affirm that statement, and add to it that women are not the only ones who want to be affirmed. Everyone wants to be affirmed.

But in reality, great evil lies in those words. The evil becomes evident if you rephrase the basic statement, with only slightly different words. “Everyone wants to be told that he is right.” “Everyone wants to be told the world agrees with him.” “Everyone wants to be stroked and flattered.” “Everybody wants to have his ego fed until it is enormous.” “Everyone wants to have his vanity validated.”

That way must not be your way. That way is the way of spiritual weakness. That is the way that will cripple you, and make you wholly ineffective in the kingdom of God, and of no use to the cause of God. You will be unprofitable and unserviceable. In short, that way is not the way of a true disciple of Jesus Christ. Not self-affirmation, but self-denial is the way of the disciple of Christ. Not self-admiration and self-esteem, but the crucifixion of self.

In fact, God’s Word says, “No,” much more than it says, “Yes.”

Rev. VanderWal is pastor of the Protestant Reformed Church in Wingham, Ontario.

Scripture gives us instruction, and Scripture gives us two examples.

Look first at one of the main passages of Scripture that declare its own inspiration (II Tim. 3:16). There it says not only that Scripture is God-breathed, but also that it is then profitable, and for what it is profitable. Among the four, there are two words that say, “No.” Scripture is profitable for reproof. Reproof is telling you when you are wrong and explaining how you are wrong. Also, Scripture is profitable for correction. The Word tells you that your way is wrong, and that this other way is the correct way for you.

Scripture over and over proves its statement in II Timothy 3. Scripture everywhere comes between you and your ways. The commandments get in your way and confront you: “Thou shalt not!” Over and over in Proverbs the word of wisdom both corrects and commends the humble receiving of correction. Only fools go on in their own ways, affirming themselves in their foolish company (Prov. 1:10-19). The prophets constantly called the people from walking in their own sinful ways to walk in the way of God’s commandments. The apostles in their writings warned against false teachings and sinful ways. The apostle Paul commanded Timothy to reprove and rebuke as part of his work in the ministry of the gospel (II Tim. 4:2).

The second example is our Lord Jesus Christ. He was not an affirming teacher. He was no flatterer. He taught with authority. He said, “Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time..., but I say unto you...” (Matt. 5). To the woman who blessed Him for His

teaching, He responded, "Yea rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it" (Luke 11:28). With His words He shattered the delusions and rebuked the errors of His audience. He tore down their idle dreams and fancies, laying bare their true need. He did not affirm Peter's boasting, but told him he would deny his Lord three times. He often rebuked His disciples: "Oh ye of little faith."

Are you ready to hear this Word of God? Are you ready to hear each and every word that it says to you? You and I are ready and eager listeners when it says yes. "Yes, that is what I believe." "Yes, that is my way." "Yes, I agree completely." What is our reaction when it tells us "No"? We quickly fly over such words. We think those are written for someone else. We might find them too difficult to explain, so we go to something easier. If such is our reaction, then truly we are not teachable, and then we are not proper disciples of Christ.

Young people, you are at a critical age for this. Your minds and hearts are much more trainable and teachable than the minds and hearts of those who are older. Habits practiced now will be that much harder to break when you are older. Habits of listening and habits of thinking are all included. Where you open your hearts and minds now will be where you open them later. Where you close your hearts and minds now will be where you close them later. Keep them open now to reproof and correction. Keep them closed now to flattery and vain affirmation.

Practice that openness with Scripture. Go to the Word of God in prayer, asking Him to correct you, to rebuke and warn you. Think of the beatitude of Psalm 94:12: "Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, O LORD, and teachest him out of thy law." Heed this praise of God's law (Ps. 119:9): "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to thy word." Your way needs cleansing, and you cleanse it by shining on it the light of God's Word. That light will clearly show those ways from which you must turn. Remember the plea of Psalm 139:23, 24: "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." Expect an affirmative answer to that prayer as you read that Word. And where it does its work of reproofing and correcting, sub-

mit. Follow where it leads, cutting away from you those actions and thoughts it forbids. Yes, you will experience the pain of self-denial, but that pain signifies growth in a disciple of Christ. The old dies hard, but the newness in its place is life and peace. The crucifying of your flesh with its affections and lusts is the way to walking in newness of life (Gal. 5:24; Rom. 6:4).

Receiving correction from Scripture, you will also be strengthened to receive reproof and correction from others. The same Word of God calls you to submit to all those who have authority over you, including your parents, your teachers, your pastor, and your elders. They also have the calling from that same Word of God to reprove, rebuke, correct, and admonish you (II Tim. 4:2).

Practice that same openness with those in authority over you. Pray to the Lord, asking Him to correct you through them. Hear His answer through them, when they say "No." Then you have the opportunity to prove that you are good disciples of your Lord. As you would listen quietly and carefully to the Lord, so you listen quietly and carefully to them. As you would change your ways before your God, you quickly and quietly change your ways when they admonish you. By your self-denial and self-correction you show the delightful power of God's grace.

This way of self-denial makes you stronger in your fellowship with your God. You find that, more and more, your walk is before God and under His loving care and guidance. His Word becomes more and more your joy and peace. Another benefit of self-denial is that you are strengthened in bonds and ties of fellowship with others. Because your habit is self-denial, you are able to see better the needs of others, to attend to those needs, and then to give yourself to fill those needs. Learning to say "No" to yourself, you are strengthened to say "Yes" to God, and also to others around you, to those in authority and to your fellow saints.

What strength is yours! Yes, your strength is first meekness and humility before the Word. Your strength is to hear and obey where the Word says "No." That strength overcomes your weak pride and vanity, to bring them to nothing. Then you will be strong to be filled with that Word alone, and then strong to obey it, in obedience to your gracious Savior, Jesus Christ.



Congregation Activities

Keeping in mind the Word of God found in John 17:9, "I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine," we extend our congratulations to the following congregations celebrating anniversaries this month, the Covenant PRC of Northern Ireland, organized on August 2, 2006; the Randolph, WI PRC, organized August 17, 1943; and the Crete, IL PRC, organized on August 24, 1926.

This summer the Consistory of the Grace PRC in Standale, MI sponsored a conference on marriage for their congregation's benefit. Three nights were set aside for a consideration of a good Christian marriage, using the Marriage Form found in the back of the Psalter as a guide. The first meeting, led by Rev. R. Van Overloop, took place on June 19, followed by another on July 17 and one final meeting scheduled for August 7, D.V.

The Consistory of the Georgetown PRC in Hudsonville, MI was excited recently to announce their plans for a program they entitled, "Strengthening of Our Marriages Through a Mentoring Program." Plans were to hold classes, for couples volunteering to serve as mentors, on Sunday evenings in July after the evening worship service, and then for all married members, on three Tuesday evenings, July

23, August 6, and 20, during which they would watch a 30-minute presentation by Paul Tripp, followed by refreshments and discussion. This two-part program presented a unique opportunity for members of Georgetown to fellowship together and help strengthen their marriages.

Seminarian Josh Engelsma, his wife, Courtney, and their three children planned to start his internship on July 1 under the sponsorship of the Peace PRC in Lansing, IL and their pastor, Rev. C. Spronk. In anticipation of that event, Peace rented a home for the Engelsmas in Lansing. A June bulletin insert also included a list of household items needed by the Engelsmas for their six-month stay, and the congregation was asked to donate as many of those items as they could. And then on Monday, June 17, the members of Peace planned a clean-up day at the temporary home of the Engelsmas.

A recent poll gauging the interest of the congregation in having Grace PRC in Standale, MI host the 2016 Young People's convention indicated to their Consistory that there is enough support for Grace to be able to accept the invitation from the Federation Board of the Young People's Societies. The Consistory went on to thank their congregation for their willingness to become involved in this opportunity.

Denomination Activities

Even though by now it is somewhat 'old news,' we have to add our congratulations to Seminarian Erik

Guichelaar, who graduated from our denomination's seminary on June 13 at the Hudsonville, MI PRC. To mark the occasion, Prof. B. Gritters spoke on "A Confessional Ministry." With thanks to God, our Synod declared Mr. Guichelaar a candidate for the ministry of the Word and Sacraments, eligible for a call on or after July 13, 2013.

Young People's Activities

The "Young Calvinists" presented another "Talking Points," held at the Grandville, MI PRC on June 22. Mr. C. Terpstra led, speaking on the subject, "Are You a Reformed Reader?"

The Young People's Society of the First PRC in Holland, MI invited their congregation to an "evening of music" on June 30 after their evening worship service. First's choir sang a number of selections, there were several special numbers, and the congregation joined together in song. A collection was taken for the 2014 convention expenses.

The 2013 Young People's Western Retreat was held July 1-4 in northeastern Washington under the sponsorship of the Lynden and Covenant of Grace PRCs in Lynden and Spokane, WA. Rev. R. Kleyn and Rev. R. Hanko spoke on the theme, "Put on the Whole Armor of God," from Ephesians 6:11. Thirty young people from Lynden, Spokane, Loveland, Lacombe, and Edmonton planned to attend, along with 11 families and individuals that were either camping or chaperoning at the retreat.

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

Evangelism Activities

Sunday evening, June 2, the collection at the Edgerton, MN PRC scheduled for the Reformed Witness Committee (formerly representing the Doon, Hull, and Edgerton congregations) was changed to the Edgerton Reformed Witness Committee. The Edgerton RWC planned to update the members of their congregation on changes to the organization. In brief, each local congregation that was once part of the RWC is now responsible for outreach work in its own area to help promote local evangelism.

The Evangelism Committee of

the Providence PRC in Hudsonville, MI sponsored two classes concerning Jehovah's Witnesses, what they believe and how to witness to them. Rev. H. Bleyenbergh was the speaker. These two classes were held in late June.

Mission Activities

Rev. R. Smit and his family, one of our denomination's missionaries to the Philippines, were recently in the United States for a five-week furlough. During those five weeks Rev. Smit gave various presentations on the development of the mission work in which he and Rev. D. Kleyn

are engaged in the Philippines. Perhaps you had an opportunity to see one of these presentations. Regardless, we all share in our churches' support for this exciting and important work that our churches are doing.

Minister Activities

Rev. C. Spronk declined the call he was considering to serve as pastor of the Faith PRC in Jenison, MI.

Rev. R. Kleyn received the call from the Randolph, WI PRC, and Rev. C. Haak received the call from the Doon, IA PRC. ☺

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Wedding Anniversary

■ On August 1, 2013, our parents,

DAVID and RUTH ENGELSMA,

celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary. We thank our heavenly Father for the gift of them as our parents. We thank them for their covenantal instruction and their continued godly example to us and our families. Our heartfelt prayer is that the Lord will guide them in the years ahead and continue to make evident His covenant faithfulness in their lives.

"Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine by the sides of thine house: thy children like olive plants round about thy table. Behold, that thus shall the man be blessed that feareth the LORD. The LORD shall bless thee out of Zion: and thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem all the days of thy life. Yea, thou shalt see thy children's children, and peace upon Israel!" (Psalm 128:3-6).

☺ Troy and Rebecca Maatman
Lucas, Jacob, Caleb, Anna

☺ Stefan and Kris Engelsma

☺ Calvin and Kristin Dykstra
Lydia, Abbi, Brianna

☺ Joel and Kristi Engelsma
Claudia, Megan

☺ Brian and Jennifer Bleyenbergh
Ben, Alyssa, Jessie, Micah, Jenna

☺ Eric and Cara Dykstra

Erica, Jason, Leah, Davis

☺ Paul and Melisa Engelsma

Joshua, Caden, Dylan, Andrew

☺ Dewey and Dawn Engelsma

Lilly, Dewey, Ethan, Liam, Reid

☺ Emma Engelsma

Grand Rapids, Michigan

Classis West

■ Classis West will meet in regular session on Wednesday, September 4, 2013, 8:30 A.M., at the Loveland Protestant Reformed Church, Loveland, CO. All material for the agenda must be in the hands of the stated clerk no later than Monday, August 4. Delegates in need of lodging or transportation from the airport can contact Loveland's Clerk, Mr. Rob VanUffelen, at rvanuff@comcast.net, or call him at (970) 744-1019.

Rev. Douglas Kuiper, Stated Clerk

Classis East

■ Classis East will meet in regular session on Wednesday, September 11, 2013 at the Byron Center Protestant Reformed Church, Byron Center, Michigan. Material for this session must be in the hands of the stated clerk no later than August 11, 2013.

Jon J. Huiskens, Stated Clerk