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Christ's poverty, our riches

Rev. Michael DeVries

The Synod of Dordt (4) The synod's location

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Of the creation of all things: Of angels and the devil

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The Canons of Dordt and missions (1)

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Contents

Meditation

- 103 Christ's poverty, our riches
Rev. Michael DeVries

Editorial

- 106 Dordt—Set for the defense of the gospel
Rev. Kenneth Koole

Letters

- 108 “Contradicting” or “out of harmony with”?

Dordt 400: Memorial stones

- 109 The Synod of Dordt (4)
The synod's location
Prof. Douglas Kuiper

Things which must shortly come to pass

- 110 Premillennialism (22)
Fundamental Reformed critique of Premillennialism (4)
Prof. David Engelsma

Believing and confessing

- 112 Of the creation of all things: Of angels, the devil, and man
(Second Helvetic Confession, chapter 7a)
Prof. Ronald Cammenga

Strength of youth

- 115 To teach them war (22)
God's armor for us: The sword
Rev. Brian Huizinga

Go ye into all the world

- 117 The Canons of Dordt and missions (1)
Rev. Daniel Kleyn

Pertaining to our churches—Domestic Mission Committee

- 119 Witnessing: Our conduct and our speech
Rev. Audred Spriensma

Bring the books...

- 121 *Here We Stand: Commemorating the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation*
Dr. Julian Kennedy

Activities

- 122 News from our churches
Mr. Perry Van Egdom



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Meditation

Rev. Michael DeVries, pastor of the Protestant Reformed Church in Kalamazoo, Michigan

Christ's poverty, our riches

“For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.”

II Corinthians 8:9

What is your attitude as we enter another season of Advent? It is very easy to be almost totally preoccupied with the mundane, superficial aspects of the holiday season. We may find ourselves busy with decorating, shopping, and juggling our schedules and finances. Many voice their complaint about the crass materialism and commercialization of the season. How necessary for us to focus on the spiritual riches revealed in Bethlehem, the riches of which the apostle Paul speaks in this Word of God!

His poverty

The apostle emphasizes that Christ was rich: “though he was rich....” Of course, there can be no debate about that. Christ was rich in a way that is beyond our comprehension. Paul refers to the riches of Christ’s eternal Godhead. For He is the second person of the holy Trinity, the eternal Son of God. As such Christ is co-equal with the Father and with the Holy Spirit. This co-equality means that all of the virtues of the Godhead belong to Christ. Everything that makes God the infinite, almighty, and transcendent One also belongs to Christ within the Trinity as well as to the Father and Spirit. And within the eternal Godhead, Christ also possesses all the fullness of the blessedness of God’s covenant life. He was truly rich! All the perfection, joy, blessedness, and supreme happiness of that full and perfect covenant life that is God’s very nature and life was (and is) the full possession of Christ.

But, “though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor....” The meaning certainly cannot be that when He became poor, Christ left behind the riches that He eternally possesses as God. We might receive that impression, but that cannot be the idea. Bethlehem does not mean that when Christ was born He left

behind the glories and riches that were His so that He ceased to be God. Nor did He deliberately lay aside His riches. This would be in conflict with what the apostle John declares at the beginning of his gospel: “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.” Christ Jesus did not become poor as a very wealthy man might lose his riches through some sort of a disaster.

As paradoxical as it may sound, the idea is really that He was poor, being rich. The point is, that Christ remained God even when He was born of the virgin Mary in the cattle stall in Bethlehem. And of course, that is precisely the wonder of the birth of Christ. It is not as if He who was God became man and left His Godhead behind. The wonder is that Christ became man all the while remaining God! Christ, as the second person of the Trinity, unites in this one divine person a complete human nature and a complete divine nature. It is the mystery of God become flesh of which Paul speaks—Immanuel, God with us.

The fact remains, nonetheless, that Christ’s divinity was hidden behind the veil of His human nature. It was somewhat obscured from us by the fact that Christ became man. And remember, He became a man who is like us in all things with the exception of the sins that we commit. He became a man who bore a weakened human nature—a human nature subject to hunger and thirst, to disease and weariness, to sickness and death.

This is what Paul expresses when he tells us that Christ became poor. You recall the poverty of Bethlehem, do you not? Joseph and Mary had journeyed to Bethlehem, lowly Bethlehem, to be enrolled for the tax according to the decree of Caesar Augustus. Seeking lodging at the inn, they discover that there is no room for them. The little town is overflowing with people present for the enrollment. There was no lodging to be found for them in the city. They are compelled to find shelter for the night in a stable, probably nothing but a cave on the edge of the city where passing caravans

would stable their animals for the night. The squalid and dirty stable was the only shelter for the Christ. All attempts through the ages to make this a pleasant place are failures! It was dirty and ugly; it was smelly and sour; it was dark and foul. Most of our modern barns are clean, bright, sanitary, even luxurious compared to that smelly stable. Christ was born in terrible poverty. It could scarcely have been any worse.

But this poverty that was Christ's lot when He came into the world continued all His life. Christ never possessed anything at all that He could call His own. Not even the clothes on His back! When a would-be disciple clamored to follow Jesus, Jesus reminded him, "The foxes have holes; and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath no where to lay his head" (Matt. 8:20). When finally He was crucified, Christ's clothes were taken from Him by the brutal soldiers who enjoyed their gambling in the shadow of the cross. Already through the psalmist Christ had spoken of this when He cried, "They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture" (cf. Ps. 22:18). Yes, at His birth we see Christ's poverty. All He has are swaddling clothes, not fine robes, and a manger, not a palace, and presently even that will be taken from Him. He was hated so completely by all His enemies that at last they robbed Him of everything He possessed, even of His life itself.

Yet, the awful poverty of Bethlehem was a *sign!* Remember when the shepherds were visited on the glorious night by the angel who told them of the birth of Christ. At that time, the angel made it quite clear that this poverty was a sign to them: "And this shall be a sign unto you: ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger" (Luke 2:12). Of what was this poverty a sign? It was a sign of the poverty of the human nature into which Christ entered. We cannot comprehend the full reality of this poverty and the suffering Christ endured because of it. God became a man! He who was omnipotent became weak and helpless—a babe in His mother's arms, a man among men. He who created food and drink became hungry and thirsty. He who had the power of life in Himself and was dependent upon no one grew weary

and required sleep. He who was above the law, and who had created the law, was now born under the law, obligated to perform all the requirements of the law and was subject to its penalties.

Yet all this was by no means the worst of Christ's suffering. He had to endure all His life long the burden of God's wrath. He who had tasted and experienced the communion with the Father and the Holy Spirit now had to experience God's wrath. There is here too an element in the mystery of the incarnation that we cannot understand. We know from Scripture that God's Word was, "Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Yet at the same time Christ bore God's wrath all His life long. Bethlehem and its poverty was a sign of it. Yet all this was because Christ bore the sins and guilt of His people. His poverty was because the burden of our sin and guilt rested upon Him. That poverty reached its climax on the cross. He became poor by making the sin and guilt that belonged to us His own.

His poverty for our sake

And that receives the emphasis here! Paul is not merely discussing the birth of the Savior, the wonder of the incarnation. He is insisting in a most emphatic way that

We cannot comprehend the full reality of this poverty and the suffering Christ endured because of it. God became a man! He who was omnipotent became weak and helpless—a babe in His mother's arms, a man among men. He who created food and drink became hungry and thirsty. He who had the power of life in Himself and was dependent upon no one grew weary and required sleep. He who was above the law, and who had created the law, was now born under the law, obligated to perform all the requirements of the law and was subject to its penalties.

this all was on *our* account: "yet, for *your* sakes, he became poor!" All Christ's poverty was for us. That is why Paul speaks of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. He begins this verse saying, "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ..." The fact that grace is ascribed to Christ indicates that grace here refers to undeserved favor. It is that which stands opposed to debt, or to works that earn or merit something, or to obligation. Grace is unmerited and undeserved! It is a favor bestowed upon someone though the object

of that favor is completely unworthy of it.

The idea is, therefore, that Christ was manifesting toward His people a favor completely undeserved when He came into the world and became poor though He was rich. That appalling poverty characteristic of Christ's life was something that He willingly took upon Himself because Christ was gracious towards His people. The emphasis falls on Christ's perfect obedience and willingness to suffer. It speaks to us of that glorious truth that

although it was painful beyond description for Christ to become so poor, nevertheless, He eagerly and anxiously seized upon this poverty because the deepest motives of His heart were for the people whom He loved. No price was too great to pay for them; no humiliation too bitter; no suffering too great; no poverty too lowly.

But what makes this grace appear so wonderful is the fact that He became poor for us because we are so very, very poor! O, not in the material sense. It is true, we may not be materially wealthy; we may have a financial struggle. But, for the most part, we have an abundance of material things. Undoubtedly you will receive many nice material gifts this season. But, remember, material riches mean nothing! Spiritually, we are very poor, by nature. We are poverty-stricken, spiritually bankrupt in ourselves. This poverty is the terrible poverty of sin, of death, of the curse, of hell! It is a poverty far more awful than the worst of material poverty. Do you recognize that poverty as yours? The whole church for which Christ died is poor, spiritually destitute. Think of the corrupt host for which Christ died, of the wretched sinners we all are, even now. If you think of your own terrible poverty, the poverty of a nature completely depraved, then you can see something of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that He, being rich, was made poor on our behalf.

There is no other explanation for it but *grace*—undeserved favor. Christ was under no obligation to come into our poverty. He did not have to come to Bethlehem! He certainly did not have to save you and me! It was grace! It was our poverty that created the necessity for that horrible, foul-smelling stable in Bethlehem in which Christ was born. Do not attempt, like so many do, to make that stable a cozy, lovely place. It speaks of our sins and the depths of our poverty. It is our shame!

Our riches

Yet, through His poverty we are made rich! You see, Christ's poverty was the only possible way to riches for us. God had to become man. Christ had to enter our poverty. He who was God! There was no other way. He had to bear our burden! He had to pay our debt! It is only through His poverty that we can become rich. Of course, Christ became rich first of all. He perfectly

bore the burden of God's wrath. The prophet Isaiah could say: "He was with the rich in his death" (Is. 53:9). Christ was raised from the dead and exalted to highest glory. He was exalted at the Father's right hand and made the Prince of the universe. He was filled with the Spirit and the blessings of salvation and given the inheritance of heaven as His own possession. He was made rich! He was given a name that is above every name! For He was the poorest of the poor, but through it becomes the richest of the rich!

And it is in this way that we are made rich! Because He became poor for us, we became rich through His poverty. We are delivered from the terrible poverty of sin and death and guilt and hell. We are raised into the glory of heaven! We are given riches beyond our wildest imaginations—all of the blessings of salvation! We are taken to heaven to inherit the whole redeemed universe, even to reign over it with Christ forever. You cannot fix a price tag to those riches! You cannot place a dollar value on them! They are greater than all the world. And they are ours by grace alone because Christ became poor for us, entering into our poverty, that we might share in His riches.

Let us ponder this gospel of sovereign grace. Let us make a spiritual pilgrimage to Bethlehem this advent season. See there the shame of the lowly stable and the swaddling clothes. Remember that it is your shame and mine. Remember, too, that only in this way could Christ make room in our poverty-stricken hearts and reveal Himself as our blessed Savior. The Christmas story is the story of the riches of salvation—salvation by grace. Let us rejoice in the unspeakable riches that we have in Christ Jesus! O come, let us adore Him!

If you think of your own terrible poverty, the poverty of a nature completely depraved, then you can see something of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that He, being rich, was made poor on our behalf.

There is no other explanation for it but *grace*—undeserved favor. Christ was under no obligation to come into our poverty. He did not have to come to Bethlehem! He certainly did not have to save you and me! It was grace!



Editorial

Rev. Kenneth Koole, minister emeritus in the Protestant Reformed Churches

Dordt—Set for the defense of the gospel

When the Enemy launched a full frontal assault against the doctrinal walls of the church, the church responded with a ‘Canons’ blast of confessional truth to ward off the assault, to show that there is plenty of life in the old city yet, and that those “set for the defence of the gospel” (Phil. 1:17) do not intend to yield one precious inch of the heritage of truth once delivered to the saints. This had been the response of the church in the fourth and fifth centuries when the person and natures of Christ suffered direct assault. She responded with the ‘Christological’ creeds. This was the response of the church in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as well. What came from Dordt was just such a ‘Canons’ blast in confessional form. Arminianism was a full frontal assault against the apostolic gospel, aiming at the heart of the gospel, namely, grace!—the grace so recently restored by the Reformers to the preaching (Gal. 1:6).

A study of the Canons gives instruction about the strategy the general synod used in its battle against Arminianism, where it began and what it emphasized.

Significant, first, is the heavy reliance of the Canons on the Scriptures, quoting the Word of God again and again in its counter blasts. This is especially true of the First Head. The four sections that follow make regular reference to Scripture, but the First Head is especially loaded with biblical quotes and proof-texts. In the first two articles there are five passages referred to (one of which is John 3:16, of all things—reminding us that there are no ‘Arminian passages’). And Article 3 basically is a quotation of Romans 10:14, 15. Biblical passages multiply from there. Clearly, the Canons are not interested in abstract doctrinal debate, in matching wits, or in an exercise of logic as has been charged, but in expounding the Word of God. They demonstrate that that is all Calvinism (the Reformed faith) really is, an explanation of the Bible according to its own words.

A confession loaded with God’s Word is devastating to the foe of heresy. Of course, you had better believe the Bible is the infallible Word of God, or you have no ammunition for your ‘guns.’ You have no weapons at all. Today the ‘Canons’ (with the other creeds) are museum pieces in most churches. Reformed churches

may show them off a few Sunday mornings a year (you have to hit it right). And the pulpiteering tour-guides themselves are Arminians. Is it any wonder that there is not anyone really *living* in those churches anymore? It makes you weep. Reject the Scriptures as the very Word of God, and you have spiked the Canons. They roar no longer. “Oh, Jerusalem, Jerusalem....”

Dordt was a better day.

We associate the Canons with five points (of Calvinism), as well we should. There are five (main) heads of doctrine. Significantly, they are called the “doctrines of grace.” Precisely correct. The general synod saw clearly what was at stake, where the main thrust of Arminianism and the Enemy was, namely, at *grace!*—the purity and the power of grace.

Salvation all of *grace!* This is Calvinism. This is the Reformed faith, heart and soul. Grace—God’s favor and saving power contrary to all deserving. And anything that diminishes or tarnishes or is inconsistent with that truth—salvation all of God’s free grace—is to be refuted and rejected. This was Paul’s blast against the Judaizers and their law-works in his day (Rom. 11:6), and so it has ever been for Christ’s true and faithful church. This is what the synod was set on defending and also setting forth in clear, unmistakable language. So, early on (I, 5), the Canons quote Ephesians 2:8—“For by grace are ye saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves....”

Significantly, in the Canons, the synod began with the doctrine “Of Divine Predestination.” We learn the five points by beginning with ‘T’ for TULIP and “Total Depravity.” The Canons, however, as do the articles of the Remonstrance, begin with God’s sovereign election. Why? In the interests of “grace.” There is no doctrine that demonstrates so clearly and powerfully that salvation is all of God, not of man’s ability or worth, than does eternal election. “...in love: having *predestinated* us unto the adoption of children...to the *praise of the glory of his grace*” (Eph. 1:4, 5, 6—quoted in I, 7). Why is one man saved, and not another? Why is one able to believe and love the Lord, but another, perhaps one’s twin brother, not able and not willing? Shall I (you) boast superior

in wisdom or worth? Of course not. It is election, the distinguishing grace of a merciful God (cf. I, 6, 7).

In the third place, note that though the Canons begin with the doctrine of predestination, yet they begin their *treatment* of predestination by referring to the sin of Adam and its universal consequences, bringing all under the wrath of God.

Why? Because the synod was not interested simply in out-arguing and outflanking the Arminians, and hence showing all the logical errors and fallacies in Arminian thinking. The synod had preeminently a pastoral concern. The gospel, with its comfort, was at stake. We hold to divine predestination not simply because it is the only theology logically consistent, but because predestinating grace is so absolutely necessary. Without it, what sinner, dead in trespasses and sins, could possibly be saved? Our lost condition is what makes God's electing will and grace essential. From the outset the Canons are pastoral in their approach. That pastoral approach is woven throughout the Canons, bringing comfort even to grieving parents who have just lost another little one to the grave (I, 17).

A fourth element worth noting is the Canons' extensive treatment of the wonder of regeneration (III/IV, 11-16). These articles stand among the most beautiful sections of any of the great Christian creeds you care to name. The phrase that the grace of regeneration "spiritually quickens, heals, corrects, and at the same time sweetly and powerfully bends [the will]" is one of the most exquisite phrases found anywhere in any creed (Art. 16).

Crucial to being a Calvinist in distinction from an Arminian is one's position on the relationship of regeneration to faith, and that of regeneration to conversion. Which comes first? The Arminian puts one's faith and conversion first. One shows spiritual activity (of a major sort) before one is even born again. The Canons sweetly and powerfully refute such error. First one is born again (whereby the Spirit of God "pervades the inmost recesses of the man...and infuses new qualities into the will" [III/IV, 11]), and then follows faith and conversion. And by this spiritual life bestowed, God renders the will "good, obedient, and pliable" (Art. 11). "And this is the regeneration so highly celebrated in Scripture..." (Art. 12). This is truly Reformed. God must graciously bestow spiritual life before dead man can be spiritually active.

Also in connection with its treatment of regeneration, the synod answered the Arminians' recurring accusation that the upshot of promoting a sovereign, electing, efficacious grace is practical antinomianism, a Christianity with little emphasis on godliness and spiritual activity in life. After all, it is God who has taken care of every-

thing anyway. The recurring allegation was that high Calvinists "treat men as senseless stocks and blocks..." (III/IV, 16). Many a Reformed man today has backed off from full-fledged Calvinism, evidently persuaded by this allegation.

Nothing is more contrary to the truth. As the Canons make clear, the work of efficacious grace does not ignore the will of man, but powerfully affects it and then uses it. As Article 12 states, "Whereupon the will thus renewed is not only actuated and influenced by God, but in consequence of this influence *becomes itself active*. Wherefore also, man is himself rightly said to believe and repent, by virtue of that grace received" (emphasis added). And any zealot who in the name of his own Calvinism would minimize the call to a godly life and good works, excusing himself on the basis of his own weakness and corruption, must contend with the Canons that declare that God, when He "...infuses new qualities into the will...actuates and strengthens it, that like a good tree it may bring forth the fruits of good actions" (III/IV, 11). Godliness is found, or one's will has not yet been set free, nor one's heart renewed.

Does Calvinism minimize the preaching of the gospel and its urgent call to faith and repentance? Quite the contrary. "And as it hath pleased God, by the preaching of the gospel, to begin this work of grace in us, so He preserves, continues, and perfects it by the hearing and reading of His Word, by meditation thereon, and by the exhortations, threatenings, and promises thereof, as well as by the use of the sacraments" (V, 14).

And, finally, note that each head has a rejection of errors in addition to its positive development of truth. The synod shut the gates of the city to a variety of errors *and to those who teach such things as well*. Teachings that threaten the gospel and are contrary to it are identified each in turn. The fathers of Dordt were not interested in ecumenical fellowship with churchmen who promoted errors contrary to the sovereign, free grace of the gospel. They were willing to discuss these things with others to show them the errors involved, but not in inviting them into the city to join in some common defense. Defense of what? If one does this with Rome or the Arminians, step-children of the fearful error of Pelagianism, he will find the guns turned against his own walls and foundations in short order. Either that or the powder becomes so watered down that it will discharge nothing.

Dordt reminds us, not only that we must stand for the right, but also that we must speak against error. We are all for unity, but unity in love for the gospel of sovereign, free grace. Those who would embrace those whom the synod rejected, must hear again the 'Canons' roar. It is the roar of Jerusalem's King.

The above article was first published in the October 15, 1997 issue of the *Standard Bearer* (vol. 74, no. 2), part

of a special Reformation issue on the Synod of Dordt, the 400th anniversary of which we commemorate this year and next.

Letters

“Contradicting” or “out of harmony with”?

The letter from Manuel Kuhs together with Professor Dykstra’s reply I found thought-provoking (*SB*, October 1, 2018). Please permit me to address something in the reply I found confusing.

The professor believes that one’s statements can be “out of harmony with the Reformed confessions” yet not contradict the confessions. The statements judged to be “out of harmony with the Reformed confessions” and that consequently compromised the doctrine of justification by faith alone, in his view, do not contradict the confessions. He writes: “If the teaching went farther and the logical conclusions were completely drawn out, it would eventually contradict these doctrines as set forth in the confessions...” “Nevertheless, the statements did not explicitly contradict the confessions...” “While the statements did not contradict the confessions, they were not ‘in harmony’ with the confessions’ teaching on the place and function of good works” (12).

I do not find this position tenable. If, as synod declared, the statements in question are out of harmony with the Reformed confessions, then they stand in a relation of opposition to the confessions. That is the meaning of the phrase “out of harmony with.” And if the statements stand in such a relation of opposition, by definition they contradict the confessions.

There is one other point about which I am confused and would ask the professor to explain. He cites with approval synod’s declaration that the statements of the minister are “out of harmony with the Reformed confessions.” Later he says “these were statements on matters that the confessions had not spelled out.” It seems to me one cannot have it both ways. If the confessions do not spell out the doctrine on these matters, then how can one be said to contradict them?

Yours sincerely,
Philip Rainey
Grand Rapids, MI

Response:

The language “compromise” and “out of harmony with” are the terms used by the PRC Synod of 2018, as I reported in July 1 *Standard Bearer*. Subsequently, a reader wrote and inquired about the meaning of these terms, to which I gave my explanation. Brother Rainey expresses a different understanding, namely that

these terms must mean that such teaching necessarily “contradicts” the confession. I am not convinced. I maintain that there is an important distinction between the words used by synod and “contradicting” the confessions.

The word “contradict” is from the Latin *contra-dicto* which means “I speak against.” A teaching that contradicts the confessions is an explicit denial of (a speaking against) what the confessions teach. For example, the confessions teach that Jesus is very God. To teach that Jesus is not truly God is a contradiction of the confessions. Again, the confessions teach that God created all things out of nothing. A contradiction of that is: God did not create Adam. A minister who taught these contradictions would be teaching *heresy*.

In the case before the Synod of 2018, the body condemned certain teachings. Synod did not declare that this or that statement was a contradiction of a specific teaching of the confessions. This does not take away from the reality or the seriousness that synod declared the teachings to be doctrinal error. However, synod did not label them “heresy.”

So the brother creates a false dilemma when he concludes that his view on “contradict” is the correct one, and then asks, “If the confessions do not spell out the doctrine on these matters, then how can one be said to contradict them?” That is exactly the point. Synod did not say “contradict.”

Nonetheless, the significant point that must not be lost in our discussions is the importance of synod’s decision. After a lengthy process of protest and appeal on the place and function of good works, Synod 2018 faced the matter directly. Certain teachings on the place of good works were rejected as doctrinal error. Synod set forth some very helpful distinctions that are, in my judgment, fully in harmony with the teaching of the confessions. I believe there was development in doctrine and clarity given in areas difficult to explain. More discussion of these doctrines will be profitable for the churches. Let us also take note that the minister, consistory, and classis whose teachings or decisions were condemned by the Synod of 2018—all of these have expressed agreement with Synod 2018. No one is undermining these decisions, and no one may.

Prof. R. Dykstra



Dordt 400: Memorial stones

Prof. Douglas Kuiper, newly appointed professor of Church History and New Testament in the Protestant Reformed Seminary

The Synod of Dordt (4) The synod's location

...These stones shall be a memorial unto the children of Israel forever.—Joshua 4:7c

The Synod of Dordt met in the city of Dordrecht, in a building called the *Kloveniersdoelen*.

The city

Two other cities were considered as possible locations for the synod: The Hague (the national capital) and Utrecht. Utrecht was ruled out because it was “a stronghold of Remonstrants.”¹ On November 20, 1617, the national government decided that the synod should meet in Dordrecht.² This city had been the site of a significant provincial synod in 1574, and of the first national synod in 1578. More importantly, the city was considered safe. It was an island city with walled gates, so entry could be monitored. Some Arminians lived there, but most ministers and citizens opposed Arminianism. Civil unrest in Dordrecht was unlikely.

Two consequences of choosing Dordrecht were that the city had a brief economic boom and that many citizens were asked to open their homes to house delegates.

The building

The city decided to house the synod in the *Kloveniersdoelen*, located on the Doelstraat. The local militia used this building for meetings, practice, and ammunition storage. The building was named after the kind of gun that the militia used, and was the largest



Kloveniersdoelen with tower

civil building in the city.³ The building was destroyed in 1857 to make way for a new prison. Currently, the site is the location of the hall of justice. A plaque is attached to the outside wall of the modern building identifying it as the site at which the synod met.

The synod met in the second story of the building. The paintings indicate that this second story had large windows, and was tall enough that the upper clerestory windows could let light in. Within the building were at least two other smaller rooms, one of which was used for committee meetings and another the place where the Remonstrants could be when they were sent out from the sessions of synod. The tower (left, in the picture above) contained a room in which the delegates could relax when not in session. Some delegates even held evening dinner parties in this room.

The synod met during the late fall, winter, and early spring. To ward off chill, a fire was always burning on the hearth, and each delegate had his own footwarmer.

1 Fred van Lieburg, *The Synod of Dordrecht 1618-1619*, transl. Dick Swier (Dordrecht: Stichting Historisch Platform Dordrecht, 2017), 11.

2 Donald Sinnema, Christian Moser and Herman J. Selderhuis, eds., *Acta et Documenta Synodi Nationalis Dordrechtanae (1618-1619)*, vol. I: *Acta of the Synod of Dordt* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2015), XXIV.

3 [https://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kloveniersdoelen_\(Dordrecht\)](https://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kloveniersdoelen_(Dordrecht)), accessed Nov. 5, 2018.



Things which must shortly come to pass

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

Premillennialism (22)

Fundamental Reformed critique of Premillennialism (4)

Previous article in this series: September 15, 2018, p. 494.

“But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light” (1 Peter 2:9).

Introduction

There is yet one fundamental error of premillennialism concerning the end of all things—eschatology—that the Reformed faith strongly condemns and that plainly exposes premillennialism as gross error concerning the end. This error pervades dispensational premillennialism. Criticism of the error likewise, therefore, has pervaded this critical examination of premillennialism.

But it is necessary to isolate the error, expose it, and bring down upon it the heavy condemnation of the Reformed, indeed, Christian, creeds and of the Bible.

The error is premillennialism’s dividing of the people of God into two, separate groups: national Israel, composed of racial Jews, and the church, made up mainly of believing Gentiles.

This division of the people of God into two distinct and separated groups is basic premillennial doctrine.

It is also rank heresy.

The error divides the people of God and the body of Christ. Since division of the body of Christ and people of God is schism, premillennialism is schismatic. In premillennialism, ugly schism parades as lovely orthodoxy.

The error makes God a polygamist, contrary to His own will for marriage. According to premillennialism, God is married to two wives. One is national Israel, wife of Jehovah (Ezek. 16). The other is the church, bride of Jesus Christ, who is Jehovah in the flesh (Eph. 5).

The error teaches, not only two ways of salvation, but also two salvations: an earthly, carnal salvation for the Jews as the restored (earthly) nation of Israel, and a spiritual salvation for the church.

This heresy of dividing the people of God bears on, indeed, demands, the eschatological error of pre-

millennialism. Because the Jews are and remain a distinct, separate people of God, there must be a millennium for them in the future, which millennium is the main feature of the last days for premillennialism. The Jews must yet enjoy the prophesied earthly power, earthly benefits, and earthly glory. Since this “golden age” for the Jews requires the removal of the church from the scene, lest the church intrude on the carnal prosperity and power of the Jews (as if the church, having begun to enjoy the spiritual and heavenly blessings of perfected salvation, the things which God has prepared for them who love Him [I Cor. 2:9], would have the slightest interest in the carnal bounties that premillennialism lavishes upon the Jews), there must be the secret rapture of the church into the air at any moment.

Contemporary premillennial theologian Barry E. Horner rightly describes premillennial theology as a “Judeo-centric Eschatology.”¹ The description is itself the exposure and condemnation of premillennialism.

Dispensationalism’s division of the people of God

The original dispensational premillennialists emphatically taught the separation of the people of God into two, different, and eternally separated groups. That is, they taught two distinct and everlastingly different peoples of God. One people is the Jewish nation of Israel, restored as an earthly kingdom. The other is the largely Gentile church of New Testament believers. The former is the kingdom of God. The latter is the church of Jesus Christ.

Indicating the intrinsic importance and necessity of

¹ Barry E. Horner, *Future Israel: Why Christian Anti-Judaism Must be Challenged* (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2007), xvi. Horner goes on to affirm “a distinct national and territorial destiny for Israel” (315). Any dissent from this affirmation marks one as guilty of “anti-Judaism,” a slightly, but only slightly, less obnoxious evil, evidently, than “anti-Semitism.”

this division of the two peoples of God, the fathers of premillennialism taught that the division would forever have a physical and local expression. The Jews would inhabit the new earth; the Gentile church would dwell in the new heavens.

Such is the inherent, far-reaching divisiveness of premillennialism that the error implied a division of creation itself. Creation itself—the *new* creation—would have a deep and wide fault-line, if not chasm, between earth and heaven, between the territory of the kingdom and the home of the church.

Salvation itself for the two peoples would be different. For the Jewish nation, salvation during the millennial dispensation would be earthly—earthly power, earthly riches, earthly glory. For the church, salvation would be heavenly and spiritual—spiritual riches and spiritual honor.

C. I. Scofield, one of the fathers of dispensational premillennialism, wrote that the Israelites have a “very *distinct* place in the dealings and counsels of God.... All the communications of Jehovah to Israel *as a nation* relate to the Earth.... The nation is promised earthly greatness, riches and power.”

Alongside Israel is “another distinct body, which is called the Church.” Between Israel and the church is a fundamental difference: “Just as distinctly as Israel stands connected with temporal and earthly things, so distinctly does the Church stand connected with spiritual and heavenly things.”

This difference between the two peoples of God extends into the future—the last things, eschatology.

In the predictions concerning the *future* of Israel and the Church, the distinction is still more startling. The Church will be taken away from the earth entirely, but restored Israel is yet to have her greatest earthly splendor and power.²

L. S. Chafer, an early, influential advocate of traditional premillennialism in the United States, wrote:

The dispensationalist believes that throughout the ages God is pursuing two distinct purposes: one related to the earth with earthly people and earthly objectives involved, which is Judaism; while the other is related to heaven with heavenly people and heavenly objectives involved, which is Christianity.³

Contemporary dispensationalist Craig A. Blaising accurately describes the traditional premillennial teaching:

In the present dispensation, God is forming a heavenly people, the church, for a heavenly (spiritual) mode of life in a heavenly destiny. In the future dispensation [the millennium of a literal, one-thousand years of continuing earthly history—DJE], when the heavenly people will fill the heavens [having been raptured off the earth to make way for the realization of God’s main purpose with history—the restoration of the earthly nation of Israel as His kingdom—DJE], God will resume his purpose for an earthly people, Israel and Gentiles [but mainly Israel—DJE], who have an earthly mode of life and an earthly destiny in the kingdom of Christ.⁴

Although Charles Ryrie now presents himself, and is widely regarded, as moderating some of the theology of the fathers of dispensationalism, thus showing himself open to ecumenical dialogue with covenant theology, Ryrie agrees that the everlasting difference between Israel and the church is fundamental to premillennialism. Having quoted Chafer concerning God’s “two distinct purposes” in history, Ryrie comments:

This is probably the most basic theological test of whether or not a man is a dispensationalist, and it is undoubtedly the most practical and conclusive. A man who fails to distinguish Israel and the Church will inevitably not hold to dispensational distinctions; and one who does, will.⁵

A little earlier in the book, Ryrie had affirmed that “the *sine qua non* [that which is essential—DJE] of dispensationalism...[is that] a dispensationalist keeps Israel and the Church distinct.”⁶

John F. Walvoord, at the time president of Dallas Theological Seminary, expressed what has been fundamental to premillennialism from the very beginning of that false doctrine, and pronounced that fundamental teaching “essential”: “[the] doctrine of the church as a body distinct from Israel...is essential to premillennialism.”⁷

Implied is that biblical evidence that Old Testament Israel and the New Testament church are one, in that the church is the fulfillment and spiritual reality of Old Testament Israel, exposes dispensational premillennialism as false doctrine. If Old Testament Israel, as the kingdom and covenant people of God, is essentially one

2 C. I. Scofield, *Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth* (New York/Chicago: Fleming H. Revell, n.d.), 7-17.

3 L. S. Chafer, quoted in Charles C. Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1965), 45.

4 Craig A. Blaising, “Dispensationalism: The Search for Definition,” in *Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church*, ed. Craig A. Blaising and Darrell L. Bock (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 20.

5 Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today*, 45.

6 Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today*, 44.

7 John F. Walvoord, *The Rapture Question* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979), 21.

with the New Testament church, as the kingdom and covenant people of God, because the New Testament church is the fulfillment and spiritual reality of Old Testament Israel, dispensational premillennialism is total,

utter, and grievous false doctrine.⁸

And this is precisely the truth.

(to be continued)

⁸ This biblical evidence will be forthcoming in a subsequent article in this series.



Previous article in this series: August 2018, p. 444.

Believing and confessing

Prof. Ronald Cammenga, professor of Dogmatics and Old Testament in the Protestant Reformed Seminary

Of the creation of all things: Of angels, the devil, and man (Second Helvetic Confession, chapter 7a)

God created all things

This good and almighty God created all things, both visible and invisible, by His co-eternal Word, and preserves them by His co-eternal Spirit, as David testified when he said: “By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, and all their host by the breath of his mouth” (Ps. 33:6). And, as Scripture says, everything that God had made was very good, and was made for the profit and use of man. Now we assert that all things proceed from one beginning.

The doctrine of creation is set forth in chapter 7 of the Second Helvetic Confession. The God of providence (SHC, chapter 6) is, first of all, the God of creation. The chapter begins with the fundamental truth that God is the Creator. God has “created all things, both visible and invisible.” From the outset, the Reformed faith has the answer to the false teaching of evolution. All things, whether belonging to the physical world or to the world of spirits, have the origin of their existence in God, not in chance or fate. Not only does the SHC oppose the teaching of evolution in its opening statement, but by its concluding sentence of the first paragraph as well, in which it asserts that all things “proceed from one beginning.” All things have a real and historical “beginning,” in fact, “one beginning.” Evolution denies any “beginning,” certainly “one beginning,” of all things. It asserts instead that matter is eternal. This is the necessary, bold, and clearly foolish assertion of the evolutionist.

God the Creator is the triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Noteworthy in connection with the confession of the truth of creation, is the SHC’s testimony of the truth of the Trinity. The “good and almighty God created all things,” but He did so “by His co-eternal Word, and preserves them by His co-eternal Spirit.” That all three Persons of the Godhead created and were all alike involved in the work of creation is testimony to their deity and co-eternality. In support of the assertion that God triune created, Heinrich Bullinger, the author of the SHC, appeals to Psalm 33:6. Along with the other Reformers, he understood Psalm 33:6 to be referring to the united activity of the three Persons of the Godhead. “The LORD” is God the Father, the First Person. “The word of the LORD” is God the Son, the Second Person, who is expressly called in Scripture “the Word,” as in John 1. “The breath of his [God’s] mouth,” is the Holy Spirit, the Third Person. “Spirit” is literally “breath” or “wind.”

Since creation is a divine work, in creating all things, God shows that He is God—the true God and the only God. He alone creates. And since creation is the work of the three Persons, at the very dawn of history the Creator showed that He is the triune God.

That which God created “was made very good.” The SHC calls attention to the fact that this is the express teaching of Scripture: “as Scripture says.” This is what Scripture says repeatedly in Genesis 1, as in verses 4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, and 31. That God created everything good means especially two things. First, it means that everything was made to serve the unique

purpose for which it was created. Each creature, in its own unique place, according to its own distinct design, in its own way, occupies the place for which God created it. Second, that everything was made good means that the original creation was morally upright and pure. It was altogether free from any imperfection or sin.

For the profit and use of man

Significantly, the SHC teaches that God created all things “for the profit and use of man.” This in no way is intended to deny that the *ultimate* purpose of God with what He had created was the glory of His own name. That certainly is true and, from the viewpoint of the SHC, goes without saying. That is Revelation 4:11, “Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.”

But this does not take away from the fact that the *proximate* purpose of God was the “profit and use of man.” The truth of this is based, first of all, on the fact that man stands at the pinnacle of the earthly creation. As the apex of God’s creative activity, all creation stands in the service and for the profit of man. Secondly, man was created as the head of the earthly creation and given dominion over it—under God, of course. Because man stands in that position, it follows that the creation stands in his service, for his use and profit. That man is called “to have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth on the earth,” implies that all was made for man’s use and profit. Third, this is expressly the teaching of Genesis 1 and 2. In Genesis 1:29, God says to Adam, “Behold, I have given *you* every herb bearing seed...and every tree.” The fact that in Genesis 2 God places the man in the Garden of Eden and calls him “to dress it and to keep it” implies that all within the garden was for man’s use and profit.

That God created all things for man’s use and profit follows from the fact that He created all things as our heavenly Father. There is nothing that delights a father so much as the proper use by his children of the gifts that he bestows upon them. The same is true of God our Father.

That God has created all things for man’s use and profit guards against two equally pernicious evils. First, it guards against the abuse of the creation. The creation is to be used, not abused. The Christian does not need the modern ecological movement to impress upon him his calling to be a good steward of the creation. The

truth of creation and the purpose of God in creation impress this calling upon him. Second, the proper use of the creation guards against the evil of setting one’s heart on the things in the creation—worshiping the creature rather than the Creator. Our calling is to use the creation, not adore it.

Of angels and the devil

Among all creatures, angels and men are most excellent. Concerning angels, Holy Scripture declares: “Who maketh his angels spirits; his ministers a flaming fire” (Ps. 104:4). Also it says: “Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?” (Heb. 1:14). Concerning the devil, the Lord Jesus Himself testifies: “He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it” (John 8:44). Consequently we teach that some angels persisted in obedience and were appointed for faithful service to God and men, but others fell of their own free will and were cast into destruction, becoming enemies of all good and of the faithful.

Chapter 7 of the SHC calls special attention to the rational, moral creatures that God made: angels and men. This paragraph is devoted to the angels, both good and evil; a separate paragraph treats the creation of man.

In the beginning, all the angels were made good. When exactly they were created we are not informed in Scripture. There is reason to believe that they were created on the first day of the creation week. One indication of this is Psalm 104, which is quoted in this paragraph of the SHC. The various sections of Psalm 104 can be divided according to the successive days of the creation week. In the opening section, which includes verse 4, the psalmist speaks of the creation of the angels: “Who maketh his angels spirits.” That also harmonizes with certain passages of Scripture that speak of the angels beholding God’s creative work. That could be true only if they were created on the first day of the creation week. Job 38:6 and 7 teach that when God laid the foundations of the earth, “the morning stars [the angels] sang together, and all the sons of God [again, the angels] shouted for joy.”

Apart from when they were created, the clear teaching of Scripture is that the angels, like men, have been created by God. They, too, are creatures. Colossians

1:16 teaches that the Lord Jesus Christ created “all things...that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible.” Paul goes on to describe the various ranks of angels: “thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him.”

Although both men and angels are created by God, and although both are rational, moral creatures, there are significant differences between men and angels. One difference is that angels are spiritual (invisible) beings and men are physical (visible) creatures. Another thing is that there is no sexual differentiation among angels, that is, there are no male angels and no female angels. Closely related to this is the fact that there is no reproduction among the angels, but the (created) number of angels remains fixed. Neither is there apparently any aging, disease, or death among the angels, as there is in the world of man.

Elect and reprobate angels

Two important truths about the angels that Scripture teaches are affirmed in this paragraph of the SHC. First, not all the angels have remained in the uprightness of their original creation by God. Some angels “fell of their own free will and were cast into destruction.” This fall of the angels must have taken place prior to the Fall of man, since Satan comes as a wicked, fallen angel to tempt Adam and Eve. Based on what information Scripture affords us, it appears that the devil (Lucifer) led a number of the angels, likely one-third, in rebellion against God. Satan’s motivation was that he aspired to overthrow and replace God on the throne of the universe, the very temptation he presented to Adam and Eve in the garden. The interested reader can consult Isaiah 14:4-12-15, Ezekiel 28:1-10, and Revelation 12.

The second important truth is that, like the Fall of man, the fall of the angels was ordained by God. The Fall of man and the fall of the angels are included in the all-wise counsel of God. Scripture teaches that God’s decree of predestination, election and reprobation, includes the angels. In I Timothy 5:21, the apostle speaks of the “elect angels.” Election always implies reprobation. That there are elect angels implies that there are also reprobate angels. Jude says in Jude 6: “And the an-

gels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day.”

Although there are elect and reprobate angels, God’s decree of predestination with regard to the angels is different than His decree with respect to human beings. With regard to human beings, they all fall into sin, but only a portion are delivered and restored—the elect. With regard to the angels, the elect angels never fell, whereas the reprobate angels fell and for them there is no possibility of deliverance. If there is a proper distinction between total and absolute depravity, this is the distinction. Total depravity applies to fallen human beings, some of whom are saved, whereas the fallen angels are absolutely depraved, inasmuch as there is no possibility of deliverance from their fallen state.

Thus, the good angels “persisted in obedience and were appointed for the faithful service to God and men.” But the evil angels who have fallen from their state of original righteousness, have “become enemies of all good and of the faithful.” The “good” and “faithful” are clearly good and faithful men, that is, the children of God. The devil and the demons are

real and spiritual enemies of the good and faithful people of God. They are bent on our ruin, temporally and eternally. Because they are invisible, we cannot see them. But they are undoubtedly behind the temptations and persecution of the world. As Satan’s minions, they go

about “seeking whom they may devour” (I Pet. 5:8). Hence, the exhortation: “Whom resist steadfast in the faith” (I Pet. 5:9a). And the assurance? “And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly” (Rom. 16:20).

...like the Fall of man, the fall of the angels was ordained by God. The Fall of man and the fall of the angels are included in the all-wise counsel of God. Scripture teaches that God’s decree of predestination, election and reprobation, includes the angels.



Strength of youth

Rev. Brian Huizinga, pastor of Hope Protestant Reformed Church in Redlands, California

“To teach them war” (22)

God’s armor for us: The sword

Previous article in this series: August 2018, p. 449.

“And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God.”

Ephesians 6:17

Down through the ages, no weapon has been more valuable and had a greater use in warfare than the sword. Countless enemies have fallen and countless battles have been won by the edge of the sword.

In the apostle Paul’s day the Roman soldier carried a short stabbing sword in a sheath attached to his belt. Often the soldier in the front line of a legion would carry his shield in one hand and a long spear in the other. Approaching the enemy, the soldier would make his first assault by hurling the spear from a distance, and then close by drawing the sword and engaging the foe in close quarters.

Every Christian bears the sword of the Spirit, and it is his only offensive weapon. Every other piece of armor is designed either to ready the soldier for battle (belt and sandals) or to defend him (breastplate, shield, and helmet). The sword is different. It stabs. It pierces. It injures. It maims. It bloodies. It slays. It defeats. With the sword the soldier advances, cuts through enemy powers, puts to flight and, if necessary, kills. The life of the instituted church and the life of individual Christian is more than defending, guarding, and holding ground; it is going on the offensive.

The sword itself

Our sword as described in Ephesians 6:17 is “of the Spirit” but the sword is not the Spirit. The sword is the Word of God (“which is the word of God”). The Word of God is the Bible. Faith does not regard the Bible to be a dead, lifeless book, but the living revelation of God that proceeded out of His mouth through Jesus Christ and is delivered in written form.

The emphasis of the term “word” is upon the *spoken* word as it proceeds from the mouth. For the term “word” in verse 17 has as its first meaning “utterance.” Furthermore, the Bible speaks of Christ having a sword coming out of His *mouth* (Is. 49:2; Rev. 1:16). That a

sword comes out of Jesus’ mouth refers to the power of His spoken word that will put to flight and even destroy His enemies. Thus, when Jesus used the sword of the Word of God against the Tempter in the wilderness, He spoke the Scriptures, saying, “It is written,” and Satan fled with dread. When the Word of God goes forth from the pulpit of the instituted church and on the mission field, the sword is being wielded. But also unofficially, whenever we believers take the Bible and from it make a testimony, we are using the sword.

Our sword is double-edged (Heb. 4:12) and, therefore, has a twofold use. The sword utters the gracious promises of the gospel proclaiming God’s sovereign, particular love in Christ for the forgiveness of sins and everlasting life. But the sword also expresses God’s warnings against and condemnation of sin and sinners. The sword converts souls as a savor of life unto life, and it hardens souls as a savor of death unto death.

Our sword is “of the Spirit.” First of all, this reminds us that our warfare is spiritual and does not consist in crusades with physical swords. The purpose of the sword is not to draw blood but to penetrate to the spiritual center of a man, which is his heart (Heb. 4:12). Secondly, the Holy Spirit is the power of the sword. He makes the Word living, powerful, and effectual so that, as we read the Bible, our hearts are stirred, or as we speak the truth of the Bible to others, their hearts are stirred. By the Spirit Satan is driven away, heretics are hardened, and elect sinners are saved as the strongholds of opposition to God are cast down in their hearts. It is fitting that the Spirit should be the One who makes the sword an effectual power because He is the One who inspired the Bible.

The Spirit who makes quick the Word is the Spirit of *Christ*. The Christ who bruised the head of the serpent, and spoiled principalities and powers, and abolished enmity, and redeemed His people unto God; the Christ who arose from the dead and took away the sting of death, and the victory of the grave, and the strength of sin; the Christ who now reigns supreme in heaven with a sword proceeding out of His mouth, and who prom-

ises to make us more than conquerors—that Christ by His Spirit is the One who takes the spoken Word of God and makes it effectual in the advance of God’s kingdom. The battle belongs to Christ.

The necessity of it

The sword is necessary for the advance of God’s kingdom, first of all, because the true, instituted church of Christ and her youth are surrounded by false doctrines, vain philosophies, and wicked lifestyles.

Dangerous are the heretics with their heresies, the crafty false teachers with their honeycomb tongues in influential speeches and cunning literature, and the pleasure-seekers attractively promoting their ungodly lifestyles. No one is more dangerous than the seducer who takes the name “Christian” and, like his father Satan, tries to take our sword by quoting the pure Word of God to prove his damnable lies and further his abominations. Danger is everywhere. And due to the Internet, everyone has a platform for their vain babblings, easily gaining entrance into and influencing any home.

The church must not wait for error to infiltrate the camp, but through her watchman must be vigilant in identifying the threat of the hour and go on the offensive by engagement in polemical preaching and teaching that condemns threatening false doctrines and wicked practices. The sword of the Spirit drives heresy and the love for dissolute living out of hearts, homes, and churches, and, more importantly, prevents its entrance.

If support for homosexuality has so worked its way into the churches that a synod must judge whether those who openly identify as homosexuals may be members in good standing or be ordained into the gospel ministry, it is not too late to win the battle. But it might be. The church must go on the offensive and condemn perverse inclinations and behaviors while proclaiming the hope of deliverance from that sin in Jesus Christ, so that the first inclination unto that wickedness is driven from hearts long before it establishes so deep a footing that a synod must address it.

False teachers hate the point of the sword. We must take the sword for the confounding of false teachers in their error. For example, Federal Vision heretics who preach a universal, resistible, ineffectual divine grace in the covenant in the interest of conditionality hate the point of the sword that is Romans 9. After futilely trying to force Romans 9 to bear witness against itself, the enemies of sovereign grace finally duck and dodge, and then flee confounded. Let the sharp point of Romans 9 be continually thrust into the theology of common grace in the covenant, as well as into our own hearts to slay the old man of pride and self-salvation, so that that

God-dishonoring heresy finds no home in us and in our fellowship.

If we listen to the plea of many to put down our sharp sword and stop being so condemnatory, and just stick with the positive message that does not make anyone feel bad, the church might grow numerically but soon enough we will also have women in the pulpit, sodomites in the consistory, rank Arminians or antinomians at the table of the Lord, and evolutionists on the school boards.

The instituted church needs the sword of the Spirit for the advance of God’s kingdom. I hope you young people will pray for the cause of the sword.

Secondly, the instituted church and the individual believer need to use the sword because often our fellow soldiers are taken hostage in sin and hurried across enemies’ lines. We need the sword for rescue operations.

You might know a fellow Christian soldier overtaken in a fault (Gal. 6:1). The enemy called “love of pornography or pre-marital sex” or “love for alcohol or drugs” or “hatred for the church or for a brother” or “delight in Sabbath desecration,” or “believing the Bible is a big lie, and the Reformed faith vanity,” or “enticement to date an unbeliever,” or “no-one-will-tell-me-how-to-live pride” has overtaken a fellow soldier. The sinner goes willingly. He feels right at home in his corruption as a hostage in the enemy’s concentration camp.

Now what? What do you do, soldier? What if you are outfitted with a helmet, a breastplate, a shield, a belt, and sandals, but you have no sword? How will you ever go across enemy lines to smite the enemy and rescue your dear friend or family member? What if you have a sword but keep it sheathed saying, “Well, he is my friend. We like each other. I don’t want to hurt his feelings, disrupt our relationship, and make him think ill of me or turn against me, so I will pretend all is well.”

We need the sword of the Spirit, otherwise that hostage will die across enemy lines. With a spirit of meekness and considering ourselves lest we also be tempted, we are to fulfill the law of Christ (Gal. 6:1-2) by taking our sword to assault Satan and that sinner’s proud heart, stubborn will, and vain imaginations by bringing the Scriptures to him again and again. Pray that the Holy Spirit will take whatever passages you bring in the rescue operation and use them for repentance unto the releasing of that prisoner from his chains. To the pain of our hearts, sometimes the sword hardens the sinner in his sin and further exposes the perversity of his heart.

Thirdly, the individual Christian needs this sword for his own life of safety in the kingdom. We are all surrounded by temptations. The devil preys on our weaknesses. Youthful lusts are strong and boil hot. In our

youth we can be heady and high-minded. While we have so much armor to defend and protect us throughout the day, we must also go on the offensive with the sword of the Spirit. In morning devotions unclean lusts, jealousy, and pride are slain by the sword of God's Word, which the Spirit uses to prick the conscience, create godly sorrow, and make Christ and His holiness desirable to us.

The taking of it

Every elect, regenerated, believing child of God and every true church will take the sword (v. 17, "...and take..."), for the Spirit who inspired the Scriptures is the same Spirit who teaches our hands to war with the sword.

The apostles took the sword from Jerusalem to the uttermost parts of the earth for the advance of the kingdom. With the sword of Pentecost, Peter lovingly stabbed those murderers of Jerusalem who had Christ's blood on their hands, so that they confessed their sins and sought baptism. With the sword of the resurrection of Jesus, Paul slighted the devil's works all throughout the Mediterranean world, so that peoples who had been bound in the slavery of idolatry for thousands of years were released.

Let our churches take the sword through preaching, catechizing, consistorial work, and especially by maintaining a theological school for the training of soldiers. And young man, will you please strongly consider enrolling in this military institution so that one day you may war a good warfare in the ministry as Peter and Paul did.

Let the young people take the sword by meditating upon God's Word day and night and adding to the knowledge that they gained in their earliest years in memorizing verse after verse, reciting catechism answer after catechism answer, singing Psalter number after Psalter number, and taking page after page of notes in Bible class. Keep learning.

Can you imagine a soldier in the heat of battle having no sword, and having none because he failed to take one to battle? More ridiculous and more serious is the believer with no sword. Take the sword! What could be more shameful than a Reformed Christian with no knowledge of and skill to use the Bible? The Reformers jeopardized their lives to get a sword in the hands of the disarmed masses of the Romish churches. Sword-taking is our Reformed heritage. But we will not take it? Take the sword of the Spirit! The battle belongs to God, He will see to it that all His soldiers take the sword.



Go ye into all the world

Rev. Daniel Kleyn, missionary of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America, stationed in Manila, Philippines

The Canons of Dordt and missions (1)

This year and next mark the 400th anniversary of the Synod of Dordt. One of the most significant labors of that Synod was to compose and adopt the Canons of Dordt. Although the main purpose and benefit of this creed was and still is to provide a clear, biblical response to the grievous, God-dishonoring heresy of Arminianism, surprisingly this creed also addresses, both indirectly as well as explicitly, the matter of the church's calling to do mission work. As we commemorate the work of this Synod and the Lord's guiding hand in that work, we do well to take a look at what the Canons of Dordt has to say about missions—perhaps especially in light of the fact that the Arminians, against whose views the Canons was written, accused the Reformed of not

having a reason to do mission work because they taught that God has eternally predestined everyone.

Reformed creeds, including the Three Forms of Unity, have often been maligned as not saying enough about missions. Some have even argued that they say nothing at all about it. Such criticisms come both from within and from outside the denominations that have adopted these creeds.

Those who criticize the creeds often blame them for a perceived lack of missionary zeal and activity within Reformed denominations. The argument is that because the confessions are chiefly polemical and doctrinal, they fail to address the important and urgent work of the church to preach the gospel to the ends of the earth. It is

said that the Reformed creeds encourage churches to be concerned only with themselves and their own survival. The creeds fail to inspire members or congregations to be conscious of, excited about, and active in missions. Some even go so far as to argue that the creeds are a hindrance to missions because they are doctrinal, and doctrine divides. They view the creeds, therefore, as a stumbling block for mission work.

It is worth noting that these accusations are in reality being directed against the Synod of Dordt itself. The charge that the creeds (including the Canons of Dordt) do not address the church's calling to do mission work is tantamount to saying that the Synod of Dordt was not interested in and concerned about missions. That is simply untrue. The charge also implies that the five points of Calvinism (which are vigorously defended by the Canons of Dordt) have nothing to do with and nothing to say about mission work. That too is simply untrue.

Those in Reformed and Presbyterian churches who raise the above-mentioned criticisms suggest various solutions. The most radical solution suggested is that the church ought to write a new creed, one that specifically addresses missions and spells out in detail what the Scriptures teach concerning the church's calling to do mission work, and how it ought to be done. It is believed that the church needs a separate creed for the task of missions.

Another proposed solution is that something be added to Article 29 of the Belgic Confession of Faith. This article concerns "The Marks of the True Church." Some believe that mission work is not comprehended under the first mark of a true church, namely, "that the pure doctrine of the gospel is preached therein." That mark, they argue, has an inward perspective and refers merely to preaching as the means for the preservation of the church. They suggest, therefore, that a fourth mark be added, namely, that the true church is one that faithfully carries out the Great Commission of Matthew 28:19-20.

Yet another solution to this supposed problem is the idea of adding an article to our existing creeds. This additional article would specifically address the church's calling to do mission work and would serve to inspire the church and her members to be conscious of and active in this work.

Sad to say, one Presbyterian denomination in the USA did exactly what was just mentioned, namely, they added to their creed. This was done in 1903 by The Presbyterian Church in the United States of America (PCUSA). Their creed was the Westminster Confession of Faith. The result was that their version of this creed has an ad-

ditional chapter entitled, "Of the Love of God and Missions." As that title itself already indicates, their main purpose was to base mission work in the well-meant offer of the gospel. The PCUSA used the heresy of the well-meant offer as the reason why the church must do missions. It is as though they said that mission work is impossible and doomed to fail if you do not maintain that God loves all men, desires the salvation of all men, and freely offers that salvation to all men.

The chapter and articles that they added to their creed makes that explicit. Part of their addition reads as follows: "In the Gospel God declares His love for the world and His desire that all men should be saved; reveals fully and clearly the only way of salvation; promises eternal life to all who truly repent and believe in Christ; invites and commands all to embrace the offered mercy; and by His Spirit accompanying the Word pleads with men to accept His gracious invitation."

One could hardly find a more blatant statement anywhere concerning the well-meant offer of the gospel. And this obvious corruption of the truth was added to a Reformed confession. That in itself ought to demonstrate the danger of and warn us against modifying or adding to our creeds.

But what about our Reformed confessions and the church's work of missions? Are the confessions silent? And if not silent, are they inadequate? Do we need something more? If a Reformed denomination lacks missionary zeal, should we cast the blame at the creeds? And were the Arminians correct after all when they accused the Reformed of teaching a doctrine (double predestination) that destroys missionary zeal?

Our answer is that our Three Forms of Unity do adequately speak to and about missions and the calling of the church to be engaged in this work. They say much more than we might at first think or expect. And that includes the Canons of Dordt. In fact, out of the three creeds that constitute the Three Forms of Unity, it is the Canons that contains an explicit statement concerning the church's duty to do mission work. It is, therefore, a creed that can guide us in our mission work. It sheds light on our missionary calling. It is an essential tool for Reformed churches and Reformed missionaries who purpose faithfully to carry out the Great Commission.

Before looking at and considering specific references to missions in the Canons of Dordt, we should realize that the very existence of this creed (and likewise of our other creeds) is itself significant for missions. That is, the creeds, even apart from what they might say about missions, themselves demonstrate that the churches who have and use them are conscious of doing and are doing mission work. Even if our Three Forms of Unity would

say nothing at all about mission work, by virtue of their existence in our midst they indicate that our churches are mission-minded. Let me explain.

We refer to our creeds by various names: creeds, confessions, forms of unity, rules of faith, standards, and symbols. The last listed name is significant here, for it means the creed is like a banner or flag. And a banner or flag is a very public item. The purpose of a nation's flag is to represent that nation as well as to distinguish it from other nations. When, therefore, we refer to our creeds as symbols, we are pointing out that they are a public expression of what we believe and confess. The creeds clearly identify us to others. They are a public and outward declaration of who we are and of what we believe. And thereby they issue a public call to others to join us in believing, confessing, and being comforted by the truths of Scripture that God has been pleased to give us.

The very fact that we possess confessions, therefore, ought to stimulate us to do mission work. The creeds are not intended to be locked away and kept secret. They are not intended to be kept to ourselves. The creeds are intended to be on public display at all times and to all peoples. They are intended to attract attention. They are intended to be hung like a banner and to be raised

like a flag. They are intended to be printed in booklets and handed out to those who do not have them. They are intended to be discussed with those who are outside our churches in such a way that we encourage and even urge them to join us.

This is true because the creeds, through the guidance of the Holy Spirit of truth, set forth the truth of Scripture. They declare, therefore, what the Scriptures declare, that men are sinners who must repent of their sins and believe and trust alone in Jesus Christ. In this way they call those who do not have the truth concerning Christ to believe and embrace that truth as it has been graciously given and handed down to us in those creeds.

The very existence of our creeds means that we are a mission-minded denomination. By means of our creeds, the message that we give to all who do not have them is: "This is who we are, and this is what we believe. Come and join us!" Reformed churches, by virtue of being confessional, are also mission churches.

However, in addition to this, the Canons of Dordt also has some specific things to say about missions. The Lord willing, we will consider that in our next article on this subject.



Pertaining to our churches—Domestic Mission Committee

Rev. Audred Spriensma, home missionary of the Protestant Reformed Churches

Witnessing: Our conduct and our speech

In Isaiah 43:10 and 12, God says to His people, "Ye are my witnesses." That witness is in contrast to the false witnesses of the nations regarding their gods. That witness is that there is one true God who saves. He saves through His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior. We are saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Jesus Christ alone. We are not only forgiven our sins but delivered from slavery to sin. We are new creatures recreated in the image of God. Our lives are to be lived in thankfulness, shown by obedience to our only Master and Lord, Christ Jesus.

God in Isaiah 43:10 says, "Ye are my witnesses." Notice the plural. It is not just ministers and missionaries, but it is all true believers as they share and are partak-

ers of Christ in their threefold office of prophet, priest, and king. Each believer confesses Christ, confesses his faith, confesses the truth of God's infallible Word. We are to do so each day and every day. Notice that God says, "Ye are my witnesses." That means that we are authorized and equipped by God through His Spirit to witness and to praise and glorify our God. This is not a once-in-awhile activity that we might engage in. Rather, each of us is to witness and be ready to witness in the course of everyday life. We do that in our homes, with our spouses and our children; we do that in our workplace; and we do that in our neighborhoods.

In Colossians 4:5, 6 we are told how we are to witness to those outside of our faith. We are to do so in

our conduct and in our speech. The exhortation comes to all the members of the church. “Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time. Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.” Wise conduct and gracious speech is stressed.

To the Jew, every non-Jew was an “outsider.” To the Christian every non-Christian is, in a sense, an outsider. They are outside the true saving faith. Often they are full of contempt, ridicule, and hatred for the faith and those who hold it. How do we react to this? How we witness to them?

Colossians 4:5, 6 begins with our walk. Maybe you are surprised at this. Often we think of witnessing as speaking, declaring, and setting forth what we have seen and heard and know. But actions speak louder than words. If we live just like those outside of Christ, serving their gods of honor, position, sexual immorality, material possessions, and many other gods, then our words about Christ being primary in our lives mean nothing. It is only as we sanctify the Lord God in our hearts that others will ask the reason for the hope that is in us (I Pet. 3:15). They ask, “Why will you not join the union?” “Why, young person, will you not move in with your girlfriend?” “Why will you not look for another marriage partner when your spouse has forsaken you?” “Why do you folks have such large families?” “Why do you go to church twice on Sunday, and refuse to go to the beach?” Our walk must be an antithetical walk, saying no to sin and saying yes to God and His Word.

We are told to “walk in wisdom toward them that are without.” This means that our conduct must be wise instead of foolish, virtuous rather than wicked. It is as if the apostle were saying, “Behave wisely toward outsiders, always bearing in mind that though few people read the Scriptures, all people read you!

Negatively, godly conduct will serve as a weapon against false characterizations that the ungodly like to make against Christians. We do not want to put stumbling blocks in their way. We do not desire that our sinful behavior gives others ammunition against Christianity, or that they are hardened and shrink more and more from religion. We do not want occasion to be given for their disparaging the gospel and, therefore, to expose the name of Christ to laughter. A sinful life by a child of God is harmful for witnessing. The people to whom one witnesses are prompted to mock the cause of God rather than see in it a working of the Spirit of Christ to whom we belong. But also, we do not desire to join in their sinful ways, defiled with their sins.

Positively, we desire that our conduct will be used by God to win outsiders to God. Lord’s Day 32 of the Hei-

delberg Catechism teaches us that we desire that by the whole of our conduct we may testify of “our gratitude to God for His blessings, and that He may be praised by us; also that everyone may be assured in himself of his faith, by the fruits thereof; and that, by our godly conversation, others may be gained to Christ.” We desire that outsiders see our conduct and say, “Behold, how they love each other and, in spite of all we have said about them, even love us and treat us with kindness, returning good for evil.”

The apostle Paul goes on to say in Colossians 4:5, “redeeming the time.” Walking among those who are outside of Jesus Christ is dangerous. We read in Ephesians 5:16, “because the days are evil.” It is as if Paul said, “In the midst of the corruption of the world, we must seize opportunities of doing good.” The participle in the original language can have the meaning, “buying up the opportunity.” Do not just sit there and wait for an opportunity to fall into your lap, but go after it. Create opportunities, avail yourself of opportunities to do good to those around you. Perhaps your unbelieving neighbor is sick, hospitalized, and unable to work. How can I do good to him and testify of the love and grace of God?

How do we witness to those outside? We do so with our conduct. In Colossians 4:6 the apostle Paul continues to say, “Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt...” It is in our conduct *and our speech*. This is important. In my pastorates I have run across those who held that believers only have to have a godly conduct, but do not need to witness with their mouths. They convinced themselves that speech was only for preachers and missionaries. Colossians 4:6 calls believing members of the church to witness by their words to persons outside the church. And that exhortation comes to all the members of the church. All of us believers are called to speak of Jesus Christ (“confess me before men” Matt. 10:32), and to speak of our Christian faith to others. We speak the Word to others as we have opportunity. This is how Christianity spread so rapidly after Pentecost and through persecution. Believers spread out bringing the Word that they had heard and echoed it to others where they moved.

Our speech must always be “with grace.” This means we will not use improper language when in a difficult situation, not witty or clever language to impress, or abusive or vindictive language to those who hate us. Rather, we are called to speak language that flows from God’s grace in our hearts and lives. It is language of truth and love. The Word of God is the basis of our speech. Love for God and for our neighbor is the motive.

Our speech is to be “seasoned with salt.” We are those whom Jesus calls the salt of the earth (Matt. 5:13). The idea of salt is that which makes tasty, flavorful, and delightful. Our speech to one another and to those outside the church must not be empty or insipid, but thought-provoking and worthwhile. How much of our speech is at times worthless, filled with jokes and sarcasm, and a waste of time. Rather, our speech must reveal Him to whom we belong, our faith in and love for Jesus Christ, and our care for those to whom we are speaking! Our speech should charm and attract.

This speech is not some canned story. Rather, it is directed so that it is the right word at the right time to the right person. It means that first of all we listen! We listen to the person outside of the faith. What does he believe? What are her fears or cares? What does he or she need to hear at this particular time and place? It is love for God and it is love for that person outside the faith that causes us to speak to him or her of the hope

that is in us. It is the truth spoken in love. It is a word spoken in all humility, gentleness, and reverence.

How will I know what to say? The Holy Spirit Himself will help us to do this. Jesus said to His disciples when He sent them out, “...take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you” (Matt. 10:19, 20; Mark 13:11). Christ will enable us to speak and gives us wisdom for the words that we use. Christ does that through His Word and through the preaching of the Word that we receive from week to week.

May God bless our witness: a necessary witness, a godly witness, a light in the midst of darkness, a wise and gracious witness. In our conduct and speech may God be glorified and may others may be gained to Christ!



Bring the books...

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



Here We Stand: Commemorating the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation, edited by Ronald L. Cammenga, Jenison, MI: RFPA, 2018, 197 pages, paper. [Reviewed by Julian Kennedy, Covenant PRC, Ballymena.]

Just another book on the Reformation, or so I thought! My initial wrong attitude was swiftly replaced by appreciation as I got into the book. What I particularly liked about it was that it majors on the main effects of this great work of God’s Spirit half a millennium ago. In fact, the chapters outline the vitally important changes that occurred in this period of the history of the church. First, there was the struggle for assurance and justification by faith, then the return to Scripture alone as the sole authority. Subsequently, there was the recovery of the priesthood of all believers, the recovery of right worship and the regulative principle. And finally, the Reformation

showed the vital importance of the Reformed confessions in the establishment of the Reformed churches all over Europe but especially in the Netherlands.

There were other very important truths developed during the Reformation; for example, Scripture interprets Scripture, the Spirit and Word are never separated, the doctrine of the covenant, and the importance of membership in a true church.

If I have one criticism of the book, it is that at least one of the contributions should have mentioned a little of the politics of the time and the armed struggle that was undertaken by many in the churches that had a significant bearing on the Reformation and the establishment of the Netherlands as a nation. But then, again, perhaps that would have been majoring in a minor! The Reformation was primarily a spiritual battle and victory not a political one!

I highly recommend this book as a succinct account of this marvelous period in church history.



News from our churches

Mr. Perry Van Egdome, member of the Protestant Reformed Church of Doon, Iowa

Trivia question

In addition to Christmas wreaths and door swags, which Ladies' School Circle in which locale sold their well-known Kissing Balls as a holiday fundraiser? Answer later in this column.

Evangelism activities

Lynden PRC Evangelism Committee hosted a Fall lecture on Friday, October 26 with Prof. R. Dykstra speaking on "The Believer's Assurance in the Canons of Dordt."

We note this from the bulletin of Grandville, MI PRC: "The evangelism committee would like to remind the congregation of the second evangelism workshop. This second speech and discussion will be focusing on the topic 'Speaking of Our Faith to Those "Without."' As with last week's workshop, this will consist of a short speech by Prof. Gritters, followed by group discussions." For those unable to attend, the speech by Prof. Gritters was live-streamed. Anyone of high school age or older was encouraged to attend.

On Sunday, November 11 Prof. R. Cammenga, Rev. C. Griess, and Mr. Doner Bartolon presented information regarding their trip this past summer to the Mexico City area, where they were able to preach and give lectures to saints from two Presbyterian denominations as well as to professors and students at the John Calvin University. A large crowd learned about the interest that was expressed by our fellow saints in this country as well as the possibility of more work that could be done there.

Congregational activities

All women of the Siouxland area churches were invited to attend the Fall Ladies League at Edgerton PRC on Thursday, November 1. The theme this fall was "Contentment," with Rev. Matt De Boer speaking. Following the program, the ladies were invited to join for some fellowship and fall refreshments.

From the bulletin of Heritage PRC in Sioux Falls,

SD: "From the Building Committee: Please save Saturday, November 3 for a fall cleanup day at church. We will be raking leaves, trimming trees and doing a deep clean inside the church building. Many hands are needed, all are encouraged to participate in the upkeep of the church property that God has graciously given us."

Minister activities

News from Grandville PRC: "Lord willing, Rev. Koole will lead our Sunday morning worship service on October 28, for Rev. Decker's installation. Rev. Decker will then preach his inaugural sermon, leading us in worship Sunday evening. Following our evening service there will be a short welcome program for Rev. Decker and his family. Refreshments will be served afterwards."

On November 11, Rev. W. Langerak announced his decline of the call from Grandville PRC to serve as minister-on-loan to Covenant ERC in Singapore.

Immanuel PRC of Lacombe, AB, Canada extended a call to Rev. Joshua Engelsma, pastor in Doon, IA PRC.

Trinity PRC in Hudsonville, MI announced the trio of Rev. Joshua Engelsma (Doon, IA PRC), Rev. Brian Huizinga (Hope PRC, Redlands, CA), and Rev. Bill Langerak (Southeast PRC, Grand Rapids, MI). The congregation there voted to call Rev. Huizinga on October 28.

We rejoice with Rev. W. Bruinsma and his wife Mary as he commemorates 40 years in the ministry. Rev. Bruinsma was ordained in Faith PRC in October of 1978.

Professor Herman Hanko celebrated his 88th birthday on October 10.

Young people's activities

Trinity Young People held a Culver's Fundraiser at the Jenison location. All were invited to join for a night of fun and food while the Trinity young people served them. A percentage of the sales, including drive-thru, and 100% of the tips for the evening were donated to

the Young People's Society for the 2019 YP Convention. Thank you for your support!

Save the date! On the evening of December 1, Cornerstone PRC invites the young people and young adults of the area churches to an important discussion led by Rev. R. Van Overloop on marriage. Anyone dating or interested in a godly dating relationship would profit from attending.

The Young People's Society of Peace PRC in Lansing, IL sold Little Caesar's Pizza Kits to raise funds for the 2019 convention. Pizza kits, desserts, cookie dough and more were available for purchase.

The Doon, IA Young People's Survival Run took place recently with participants enjoying beautiful weather and grand comradery!

School activities

The 4-on-4 Volleyball Tournament for Covenant CHS (Grand Rapids, MI) will be held on December 8 this year. There will be men's and a women's divisions. This tournament is open to all post-high school adults and helps support the volleyball program at CCHS.

Young adult activities

Lynden PRC Young Adults Retreat Updates: As previously announced, the retreat will take place at Mt. Baker Bibleway Camp from July 1-5, 2019. Speakers for the retreat will be Prof. B. Gritters and Rev. S. Regnerus. The retreat theme is "An Unchanging God in an Ever-changing World." Registration is set to open in February 2019! Any young adults post-high school age are encouraged to attend. Further details

have been posted to their Facebook page: Lynden PRC Young Adults Retreat 2019. Request an invite to see these details or message the group if you have any questions!

Sister-church activities

The Classis of the Protestant Reformed Churches in the Philippines met on October 31 at the Maranatha Protestant Reformed Church in Valenzuela City.

Mission activities

During the time Rev. Joe Holstege supplied the pulpit of the Covenant ERC in Singapore recently, he also had the opportunity to visit the mission field in the Philippines, where his older brother, Rev. Daniel Holstege, labors. His wife and son made the trip with him, and Rev. J. Holstege had occasion to address the Wednesday night class at Provident Christian Church in Marikina on the topic of "Evangelism."

Trivia answer

The Faith Christian School Ladies' School Circle in Randolph, WI sells their Kissing Balls annually as a school fundraiser. Too late for this season, but try again next year! More trivia next time.

"To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven." Ecclesiastes 3:1.

Announcements

Resolution of sympathy

The Council and congregation of First PRC, Holland express their sincere Christian sympathy to Clare Haveman, Les and Joyce Haveman, Brent and Wilma Overway, and Cal and Eunice Yonker in the passing of their mother, **Florence Haveman**. May the families receive comfort from the words of Christ in John 14:3. "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also."

Rev. Justin Smidstra, President
Tom Pastoor, Assistant Clerk

Reformed Witness Hour

Rev. Wilbur Bruinsma

- Dec. 2 "The Goodness of God's House"
Psalm 65:4
- Dec. 9 "God's Promise to His Church Confirmed (1)"
Acts 2:39
- Dec. 16 "God's Promise to His Church Confirmed (2)"
Acts 2:39
- Dec. 23 "The Song of the Angels"
Luke 2:13, 14
- Dec. 30 "God's Faithfulness"
I Thessalonians 5:24

Announcements continued

Teacher needed

Loveland Protestant Reformed Christian School (Loveland, CO) is seeking applicants for an additional high school teacher for the 2019-20 school year. Interested candidates may contact the Administrator, BJ Mowery at (970) 218-3420 or bmowery@lovelandprcs.org or the Education Chairman, Joe Ophoff at (970) 818-6790 or joe@scotthomeinspection.com.

Classis East

Classis East will meet in regular session on Wednesday, January 9, 2019, at 8:00 A.M., in the Hope Protestant Reformed Church, Walker, MI. Material for this session must be in the hands of the stated clerk by December 10, 2018.

Gary Boverhof,
Stated Clerk



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