

The Standard Bearer

A Reformed semi-monthly magazine

September 1, 2019 • Volume 95 • No. 20

Selah: pause, reflect, and know

Rev. Ron VanOverloop

The covenant and Dordt

Prof. Russell Dykstra

**Father's influence
in the covenant home**

Rev. Arie denHartog

Fill

Rev. William Langerak

**A personal warning
about sports**

Rev. Jon Mahtani



The *Standard Bearer* (ISSN 0362-4692 [print], 2372-9813 [online]) is a semi-monthly periodical, except monthly during June, July, and August, published by the Reformed Free Publishing Association: 1894 Georgetown Center Dr, Jenison, MI 49428-7137.

Postmaster

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

Reprint and online posting policy

Permission is hereby granted for the reprinting or online posting of articles in the *Standard Bearer* by other publications, provided that such reprinted articles are reproduced in full; that proper acknowledgment is made; and that a copy of the periodical or Internet location in which such reprint or posting appears is sent to the editorial office.

Editorial policy

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

Subscription price

\$27.00 per year in the US, \$39.00 elsewhere
esubscription: \$27.00
esubscription free to current hardcopy subscribers.

Advertising policy

The *Standard Bearer* does not accept commercial advertising of any kind. Announcements of church and school events, anniversaries, obituaries, and sympathy resolutions will be placed for a \$10.00 fee. Announcements should be sent, with the \$10.00 fee, to: RFPA, Attn: SB Announcements, 1894 Georgetown Center Dr, Jenison, MI 49428-7137 (email: mail@rfpa.org). Deadline for announcements is one month prior to publication date.

Website for RFPA: www.rfpa.org

Website for PRC: www.prc.org

The Reformed Free Publishing Association maintains the privacy and trust of its subscribers by not sharing with any person, organization, or church any information regarding *Standard Bearer* subscribers.

Editorial office

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

Business office

Mr. Alex Kalsbeek
1894 Georgetown Center Dr
Jenison, MI 49428-7137
616-457-5970
alexkalsbeek@rfpa.org

Church news editor

Mr. Perry Van Egdom
2324 Fir Ave
Doon, IA 51235
vanegdoms@gmail.com

United Kingdom office

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

Rep. of Ireland office

c/o Rev. Martyn McGeown
38 Abbeyvale
Corbally
Co Limerick, Ireland

Contents

Meditation

- 459 Selah: pause, reflect, and know
Rev. Ron VanOverloop

Editorial

- 461 The covenant and Dordt
Prof. Russell Dykstra

Letters

- 463 • Help in understanding “in the way of”
464 • More on Psalter revision: “Proffer”

Things which must shortly come to pass

- 465 Postscript: Antinomism (3)
Prof. David Engelsma

When thou sittest in thine house

- 467 Father’s influence in the covenant home
Rev. Arie denHartog

A word fitly spoken

- 470 Fill
Rev. William Langerak

Strength of youth

- 471 A personal warning about sports
Rev. Jon Mahtani

Go ye into all the world

- 473 The war years:
Mission work flounders (1940-1946) 4
Rev. Wilbur Bruinsma

Pertaining to the churches in common— Domestic Mission Committee

- 475 Home missions:
What are we doing?
Rev. Audred Apriensma

Bring the books...

- 477 *Can We Trust the Gospels?*
Prof. Douglas Kuiper

Activities

- 478 News from our churches
Mr. Perry Van Egdom



REFORMED
FREE PUBLISHING
ASSOCIATION



Meditation

Rev. Ronald VanOverloop, pastor of Grace Protestant Reformed Church in Standale, Michigan

Selah: pause, reflect and know

“Be still, and know that I am God.”

Psalm 46: 10a

“Selah Grace” is the name of a baby girl recently baptized.

The infant girl to whom the parents gave this name has Down Syndrome. Those born with Down Syndrome have an extra copy of a chromosome—chromosome 21. The parents learned about the possibility of this early in the pregnancy. The joy that characterizes the expectation of a child is suddenly dampened and very quickly the mind runs in a multitude of directions, accompanied by all kinds of concerns and fears. And very quickly we all wondered what the future held.

“Selah” is a Hebrew word that does not have an easy translation. It is a technical musical term, probably showing accentuation, pause, or interruption.

How fitting to name the infant “Selah”! When the mind is running fearfully in every direction, we have to pause. We have to interrupt our racing thoughts. We have to pause in order to direct our thoughts. We have to reflect on the knowledge that our God is doing this.

In the eleven verses of Psalm 46 the word “selah” appears three times. As we read this psalm, there are three times we are to pause. The setting of this familiar psalm is one that occasions fear. In the middle of frightening circumstances the psalmist calls us to pause for a while and reflect on God. The psalm answers our fears with the knowledge that God is our refuge and strength, that He is a very present help in trouble, and that He is with us.

The psalm presents God as a refuge and strength in the face of severe troubles and earth-shattering events. There are three general sources that occasion fear in the lives of the child of God and of the church of Christ in the midst of this present evil world.

First, there is the ungodly world. Sometimes they attack God’s children and His church with great anger: “the heathen raged” (v. 6). Sometimes they attack with weapons of destruction: war, bow, spear, and chariot (v. 9). Sometimes they attack with mockery and ridicule.

The power and might of the ungodly is always much stronger than that of Jesus’ little flock. They would love to remove God’s people from this world. So did Cain, Lamech, the men of Sodom, Athaliah, and Haman.

Sometimes, the world attacks with sweet allurements. They make sin appear so nice and attractive. And the world has found ways to make disobedience to God readily available. Those who have faced such temptations are greatly concerned for the less mature members of the church, who are more easily distracted from the truth and from godliness. Spiritual pilgrims and strangers can easily be afraid for the future.

The second source of fears for the church and believers is Satan and his host. He is behind every scheme and every attack against the true church and against the elect of God. He mightily uses the world of the ungodly, though they are not conscious of him. And he has an ally in the old man of sin that still resides in every believer. The devil is the roaring lion who is constantly seeking to devour. He tempts (Gen. 3:4, 5); he slanders saints (Job 1:9-11); he opposes the righteous (Zech. 3:1); he removes the good seed (Matt. 13:19); he sows tares (Matt. 13:38); he is a murderer, abides not in the truth, and speaks lies (John 8:44); he wrestles with believers (Eph. 6:12) and inspires lying wonders (II Thess. 2:9). The knowledge of the devil’s power is very frightening.

The third source of fears for the believer is his heavenly Father, who puts afflictions and crosses into the lives of His people and church. It is God’s will that His people, through much tribulation, must enter into the kingdom of God (Acts 14:22). “Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth” (Heb. 12:6 from Prov. 3:11, 12). And there are times when God makes “us a reproach to our neighbours, a scorn and a derision to them that are round about us,...a byword among the heathen, a shaking of the head among the people” (Ps. 44:13, 14).

When our Father brings such difficulties, we become fearful about the present and the future. We easily have serious concerns when we learn that the child we are expecting is one with special needs. Also we fear when it is God’s good pleasure that our fellow saints sin against

us, whether it be hurtful gossip or a form of abuse. And God's people stagger before the anguish of the sudden deaths of loved ones.

There are many things in the pilgrim's path that occasion fear!

It is in this setting that God issues the command of our text: "Be still"!

This Hebrew word is given various translations: sink down, be disheartened; to relax or let drop, abandon, relax, refrain, let alone, or to be quiet.

That we are told to be still implies that the child of God naturally has many other reactions to fears and frights, all of which are wrong—sinful.

Sometimes it is our desire to be active either to fix the problem or to remove the cause of our pain, sorrow, or difficulty. Also, we can become angry and rise in rebellion. It is easy for us to conclude that we have the right to be angry and to exercise revenge. Sometimes we want to bargain with God. Other times we run ahead, creating in our minds various scenarios of what we think might happen in the future. Generally, we want to talk instead of listen. Or we conclude that God has forgotten to be kind and that His mercy is forever gone (Ps. 77). It is not usual that we claim the right to know why God is doing what He is doing, already having concluded that God did something wrong.

When we are told to "be still," we must not conclude that God wants His children to act unaffected or stoical before divine judgments. We are not to try to act unconcerned about the commotions in the earth and the horrific sins in the world.

The command to "be still" is a call to be quiet in body and in mind while living assured of God's love. Such spiritual, quiet resting in the arms of our Savior is opposed to being restless or fretful, fearful and impatient.

We are to be silent in the sense that we do not object or complain against God, nor fight against His way. Our silence means that we decide not to blame or condemn God, nor to accuse Him of being unfair and unrighteous. David put it this way: "I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue: I will keep my mouth with a bridle, while the wicked is before me. I was dumb with silence, I held my peace." And, "I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because thou didst it" (Ps. 39:1, 2, 9).

Positively, to be still is the silence of consent. It is a decision to live by faith and not by sight. It is to trust. It is to believe that God's love ceases never. It is to believe that divine love governs everything that befalls us.

The believer confesses that God is always righteous in all that He does and that He is good...always...to every one of His own!

The reason we have for being still is that we know that God is God!

"Be still, and *know*..." Know by faith. The knowledge of faith holds for truth what God has revealed in His Word. Since the fall into sin, man by nature does not know correctly. Therefore, we are admonished not to lean on our own understanding (Prov. 3:5). Additionally, God is infinite. He is infinite in His being so no creature is able to possess the knowledge that God possesses. To know God at all, and then to know Him accurately, we must go to Scripture. It is the revelation that God Himself gives of Himself. He will tell us accurately about Himself. We then are able to know correctly because "the Bible tells me so." Further, God's infinity means that His knowledge and wisdom are infinitely higher than our knowledge and wisdom (Is. 55:7-9). And "if any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know" (I Cor. 8:2).

What are we to know? "Know that I am God." Scripture teaches that God is the supreme Being who is every perfection, every attribute. And He is such infinitely (that is, immeasurably), and eternally (that is, forever). It is not that God *possesses* every virtue, but that He *is* every virtue. "God is love" (I John 4:8). He is omniscient and He is wisdom. He is goodness, holiness, truth, righteousness, and justice. He is love, grace, mercy, and longsuffering. God is every perfection perfectly. Also, Scripture declares God's amazing works. God reveals Himself in every one of His works. In the Scriptures we find revealed God's wondrous works of old, which evidence His ability to know and to do always what is best. "I will remember the years of the right hand of the most High. I will remember the works of the LORD: surely I will remember thy wonders of old. I will meditate also of all thy work, and talk of all thy doings" (Ps. 77:10-12).

Know that God is God, that is, that He is in control of *all* things with a perfect wisdom and the greatest love for His own. Psalm 46 speaks of God as sovereign in creation in verses 2 and 3. God's control over every host is implied when God is identified as Jehovah of hosts (vv. 7 and 11). The psalmist specifically calls the readers to see the works of Jehovah in verse 8 when he writes of the desolations God made in the earth. God performs astonishing things as is obvious in the questions He asks Job in Job 38-41. The psalmist also speaks of God's sovereignty over the heathen as they rise up against His

church. The heathen's rage may move kingdoms of the earth, but when God utters His voice, then the earth and all within it melts (v. 6). The wicked can do nothing against God's church but according to His will, for He makes wars to cease. He breaks the bow and the spear and burns the chariot (v. 9). He controls all and every antichristian force of earthly power. God is God!

Further, we must reflect on the truth that this God is our God for ever and ever (cf. Ps. 48:14). Jehovah of hosts is ours. He is our refuge and strength (v. 1). The God of Jacob is our refuge (vv. 7, 11). Jehovah of hosts "is with us" (v. 11). It is He who made us to be His, and He established and He maintains a relationship that makes Himself to be ours. This makes glad His city (v. 4).

Therefore, "Be still." To be still is the humble realization that I am naturally foolish. Our human nature

wants us to think that we are wise, capable of knowing what is best. But this Word reminds us that man is of very limited understanding, and that our understanding is always corrupted and twisted. To be still is to acknowledge that we can only understand a little, and then only from the viewpoint of this earth. We are creatures in the hands of the Creator/Potter who is fashioning us with perfect wisdom to be conformed to the image of His Son.

Because God is God, and because He is our refuge and strength, we can understand that He is a very present help in trouble. Because God is Jehovah of hosts, we are to keep still before Him. Bow before His majesty. Listen to His Word describing Him and declaring His wonderful works. And then praise Him who only blesses us with every spiritual blessing.



Editorial

Prof. Russell Dykstra, professor of Church History and New Testament in the Protestant Reformed Seminary

The covenant and Dordt

The theology of God's eternal covenant of grace is a uniquely Reformed doctrine, that is, a product of the Reformation. It is true that theologians prior to the Reformation referred to the covenant, even as early as Augustine in the early 400s. From that time to the Reformation the covenant was incidentally included in discussions on salvation or man's relationship to God. But the significant development of the *doctrine* began with the Reformation. Swiss theologians Ulrich Zwingli and Heinrich Bullinger, faced with the serious errors of the Anabaptists, began developing the doctrine of the covenant to explain the place of children of believers in the church. John Calvin and other Reformers did the same. Further development of the doctrine came from the writings of Zacharius Ursinus and Caspar Olevianus. Subsequently, their influence carried into the Netherlands, where the Heidelberg Catechism was faithfully preached in the Reformed churches. The doctrine of the covenant found a place in the teaching and writings of the Reformed men there, and a number of these men are considered covenant theologians. Various Presbyterian theologians likewise concentrated on the covenant. So much so, that the divines of the

Westminster Assembly (1647) included in its Confession a separate chapter "On God's Covenant with Man," followed by the chapter "Of Christ the Mediator."

The covenant is a *Reformed* doctrine.

The Canons of Dordt are the Reformed credal presentation on the doctrine of salvation. The Arminianism that was infiltrating the Reformed churches was, at bottom, a rejection of the theology of Martin Luther, John Calvin, and, indeed, the Reformation. Everything from justification by faith alone, to the bondage of fallen man's will, to the eternal security of the believer, was being denied. The 'great Synod' came together to condemn these errors. In so doing, the Synod not only reaffirmed the doctrines of the Reformation, it also developed them. The theology of Dordt is the *Reformed* doctrine of salvation, clearly and thoroughly expressed.

In 2018-19, the *Standard Bearer* has been commemorating the 400th anniversary of the great Synod of Dordrecht. Our desire is to continue, in a meaningful way, celebrating the doctrinal advances of Dordt. Accordingly, this editorial is the start of a discussion of these two distinctively Reformed doctrines—God's everlasting covenant of grace and salvation by sovereign grace.

The burden of the editorials will not be simply to bring out what Dordt teaches about the covenant. Such a discussion would be largely setting forth what Dordt taught by implication. The Canons did not focus on the covenant as a separate doctrine, because the core of the Arminian error was salvation and grace, not the covenant. But there is more to this.

The confessions are the fruit of the Spirit of Christ guiding the church in every age “into all truth” (John 16:13) as Jesus promised. God sovereignly directed also the errors that the church faced through the ages, and through conflict and much study of the Bible the Spirit lead the church to set down the truth in creeds. The Spirit’s work in the early 1600s focused on the doctrines of sovereign grace. The errors of Arminianism forced the church to study and set forth these doctrines. The truth of the covenant, on the other hand, was not developed to the point that the church was ready or able to set forth this doctrine in confessional form. As noted earlier, there was some development between Dordt (1619) and Westminster (1647) so that the Westminster Standards treated the covenant, but even that was without defining or developing the doctrine completely.¹

At the same time, though the Synod of Dordt did not focus explicitly on the covenant, it was keenly aware of the doctrine. The word “covenant” is found in the Canons eight times in six different articles.² In addition, the Canons use language of the covenant such as Mediator, adoption, and children and heirs of God. Most of the direct references to the covenant are in the rejection of errors sections. That indicates that the Arminians had been teaching false doctrine about the covenant, or wrongly using the covenant to introduce their errors. We will have opportunity to examine some of these references, D.V.

The burden of these editorials will be to demonstrate the unity and the harmony between the doctrines of grace defined by Dordt, on the one hand, and the Reformed doctrine of the covenant, on the other.

That these two Reformed doctrines must be in harmony should be self evident simply from the fact that both are *Reformed* doctrines. “Reformed” means to be “formed back to the Bible.” The Bible is the source and standard of all Reformed teaching. The Bible is truth. And all God’s truth is one, just as God is one. It necessarily follows that all the truth of God is in har-

mony with itself. No part of Reformed doctrine will contradict another part, any more than one passage of the Bible ever contradicts another.

In addition, these two doctrines are intricately related, for both the doctrine of the covenant and the doctrines of grace involve the one truth of salvation. Salvation is the subject of the Canons, directly. Reformed believers recognize that the covenant is related to salvation, though different theologians will express the specific relation differently. Some propose that the covenant is an arrangement that God makes in order to provide a way for the blessings of salvation to be imparted to man. This presents the covenant as a means to an end—the covenant imparts salvation. While we take issue with that proposed relation, it should be noted that it does relate the covenant to salvation. And it should follow then that the covenant itself, in form and as God works it out, ought to be in harmony with the salvation to which it leads (as some maintain).

Our view of the relation is different, namely, that the covenant is the goal of God in the work of salvation. The covenant is not merely the means unto salvation. It is rather that God saves His people in order to bring them into His covenant. God saves His people, adopts them as His children, and assures them that He is their God and they are His people. And that is exactly the relationship described in Revelation 21, which will abide eternally: “And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God” (Rev. 21:3).

The point is, the covenant, being the goal of God’s saving work in Jesus Christ, will be in harmony with the saving work itself.

Finally, the unity and harmony between covenant and salvation is due to the fact that both are in harmony with God’s own being. The Canons make that point in connection with the very foundation of salvation, namely, the doctrine of election. In Head I, Article 11, the Canons state:

And as God Himself is most wise, unchangeable, omniscient, and omnipotent, so the election made by Him can neither be interrupted nor changed, recalled or annulled; neither can the elect be cast away, nor their number diminished.

The thrust of that article is that both God’s decree of election and God’s working out (execution) of that decree are in harmony with God’s own being. Since God is most wise, unchangeable, omniscient, and omnipotent, it follows that election cannot be interrupted or

1 We point out just one notable teaching of the Westminster Standards on the covenant. The Larger Catechism asks “With whom was the covenant of grace made? A. The covenant of grace was made with Christ as the second Adam, and in him and all the elect as his seed.”

2 I, 17; II 8, errors 2, 4, 5; V, error 1.

changed, cannot be recalled or annulled, that the elect cannot be cast away, nor their number diminished. The article need not even prove that, it is so obvious.

We maintain that the same can be said of God's covenant. God's decree of the covenant of grace and God's working out of that decree must be in harmony with God's own being. Much can be said about the very nature of the covenant itself, that it is in harmony with the life of love and fellowship within God's own triune life. But we will limit ourselves at this time to the language of Article 11. Read the article again, with the word "covenant" substituted for "election."

And as God himself is most wise, unchangeable, omniscient and omnipotent, so the *covenant* made by him can neither be interrupted nor changed, recalled or

annulled; neither can the elect [or *covenant members*] be cast away, nor their number diminished.

All this leads to the conclusion that whatever is set forth as the Reformed doctrine of the covenant must be in harmony with the doctrines of grace taught in the Canons.

That presents a problem, for there are many variations of Reformed, covenant theology espoused. Which is consistent with the doctrines of sovereign grace? The doctrines of grace are founded on and governed by the truth of *election*. It is our contention that the only covenant doctrine in harmony with Dordt is the doctrine founded on election, which is to say, the covenant theology that is governed by election. In our examination of the harmony of the covenant and Dordt, we must begin with election.

Letters

Help in understanding "in the way of"

I am having a hard time understanding the connection between the following example given in your editorial ("Highlights of Synod 2019" in July *SB*, p. 419) and the following decision of Synod 2019.

Example in article:

"Of particular importance is the 2019 Synod's decision not to reject the phrase 'in the way of.' ...Years ago, this was pointed out to me (a young minister) as the proper way to express the relationship between obedience and blessing.... Parents see the salvation of their children in the way of faithfulness to God's commands. *Not*, he said, a little louder for emphasis, *because* of their faithfulness."

Synod 2019's decision (Article 85, B. 3. c.):

"c. The statement 'we experience covenant fellowship with God through faith (instrument), on the basis of what Christ has done (ground), and in the way of our obedience (way of conduct or manner of living)' is clear and distinctive. 1) This statement makes clear that obedience is not the *instrument for* or *ground of* our experience of covenant fellowship with God. If obedience is not the *instrument for* or *ground of*, then it must be the necessary life of gratitude for one who is enjoying covenant fellowship with God by faith."

As I see it, the question before Synod 2019 was not, "Is 'in the way of' Reformed, and can it be used clearly and distinctively to express the relationship between anything in Reformed theology?" but rather was, "Does

the specific phrase 'we experience covenant fellowship with God in the way of obedience' clearly and distinctively express that obedience is only the *fruit* of experiencing covenant fellowship by faith?" As I see it, Synod 2019 answered this question with a "yes," saying that 'we experience covenant fellowship with God...in the way of obedience' is clear and distinctive, and that the clear and distinctive truth that it expresses is that obedience is "the necessary life of gratitude for one who is enjoying covenant fellowship with God by faith." In the example provided, the sense of 'in the way of' seems to be that parents' faithful instruction of their children in the truth of Scripture is the ordinary *instrument* that God uses to bring His covenant children to a mature faith in Christ, which truth I would heartily agree with. However, I notice that synod not only emphasized that we do not experience covenant fellowship *because of* our life of obedience, but they also emphasized that our life of obedience is not the *instrument* through which God gives us the experience of covenant fellowship either.

My question, then, is: "Does 'in the way of' carry the same meaning in the example provided as it does in synod's decision? How does this example help in understanding the proper relationship between obedience and the particular blessing of the experience of covenant fellowship? How is this example to be properly applied to synod's decision?"

I appreciate your help in understanding this decision.

Sincerely in Christ,

Sara Doezema, member of Hope PRC (Walker, MI)

Response:

Dear Sara,

I appreciate the fact that you took the time to write, seeking clarification.

The crux of the matter has to do with whether the phrase “in the way of” indicates a *means*, an *instrument*. It does not. My example of the parents raising their children in the fear of the Lord did not speak of means or instrument, nor was it implied. One can speak of God using godly instruction for the salvation of covenant children, of course. And the Bible makes it abundantly plain that God does use instruction by godly parents as a means in the salvation of their children. But the phrase “in the way of” is not a discussion of means or instrument. It connects a certain kind of behavior with a God-announced blessing on the elect children of believers. That behavior is commanded, and therefore, required. If the parents do not raise their children in the ways of the Lord, they cannot expect their children to walk in those ways. The blessings are gracious, unmerited, and undeserved, but they are promised. In the way of raising their children in the fear of the Lord, believing parents will be blessed, will see their covenant children “not depart from” the ways of God.

Similarly, the synodical decisions in 2018 and 2019. Both synods emphasized that obedience was necessary. God commands His people to walk in obedience. If they do not, they will not enjoy fellowship with God. Obedience is required of God’s people in the covenant. And in the way of obedience, not because of, they enjoy fellowship with God.

I hope this is helpful.

Cordially in Christ,
Prof. Dykstra

More on Psalter revision: “Proffer”

Once again, regrettably, Prof. Dykstra and I disagree on the interpretation, inaccuracies, and shortcomings that he perceives in our beloved 1912 Psalter.

In the July 2019 issue of the *SB*, Prof. Dykstra continues to point out in his summary of recent synodical decisions the failing of our current Psalter, particularly verse 4 of Psalter number 255. He regards this verse as a “blatant well-meant offer,” that is, heresy. I love this song; we lustily sang all four verses of number 255 in the classroom; nor do I consider myself a heretic. Prof. Dykstra should not allow theological thieves to hijack good Reformed language.

“Proffer” is a fitting old word that means “to present.” Isn’t that what Jehovah does to and for us? He presents to us peace and pardon, and by faith through

election in Jesus Christ we receive and take hold of these two inestimable gifts. Certainly, we don’t see God as gripping “peace and pardon” tightly in His fists behind His back, and we poor sinners by our own will, strength, and determination must wrest peace and pardon out of His almighty hands. No, that would be a ludicrous impossibility! He graciously gives us peace and pardon.

Proffer is not an offer. It is a gift.

The key word, it seems to me, in this disputed phrase is the little word “us.” “While He proffers peace and pardon let *us* hear His voice today.” Only *us*. Only, and particularly, *us*. Only to God’s elect, redeemed people does He present peace and pardon. And we, and only we, hear His voice to receive this gift. Let’s be very clear about that! And ever so thankful!

There is no reason not to retain this lovely sentence. It has the same idea as many other Scripture passages. John 3:16 comes to mind as does “Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me” (Rev. 3:20). See also Joshua 24:15 and Revelation 22:17 for similar passages.

For almost 100 years, verse 4 of Psalter number 255 has not caused too big a disturbance in our midst; either choose to sing it, or choose not to sing it. But, if there are those who genuinely stumble over this line, well, then, rather than turning the entire Psalter upside down and inside out, wouldn’t it be a whole lot simpler—and much, much cheaper—to take an inky black pen and delete this singular “troublesome” phrase?

Holding dear the 1912 Psalter,
Mary Beth Lubbers
Grandville PRC

Response:

Dear Mrs. Lubbers,

While I do thank you for taking the time to write in response to the summary of Synod 2019, I cannot agree with your point.

I am saddened that you perceive my synodical report as taking the opportunity “to point out...the failing of our current Psalter.” I take no delight in criticizing the Psalter that I have sung from my youth, and still love. Rather, I was taking the opportunity to show that the settled and binding decision of the synod of the PRC was bearing positive fruit, namely, making changes in the versifications that made one particular song more faithful to the Psalms and to the theology of the whole Bible.

The particular phrase in Psalter 255, “While He proffers peace and pardon...” has been interpreted in vari-

ous ways, and some have interpreted it as Mrs. Lubbers does, namely that the word “proffers” is “to present.” If the word in Psalter 255 were the old English word “profer” (accent on the second syllable), it would certainly mean “to present, to utter.” However, “proffer” is a synonym of “offer” and the usual meaning is “to tender what may be accepted or rejected at the option of the other party.” It is certainly true that “offer” can mean “to present.” For example, the Canons speak of “the gospel, [and] of Christ, offered therein,” which (we contend) is the preaching of the gospel and a *presentation* of Christ, an accepted meaning of the Latin *offero* in the 1600s. Sadly, most today use the word offer in the sense of a well-meant offer of the gospel, teaching that God sincerely desires the salvation of all men head for head and offers it for the hearer to accept or reject.

So how is Psalter 255 using it? Let’s go to the Psalm and find out. Therein lies a problem. Stanza 4 is not a

versification of the words of Psalm 95. The closest one can come to that stanza are the words “To day if ye will hear his voice, Harden not your heart, as in the provocation, and as in the day of temptation in the wilderness” (Ps. 95:7, 8). What did the men who put together the Psalter in 1912 intend stanza 4 to convey—“to present”? Or, “to tender what may be accepted or rejected...”? Well, that becomes very speculative. But one thing we know, the CRC, which participated in the formation of the Psalter, officially adopted the well-meant offer in 1924.

It is my judgment that the Psalter revision committee’s recommendation on Psalm 95 removes the ambiguity, is more faithful to the Psalm (as interpreted by Hebrews 3 and 4), and is in harmony with the theology of Scripture. And that was my point.

Prof. R. Dykstra



Things which must shortly come to pass

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

Premillennialism (27)

Postscript: Antinomism (3)

Previous article in this series: May 15, 2019, p. 379.

“This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them.”

Hebrews 10:16

“Why will God...have the ten commandments so strictly preached? ...That we may become more and more conformable to the image of God, till we arrive at the perfection proposed to us in a life to come.”

Heidelberg Catechism, Q. 115

Introduction

In previous articles in this series, I explained this “postscript” to my treatment of premillennialism’s doctrine of the last things, or eschatology. Although the content of this “postscript” is not strictly the premillennial doctrine of the last things, it is a necessary and extremely important implication of premillennialism’s theology of the end. It is dispensational premillennialism’s

opposition to, and rejection of, the law of God consisting of the Ten Commandments as the rule of the holy life of the New Testament believer.

Premillennialism is antinomian, that is, literally, and actually, *against the law*.

In this aspect of its theology also, in addition to its false eschatology, premillennialism is a foe of the Reformed faith, and the Reformed faith, on its part, is the sworn foe of premillennialism.

In the previous articles in this series, I demonstrated the truth of the charge that dispensational premillennialism is antinomian both from some of the originators of that heresy and from several of the contemporary, supposedly more “moderate” defenders of the false doctrine. I also exposed as erroneous the explanation of Romans 10:4 (“Christ is the *end* of the law”) that makes the law “obsolete,” as though Christ did away with the law altogether.

In this article, I return to the observation I made in a previous article, that the antinomism of premillennialism is of special importance to members of the Prot-

estant Reformed Churches, as well as to many others in other Reformed churches in North America, because of the controversy in the Christian Reformed Church over premillennialism in the early 1900s.

The capable and influential Christian Reformed preacher, Harry Bultema, embraced, defended, and attempted to spread in the Reformed community the theology of dispensational premillennialism. In a popular booklet of more than one hundred pages, Bultema argued the premillennial case for the abolition of the law.¹

With Herman Hoeksema playing a leading role, the Christian Reformed Synod of 1918 condemned Bultema's premillennial theology. Although the synodical condemnation did not center on Bultema's, and premillennialism's, antinomism, the condemnation did extend to the antinomism of the heresy. From this controversy and its outcome, members of the Protestant Reformed Churches and other Reformed believers ought to be alerted to the threat of the popular error of premillennialism. They ought also to be confirmed in the Reformed faith over against the error, particularly against its view of the law—antinomism.

Premillennialist Bultema's antinomism

Harry Bultema made clear at the outset of his advocacy of antinomism that his rejection of the law was part and parcel of his premillennial eschatology. In the "Foreword" to his small book, he announced "the return of the Lord for the taking up of His church and somewhat later for the restoration of Israel and the establishment of His kingdom." This is vintage premillennialism.

But the main message of the book was the vehement declaration that the law of the Ten Commandments is not for believers. It is not for believers as a rule of the thankful, Christian life. Bultema condemned the teaching that "one must keep the law...as a proof of gratitude." Such teaching is "blindness and folly."² For them [believers in the New Testament church—DJE], the law has nothing more to demand."³ "God has ordained His holy law in no way for His Church, justified and sanctified in Christ."⁴ Frankly, Bultema uttered his misguided "here I stand": "I stand now in the holy con-

viction, that neither the law of Moses in its entirety, nor the law of the ten commandments in particular, is the rule of gratitude for the believers."⁵

Drawing out the implication of premillennialism's radical differentiation between Israel and the church, Bultema contended that "the law was given to Israel and not to us and is altogether no longer of application to us as law and rule."⁶

With regard to New Testament believers and their children, "the law neither can nor may be proposed as rule of the new life of believers."⁷

Clearly showing his dispensational colors, Bultema declared that he would not preach the law to the church, because "the law was given to Israel and not to the Congregation."⁸ Only the error that supposes that the New Testament "Congregation is Israel" allows for the preaching of the law to the New Testament congregation.⁹

With the characteristic antinomian misunderstanding of Romans 10:4, Bultema contended that "the law... began with Moses and ended with Christ, Rom. 10:4."¹⁰ Not that the law found its *goal* in Christ, so that, fulfilled in Him, it now functions as the authoritative rule of the Christian life. But the law ended with Christ, so that, as concerns the believer, the law is no more! With the ministry of Christ, the law is *abolished!*

The law may not, therefore, be preached "*als leven-sregel*" [English: "rule of life"].¹¹

As one, especially as a preacher, who had fallen away from the Reformed faith and life, Bultema expressed his opposition to the law even more forcefully than do those who have cut their theological teeth on premillennialism. Striking out at the Reformed doctrine that the law functions "as rule of life for the believer,"—the so-called third use of the law—Bultema passed this judgment on the Reformed faith's "third use of the law":

This is an unproved conception, for which one can furnish not a particle of proof in the entire Scripture. It is a conception which people continue to maintain apparently only from the power of the tradition and for popular appeal, to the great shame of the spiritual life of believers.¹²

To this challenge, of course, the Reformed Christian

1 H. Bultema, *Het Wettig Gebruik der Wet* [English translation: *The Lawful Use of the Law*. To my knowledge the booklet has not been translated. All quotations from the book in this article are my translation of the Dutch—DJE] (Muskegon, MI: Bereer Publishing Comm., 1922).

2 Bultema, *Het Wettig*, 31.

3 Bultema, 47.

4 Bultema, 18.

5 Bultema, 43.

6 Bultema, 49.

7 Bultema, 53.

8 Bultema, 83.

9 Bultema, 83.

10 Bultema, 84.

11 Bultema, 88.

12 Bultema, 99.

does not respond by trying to find a text in the New Testament that states, “The Ten Commandments are the rule of the Christian life.” But he appeals to the Ten Commandments themselves. The preface to the commandments describes them as the will of God for the life of those whom God has delivered from the bondage of sin into the liberty of serving God in love for Him (Ex. 20:2).

When the premillennialist responds by denying the essential oneness of the true Israel of God in the Old Testament with the New Testament church, so that the Ten Commandments applied only to physical Jews, not to the spiritual Israel, having the faith of father Abraham, which is the New Testament church, the Reformed Christian replies, “*This* is the issue between us, and your sin—you deny the oneness of the people of God; the oneness of the Savior of the one people of God; and the oneness of salvation as faith in Jesus Christ, which shows itself by thankful obedience to the one will of God for His redeemed people.”

“Besides,” asks the Reformed Christian of the law-re-

jecting premillennialist, “are we to suppose that the worship of the one, true God only, as commanded by the law in Exodus 20, was the will of God only for the Jews in the Old Testament? Are we similarly to suppose that the prohibition of murder, adultery, stealing, bearing false witness against the neighbor, and coveting, as also the requirement to honor one’s parents, applied only to the Old Testament nation of Israel?

“They do not apply to the life of the New Testament Christian?”

Really?

Why are all the Ten Commandments repeatedly enjoined upon the members of the New Testament church in the New Testament Scripture? For instance, if the Ten Commandments are no longer the rule of the grateful life of the members of the New Testament church, why does the apostle command the children of believers to obey and honor their parents, identifying the command as “the first commandment with promise” in the law of Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5 (Eph. 6:1-3)?

(to be continued)



When thou sittest in thine house

Rev. Arie denHartog, minister emeritus in the Protestant Reformed Churches

Father’s influence in the covenant home

Evil things are happening in homes and families in our land. Daily media reports are sometimes shocking, even unimaginable. There is the shameful abuse of women and children, sexual sins, sometimes committed by fathers violating their own children. We read of the most horrible atrocities imaginable, such as parents murdering their own children, and children their own parents. Even natural affection in the home seems in some cases to be utterly absent. All of these things are clear evidences that we are living in the last days, days of increasing wickedness in the world in which we live. May the Lord in His great mercy preserve us in this evil world, for sometimes these sins come close to us, and we know we are capable of committing them.

We could mention other signs of the deep trouble and distress of the youth in our land. There is increasing apostasy in the church. This takes many forms. One

of them is that young people are leaving the church in droves. Many churches have only the aged who remain and gather for worship on the Lord’s Day. Sometimes these parents experience great anguish that their children and young people are gone from the church. Sometimes they do not even care that this is happening. Many in our generation have little or no spiritual interest, and if at all instructed in the home and by the church, when these children grow up to adulthood they leave the church.

Some of the apostasy taking place in the church involves young people who leave doctrinally sound churches, true churches once founded on such doctrine. They then join themselves with mega-churches, where there is little importance given to sound doctrine. All the emphasis in these nominal churches is on feeling excitement, the attraction of large numbers, and popular

entertainment styles of worship services. Young people grow up unable to discern truth from error. Many of the younger generation are totally careless about sound doctrine. Popular preachers in mega-churches draw large audiences through promoting pop-psychology and feel-good religion. Others attract the masses by exhorting their members to be involved in all kinds of community action and social issues of the day. They spread the popular philosophy that convinces people that this is where true religion is to be found. As long as you are active in the church doing good in society, perhaps even going to a faraway third-world country where you can be involved in human concerns, world peace, the education of children, cultural renewal, projects that help alleviate world poverty, and assisting where natural catastrophes have happened, then you are involved where Christianity is truly active and significant in the world. Preaching salvation, righteousness, and truth are not important or relevant. Preserving truth and righteousness as the foundation for life, living for and confessing God and Jesus Christ as the only hope of salvation, are not considered important and relevant for Christianity. Promoting God's glory in a life of true godliness in things like Christian marriage, family life, and the communion of God's people in His church is just not relevant, and most of that is considered nothing but hypocrisy.

The truly Reformed church maintains the truth of the covenant, according to which God is pleased to continue His church in the line of continued generations of faithful believers. The gospel must be faithfully preached by the true church of Jesus Christ. The truth of the gospel and sound doctrine must be preserved and maintained in her midst. Importantly, arising out of this perspective is the great urgency of instructing our children in God's foundational institution of the Christian family.

In this article and my next I want to focus on the role and calling of fathers in the covenant home, with what has been said as the background and context. Never before has there been such great urgency of having good fathers in the home as there is today. There is great need for fathers to have a strong influence in their covenant homes. The failure and negligence of covenant fathers in the home will have devastating consequences for the strength of family and for the stability of society, even for our own churches and their future. In our special focus on fathers we are, of course, not minimizing the important role of covenant mothers as keepers in the home. We are simply recognizing the emphasis that Scripture places on fathers in that they are called to be the heads and strong leaders of their homes, greatly influencing their covenant children by

instructing them in the fear of the Lord, by the grace and Spirit of God.

In order for fathers to have the godly influence they ought to in their homes, they must themselves be men who are truly godly, fearing God and keeping His commandments. They themselves must be spiritually minded and have great spiritual concern for their children. They must also love the church of Jesus Christ and the truth God has given to her, the doctrine she is called to maintain and promote in the world and in the sphere of God's covenant.

Fathers have the God-given relationship to their children that they can by the grace of God have a great influence on their children's lives by instructing them in the truth and guiding them in the way in which these children must go. A father must be a living example of our Father in heaven in his family, so that believing children will experience the love, care, and comfort of their fathers and submit themselves to his necessary discipline and chastisement for their nurture and development to mature adulthood.

Because of this influence, fathers can also do great evil in their own homes. There is the sober warning of God's judgment in His law where God warns that He will visit the sins of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation (Ex. 20:5). The wickedness of fathers in the covenant home will have serious consequences of apostasy from the truth in the generations of the church. As fathers, we should all tremble before this warning of the law of God and earnestly pray that God will deliver us from our own personal sins and that He will not cause our sins to have a negative effect on the attitudes and behavior of our children.

Fathers can do great evil in their own marriages and families by their wicked lives. It cannot be denied that there are devastating consequences in families when fathers behave in an ungodly manner. When fathers walk in covetousness, pride, greediness, adultery, divorce, and drunkenness, they will bear evil fruit in the home and family. Even sins such as self-centeredness, unholy ambition, and worldliness will influence the children growing up in the homes of these fathers. God is not mocked; a father will reap what he sows.

Even fatherly neglect of the children will have serious consequences in his family. The father who does not have covenantal love and concern for his children will leave them feeling unloved and uncared for. As covenant children, they need this constant demonstration of love and concern for their own spiritual development, nurture, and sense of wellbeing. The absence of this will often leave deep feelings of bitterness, distress, and confusion within the souls of children.

A worldly father will teach his children to be worldly. A worldly man who does not live his own life in the fear of God will find that his children do not have within them the fear of God, which according to Scripture should be the guiding principle of their lives. A man who is overly committed to his earthly career and occupation, only to increase his wealth and his company's prosperity so that he does not have the time or energy personally to interact with and influence his children, must not be surprised when his children in later life show little of the fear of God in their lives, in their involvement in the church, and for walking in the good works God has ordained for them to walk in for His glory.

Having said all of the above, we must immediately also comfort faithful fathers in their difficult role. We are completely dependent on the grace of God and the work of His Spirit in the hearts and lives of our children. God in His mercy will also preserve our children in spite of the sins and weaknesses of fathers in the daily task of raising covenant children.

Even in covenant homes where father has been faithful, there are some who still experience the great sorrows and anguish of children who in later life depart from the truth in which they have been instructed, even forsaking the Lord altogether for a life of sin and worldliness. God-fearing fathers must not despair of God's mercy and wrongly burden themselves with guilt feelings about their own failings and short-comings. They must continue to labor with wayward children, continuing in much prayer that God according to His will and in His great mercy might return wayward sons and daughters of the covenant.

To such wayward children the godly father must be able to say with humility and the grace of God in his own heart, "My son, my daughter, you have grown up in our covenant home. I have instructed you in the fear of God, in keeping His commandments and in confessing and living by the Lord's truth in your whole life. I have taught you by the example of my own life of the personal sacrifices you must make in life as well as of the ridicule and persecution you must expect from this ungodly world. I have taught about the only hope of salvation as it is in Jesus Christ alone. I have instructed you in the way of truth and righteousness, and of the great reward of

the Lord's blessing on the lives of His people in the way of fearing Him. I have taught you that which I believe in my own heart is the greatest wisdom and the greatest good that will lead to peace with God, life eternal, and glory. But you have willfully and foolishly rejected all of this and chosen the way of wickedness and forsaken the Lord. For this also God will hold you responsible."

Much of this article has been about warning; it has been somewhat negative, necessarily so. In our next article we are going to discuss the positive instruction of God's Word summarized in one of the classic passages of the Bible, Ephesians 6: 4. "And you fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." This one short verse is full

of instruction and encouragement to fathers for their role in their covenant home. This verse is such a great example of verbal inspiration. Every word of this passage in its precise meaning has such great importance. This passage has a negative part to it. In raising of our covenant children, we must be careful not to provoke them to anger. There is great warning here about our behavior towards

our covenant children. We want soberly to consider some of the misbehavior and neglect of fathers that can lead to provoking our children to wrath.

Yet, this passage also has volumes of positive instruction and encouragement. Central to this whole passage, as well as to the whole book of Proverbs (written especially for the instruction of our covenant sons and daughters by their parents and again especially for fathers), is one great principle. I refer to the great principle, "the fear of the Lord." Fathers must instruct their children in the fear of the Lord. Through all their work fathers must labor by the grace and Spirit of God to instill and increase in the hearts of their children the attitude of "the fear of the Lord." Because of our natural pride, sometimes also sinful and worldly, we want our children to grow up to be successful in life, hopefully even more successful and prosperous than we were. We want our children to have honor among men and success in all their lives. We desire them to reveal that they are very intelligent, gifted, and talented. But we must always be reminded that without the fear of the Lord all of this is nothing more than the vanity of the world and in the end will profit our children very little.

...we must immediately also comfort faithful fathers in their difficult role. We are completely dependent on the grace of God and the work of His Spirit in the hearts and lives of our children. God in His mercy will also preserve our children in spite of the sins and weaknesses of fathers in the daily task of raising covenant children.



A word fitly spoken

Rev. William Langerak, pastor of Trinity Protestant Reformed Church in Hudsonville, Michigan

Fill

Our God is the God who fills. Immense, He fills the vast heavens with His presence (Jer. 23:24). Thrice-holy, He fills the whole earth with His glory (Is. 6:3). Righteous Judge, He fills the world with His knowledge as waters cover the sea (Is. 11:9). Sovereign Lord, He sends His servants into the streets and lanes, highways and hedges to bring in the poor, maimed, halt, and blind to fill His house. Gracious, full of compassion and plenteous in mercy, He fills empty rebels with peace and the fruits of righteousness (Rom. 15:13-14; Phil. 1:11). Spirit, He fills dead men with the living fullness of Himself (Acts 2:4; Eph. 3:19, 5:18). Infinite, He could fill everything to overflowing without ever being emptied Himself; no matter how much fills, He Himself will always remain full.

To fill is to supply, furnish, or provide so that which is planned is accomplished, that which is lacking is supplied, the unfinished is completed, and the exhausted is replenished (Dan. 9:2; Is. 40:2, 65:11; Lam. 4:18; Jer. 31:25; Eccl. 1:8; Ps. 96:11).

Our God only fills that which is empty. He fills the hungry soul while the rich He sends away empty, the full away hungry, and those laughing away mourning (Luke 1:52, 6:25). When our God fills the empty vessel, He also fills it to capacity. The longing soul He fills so that it is satisfied (Ps. 107:9). He fills such that deserts bloom, parched ground becomes a lake, and thirsty lands springs of water (Is. 35:7). Petition Him when lacking, He will provide (Ps. 20:5). Open thy mouth wide, and He will stuff it full (Ps. 81:10).

God fills the empty vessel with precisely that which it needs. The sad He fills with joy (Acts 13:52). The poor He fills with riches (Matt. 5:3). The distressed soul He fills with comfort (II Cor. 7:4). The crying mouth He fills with laughter, and mourning lips He fills with sing-

ing (Ps. 126:2). Those who honor Him with their substance He fills with more substance (Prov. 3:9). Fools he fills with wisdom (Prov. 8:21). Those who hunger and thirst after righteousness He fills with righteousness (Matt. 5:6). The longing soul that turns to Him He fills with Himself (Ps. 107:9).

In great contrast are the ungodly (and ourselves in our fully depraved natures) who are filled with wrath and madness (Luke 4:28, 6:11), lies and indignation (Acts 5:3, 17), envy and confusion (Acts 13:45, 19:29); filled with unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, coveting, malice, and malignity (Rom 1:29). Their mouths are filled with gossip and cursing, their hands with blood and bribes, their eyes with adultery and sin, and hearts with murder and evil (Micah 6:12; Ps. 10:7, 26:10; II Pet. 2:14; Is 1:15; Eccl. 9:3). They fill their houses with violence, their cities with robbery (Nah. 3:1), and their land with idols (Zeph. 1:9; Nah. 3:1; Jer. 23:10; Is. 2:8). Their cup of iniquity they fill to the full (Rev. 18:6). On them the Lord will empty His cup of wrath, and the bitter dregs they shall drink (Ps. 75:80). In the harvest, when His sickle cuts them down, the winepress will be filled to overflowing because their wickedness is great (Joel 3:13).

On the other hand, the church, which knows the love of Christ, will be filled with all the fullness of God. For the church is the body of Christ, the fullness of Him who fills all in all, yet who in the fullness of time emptied Himself that she might be full (Eph. 1:23; Phil. 2:7). Thus Zion is filled with the glory of the Lord, with His righteousness, and fruits of righteousness by Jesus Christ; and her streets filled with playing boys and girls whose minds are filled with His knowledge and whose mouths are filled with His praise (Is. 3:5; Zech. 8:5; Ps. 71:8).



Strength of youth

Rev. Jon Mahtani, pastor of the Cornerstone Protestant Reformed Church in Dyer, Indiana

A personal warning about sports

Young men and women, lend me your attention for a few minutes. Your love for sports might make this a sensitive issue that you would rather not consider, but I think this is a necessary caution. I also believe myself qualified to write this warning because I have an appreciation for sports. I played at the high school and college levels, and I continue to value it even today. Athletics can benefit men and women with respect to social and leadership skills, as well as improvement in mental and physical health. There is an extreme view that sports have minimal to no value, but I heartily disagree. And yet, at the same time, there are dangers I want to counsel you about. Dear young people, I write as one who has succumbed to the very temptations I warn about—with a prayer that you would fight them with me.

There are two basic areas to address: watching sports and playing sports. They are related but different activities with the same general danger: *We tend to make the sport we watch and play an idol.* While this is familiar to us, I do not think we truly realize the enormity of this false god in America.

At the beginning of last year, my attendance at the Worship (I mean, United) Center of the Chicago Bulls sparked many thoughts about this idolatry of sports. On the way home from the game, my wife and two oldest boys began to discuss the eerie resemblance of this event to that of Exodus 32. At both events, the bull was glorified—Chicago’s was red and Israel’s was gold-en. Surrounding Israel, Philistia revered a fish god and Egypt a snake god, while Israel at Sinai chose to bow before the bovine kind. Around Chicago are the tigers, lions, and wolverines of Michigan, but those gathered in the windy city had a heart for the bull (and bear). As the people “rose up to play” in their calf worship, thus did half-dressed women called cheerleaders dance before the bulls and their admirers to the beats of the world (see Ex. 32:6, 19). And in both arenas, there was much eating and more drinking. While my family did not think that our attendance at such a sporting event was wrong in and of itself, we were stunned by the parallels between it and paganism.

After this exercise of comparison, my mind began to make a slightly different evaluation, still related to the idolatry of sports—contrasting the worship of sports to the worship of God. Consider the actions of a fictional character named Jonny on Saturday, Game Day versus Sunday, the Lord’s Day.

- 1) *Anticipation*—On Saturday, Jonny is so excited that he jumps out of bed far earlier than necessary. (On Sunday, Jonny barely gets out of bed in time to get his church clothes on and rush to the morning service.)
- 2) *Preparation*—Jonny turns on the TV for the pre-game analysis, preparing his mind by thinking about the stats, matchups, and commentaries by ESPN announcers. (Jonny rushes to church with a minute to spare and sits down without a thought about worship, except that he can’t be late for the formality.)
- 3) *Dedication*—Jonny takes a two-hour drive through the snow, finding a parking spot two miles away and, in spite of the inconvenience, manages to get there with time to spare. (It takes less than ten minutes to drive to church, plus about thirty seconds to walk from the parking lot to his seat, but it was a long weekend and Jonny is thinking about how much more convenient it would have been just to stay home and stream it online.)
- 4) *Seating*—Throngs of people join Jonny, earnestly desiring to see the action in the best seats up front. (Jonny whispers to the usher at church, “Somewhere in the back, please,” hoping to sneak out quickly after the service is done.)
- 5) *Offering*—For the ticket, gas, parking spot, and food at the game, Jonny spends hundreds of dollars—money that he has saved up just for this day. (At church, Jonny frantically looks in his wallet for some spare change.)
- 6) *Participation*—During the game, Jonny is on the edge of his seat anticipating the next great wonder, rising and cheering wildly when it happens: Amid the thronging worshipers, LeBron James will he bless. (In church, Jonny sits like a potato chip and stands like a

banana, barely moving his lips to sing, unable to focus during prayer and the sermon.)

7) *Overtime*—When the game goes into overtime, Jonny is pumped—more action is worth it even if it has to delay bedtime. (The sermon extends a little longer than normal and Jonny sulks, complaining about repetition and how we should not expect people to have such long attention spans.)

8) *Conversation*—Jonny hangs with his buddies and describes the great assists, plays, and dunks, feeling close to his friends who have a common interest in sports. (Jonny knows he is supposed to have conversation about spiritual things after church, at dinner, and in society meetings, but he would rather not sound so pious.)

9) *Meditation*—Jonny replays the highlights of the game in his mind and on the screen, imagining what it would be like if he could go pro. (Jonny does not, cannot, and will not meditate on the law of God day and night.)

10) *Role modeling*—Jonny wants to be “an animal” like those hall of famers. He puts all his effort into getting his hero’s jersey, shoes, paraphernalia, and imitating his moves and swagger. (Jonny is not intentional in applying the command to conform to the image of Jesus in meekness and holiness.)

Too many churches today are full of Jonnys. If there is any similarity between you and Jonny, I pray that you would repent with me and delight in the forgiveness found in Christ Jesus alone. From my own life, I have noticed the idolatry while watching sports, but perhaps worse for me has been idolatry in *playing* sports. Here are a few related warnings to consider:

1) *All pride in sports is idolatry.* I had to (and still have to) ask myself these questions and answer honestly whenever I play a sport: What is my goal? Is my end-game truly to glorify God or to glorify self? Why do I practice and play hard? Why do I want to score double-digits? Why do I want to win so badly? Why do I give that high look and celebrate in such a fashion after I score? Too often I have to repent of my heart’s goal. The sinful polytheism of my old man makes not only basketball and soccer my gods, but my *self* becomes the idol.

2) *Success in sports must not be your source of confidence.* In high school and college, I relied on and trusted in sports for self-confidence. Foolishly, I imagined that being able to put a rubber orange ball through a hoop supposedly made me a better person (even better than others). This was a deceitful and flimsy foundation upon which to build confidence, for you will find out quickly that many are better than you in this world, even if you are a star in your small high school. Our confidence must be found in Christ alone!

3) *Winning in competition can itself become an idol.* This became my idol, and I still struggle against it. This became evident to me when I noticed my heart desiring to win not only in sports but in every kind of occasion. Even when there was no real competition, I often made the activity into a competition! Grades became a competition. Every discussion or argument became a competition. Finding a date became a competition. Silently I competed, comparing myself to others. Instead of being content with the victory I had in Christ, instead of rejoicing that we are more than conquerors in Christ, instead of acknowledging the various talents given to

each within the church, I craved winning and dealt poorly with losing. Beware of the idol of winning.

4) *Your priorities prove your idol.* If you are like me, you will insist as a young person that your idol is not an idol. Parents may even help with denial, as they live out their idolatry of sports through their children. But the proof is in the pudding. When sporting events habitually become reasons for skipping family devotions, when time and

energy spent on practice constantly displaces time and energy spent on school work and catechism, we have over-prioritized sports and made it our idol.

I write this personal confession and warning not to give you an excuse in your idolatry (“Since this pastor did it, it’s not so bad.”), but rather to seek your repentance along with mine. Whether it be while watching sports or playing them, I sincerely pray that you recognize the seriousness of your sin, turn with your heart to rest in Christ’s forgiveness, and daily battle by His grace against this and all kinds of idolatry.

All pride in sports is idolatry. I had to (and still have to) ask myself these questions and answer honestly whenever I play a sport: What is my goal? Is my end-game truly to glorify God or to glorify self? ...The sinful polytheism of my old man makes not only basketball and soccer my gods, but my self becomes the idol.



Go ye into all the world

Rev. Wilbur Bruinsma, pastor of the Protestant Reformed Church in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Protestant Reformed Missions The war years: Mission work flounders (1940-1946) 4

Previous article
in this series:
April 1, 2019, p.
306.

The Synod of 1946 was pivotal. Its decisions could change entirely the direction of mission work in the Protestant Reformed Churches. First, should our churches engage in foreign mission work and, if so, should that work be done in China as the eastern branch of the Mission Committee was recommending? Second, should the structure of the Mission Committee be altered? Should synod appoint a mission committee made up of men from Classis West to pursue church extension work in the West while retaining the present Mission Committee with the men from Classis East to carry on domestic and foreign missions? Third, ought the eastern branch of the Mission Committee be dissolved, retaining the western branch as the new Mission Committee? With this, should not synod appoint a church in the West as a new calling church for a missionary?

From both strong disagreement between the two branches of the Mission Committee and overtures from a number of consistories, it is evident that the PRC Synod of 1946 was filled with tension that fell generally along the lines of the two classes. Certainly, this was not a healthy situation for the churches!

What then were the decisions of Synod 1946?

In one broad sweep the Synod nixed the idea of foreign mission work. This was true of the eastern division's recommendation to labor in China, but also the western division's recommendation to pursue supporting De Gereformeerde Kerken in the Netherlands in their mission work in the East Indies. In Articles 72-74 of the 1946 *Acts of Synod* (p. 73), the synod spelled out the following grounds for not engaging in mission work in China:

- 1) We are not convinced that our churches are ready to support a continued foreign mission project such as the committee suggests.
- 2) We strongly feel that our home mission work, i.e., church extension work, should for the present still receive all emphasis.
- 3) We

are convinced that our churches could not carry the continued support of both foreign mission project and home mission project—both will suffer.

Synod then reemphasized what it saw as the aim and goal of home mission work in the Protestant Reformed Churches:

We are convinced that our Mission Committee should continue to emphasize the work of church extension, and press this to the utmost of its ability. Church extension work ought to be pushed even more than before, and give to the committee authority so to do by any ways and means it is authorized to employ under its constitution (Art. 75, p. 73).

This placed a severe handicap on the Mission Committee, which at that time was running out of places in the United States with interested saints asking for help to establish a church. Even Holland PRC's overture that synod consider the possibilities of mission work in the Netherlands was defeated (Art. 32, p. 36). In years to come the Mission Committee would find itself stretching its search more broadly into North America.

As mentioned, the western branch of the Mission Committee recommended that our churches lend support to the foreign mission work of the Gereformeerde Kerken in the Netherlands. Though there was some support for this at Synod, nevertheless Synod decided that "the Mission Committee take this matter under advisement and report to the next Synod." The matter died in committee.

Regarding the restructuring of the Mission Committee, Synod decided that the present arrangement of two divisions or branches was not efficient. Classis East's decision regarding the overture from Grand Haven PRC was taken into advisement: "To appoint the Mission Committee from one Classis and instruct Synod to revise the constitution accordingly" (Art. 26 of Classis

East, p.36 in the 1946 *Acts of Synod*). This changed the direction of Grand Haven's overture that in reality wanted the Mission Committee (redefined by Grand Haven as Church Extension Committee) to be moved to the West. Though Grand Haven's proposal was a bit odd, the consistory's reasons for choosing the constituency of the Mission Committee from the West were sound. That is where the mission work of our churches was taking place! If the Mission Committee was at the present time made up of men from the East and the West, and if the present make-up was not working, then drop the eastern branch and reformulate the western branch into the new Mission Committee. No doubt, this was debated long and hard on the floor of synod. In the end synod decided that the western branch would be eliminated and the Mission Committee would be limited to the men of Classis East. What follows is the decision of synod:

To return to the former situation in which our Mission Committee was chosen from the eastern branch of our churches.

Grounds:

- a. Constant unity of action by this important committee is preferable over the present situation.
- b. Before the Mission Committee was divided it was situated in the East and even now the largest part of the committee is from the Eastern branch of our churches.
- c. It would certainly seem advisable that the largest congregation in our denomination should remain the calling church.
- d. It is easier to elect a committee of 8 members from the Eastern branch of our churches that can have ready contact with one another than the West.
- e. It would eliminate much unnecessary expense and travel.¹

I am sure the various pros and cons were weighed out carefully by synod. But the grounds of the above decision do not seem to answer some of the valid points that the overture of Grand Haven made. Why not move the Mission Committee to the West? It is true that the churches in the East, for the most part, were concentrated in the Grand Rapids area, but there were a number of churches established in Northwest Iowa from which to choose a Mission Committee, too.

These churches were in close proximity to one another. Besides, much of the mission work of our churches seemed to be in the West not far from the location of our churches. Now, this does not mean that I would not

be in favor with what synod decided, but I am trying to put myself in the place of the elders and ministers that were serving congregations in the West. The men that were serving on the Mission Committee in the West already felt slighted by the eastern branch of the Mission Committee. Now synod simply eliminates the western branch of the Mission Committee (even though basically Grand Haven recommended that this branch be retained), and gives the mission work exclusively into the hands of the eastern branch!

I bring this up because tensions were beginning to build up in the Protestant Reformed Churches. Remember, this was only seven years before 1953, a split that came to a head through our mission work among people who emigrated from the Liberated Churches in the Netherlands. We only mention this situation now, but will, the Lord willing, be able to write more on it later. There can be no doubt that Rev. Herman Hoeksema was influential in our churches due to the fact that he was a founding father of our churches and a man of powerful character. There were those who were beginning to resent that. All the work of our churches, they felt, centered in Hoeksema as if no one else were capable of carrying on that work effectively and faithfully. To them here was another case in point: the Mission Committee had to stay close to Hoeksema.

On top of that, it was stated *in passing* in the decision of synod to keep the Mission Committee in the East because, "it would certainly be advisable that the largest congregation in our denomination should remain the calling church." This was stated as a ground rather than a separate motion to be considered. Why was it advisable that First PRC of Grand Rapids remain the calling church? Just because it was the largest? No other size congregation was able to perform mission work? In the mind of many it was only because Hoeksema was pastor of that congregation! He was pastor of a "mega-church" in our denomination, he was intimately involved in the instruction given in the seminary, radio pastor of the Reformed Witness Hour (as we will find in another article), and, now, the one around whom all our mission work centered. Unrest was growing. Some felt that Hoeksema was running all the affairs of the denomination.

It did not help that Hoeksema was the chairman of the committee of pre-advice that formulated this advice for synod of that year.

Again, I mention this because this was the attitude of a number of ministers and elders in our churches already prior to 1953. They failed to recognize that Hoeksema was a man of extraordinary capability. He did not always look for the work that was placed on him by our churches, but when it was given him he did

¹ 1946 *Acts of Synod*. The advice is found on page 26, E.,1. The decision is found on page 34, Article 31.

not back away from it either. He did it, and he did it well. Besides, he was now a senior member of the clergy highly respected and honored as such in the Protestant Reformed churches. The Lord gave him that place in the denomination and it was wrong to act as rivals to him rather than trusted colleagues together with him.

One other important decision made at the 1946 Synod having to do with mission work was to send out two missionaries to labor together in home missions. The Mission Committee in a supplemental report to synod grounded their “suggestion” to synod on the following:

1. This is a sound scriptural principle with respect to mission labor. Cf. Luke 10:1, Acts 10:23, Acts 13:2 etc.
2. The testimony of our own men who have experienced this manner of labor expresses its desirability. [Two testimonies are here recorded—WGB.]
3. This arrangement would promote greater efficiency, dispatch, and thoroughness of our mission work.
4. This arrangement would promote continuity and succession during vacations, attendance of meetings, investigation of new fields, acceptance of calls, etc.
5. It would not increase the expenses so as to make it prohibitive from a financial point of view.²

This recommendation of the Mission Committee was approved by synod in Article 82 (*Acts*, p. 82): “We recommend to do as the Mission Committee suggests, especially in view of the fact that this Synod has gone

² 1946 *Acts of Synod*, page 69, Supplement IV.

on record as favoring stressing of Home Mission work.” First PRC of Grand Rapids was then authorized to call and send this second missionary too. This decision of Synod 1946 was reconfirmed at Synod 1947 and in that year two missionaries were called (W. Hofman and E. Knott) to labor in Byron Center, MI and Lynden, WA. For practical reasons, as we will find when we consider the next phase of our mission work, this practice of sending out two missionaries to labor together ceased in 1948.

Calling and sending out two missionaries to the same field of labor has been the subject of at least one conference hosted by the Domestic Mission Committee. It is always a matter of concern and even was proposed to a future synod as well. In some instances it is a good thing to do in domestic missions. Having served as a missionary in a foreign country, I believe it is the only right thing to do when involved in foreign missions. When missionaries are far removed from the confines of a denomination and the supervision of their consistories and the advice of a Mission Committee, more than one missionary is needed for the reasons mentioned in the decision of the 1946 Synod. Two other reasons would be: 1) they need the companionship and counsel of one another; 2) two or more missionaries will hold one another accountable in life and labor. Certainly, this has proven itself to be most valuable in our present labors in the Philippines.

One last article needs yet be written on our mission work during the war years. In that article we intend to treat the rise in radio broadcasting and of Reformed periodicals published in our churches during that time.



Pertaining to the churches in common— Domestic Mission Committee

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

Home missions: What are we doing?

Notice the title of the article, “What are *we* doing?” Missions is the work of the church. In the year 2001, we had three home missionaries, working in three different declared fields with church plants: Northern Ireland, the eastern United States, and the Western United States. The calling of the church was to pray for

our missionaries and, of course, financially support the work with their offerings.

In the year of our Lord, 2019, we have one home missionary, with no declared field of labor, except of course, the whole of the United States and Canada. Are we doing anything? Is it the case that eighteen years ago

the PRC was considerably more involved with domestic mission work than we are today? Have we lost our mission-mindedness?

First of all, the Domestic Mission Committee (DMC) does not jump in today and start a church plant immediately when we receive a call to “come over and help us.” When we received these requests in the past year, the DMC sent their home missionary and others to investigate whether it was feasible to begin a church plant in those areas.

Second, the DMC, with diminished requests “to come over and help us,” is working with a new approach to establish a definite field of labor. In this model, our congregations are more involved in starting evangelistic Bible studies in their communities and their outlying areas. To date, we have or have had nine of our congregations busy establishing these outreach Bible studies in various areas along with teaching men in correctional facilities. Our congregations are developing contacts that they can pursue or refer to our missionary to labor with.

Is this not the labor of home missions? The *congregations* are doing the work of missions, not only praying for and financially supporting the work of paid missionaries. The PRC, I believe, is becoming more evangelistic and energetic in this labor. Mission work is a very important calling from Christ to His church, for He said, “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations...” (Matt. 28:19). In the Canons of Dordt we have a beautiful statement: “And that men may be brought to believe, God mercifully sends the messengers of these most joyful tidings, to whom He will and at what time He pleaseth; by whose ministry men are called to repentance and faith in Christ crucified” (Canons I, Art. 3). Again, in the Canons, we read, “Moreover, the promise of the gospel is, that whosoever believeth in Christ crucified, shall not perish, but have everlasting life. This promise, together with the command to repent and believe, ought to be declared and published to all nations, and to all persons promiscuously and without distinction, to whom God out of His good pleasure sends the gospel” (Canons II, Art. 5).

How important this work is, especially for rather isolated churches! The apostle Paul on his missionary travels preached, and the Holy Spirit established churches that were geographically close to one another: Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe. These churches could encourage and labor together as the churches of Asia Minor. In the Philippines, our missionaries labor not only with the first church that was organized, but with pastors and churches that are near the first congregation, so that we now have a federation of churches laboring together. How important this work is for small churches that have been dependent upon synodical subsidy for

many years. It is easy for an organized church, whether large or small, to be content with their church life, not bothering to go and seek to save the lost in the communities around them. It is through missions that the Lord is pleased to add to His church such as should be saved.

You might ask, “Why have Bible studies in our areas when we already have Bible studies within our churches? Why go out into the communities when others can come to our worship services?” There are a number of reasons. First, one cannot expect those who have little or no church affiliation to travel long distances to come to our churches. It just will not happen. Second, these community members would not feel comfortable in many of our church societies or services. Many of them know little of our Reformed terminology or even Bible history that we take for granted and use. Third, they do not know anyone else that goes to our church and who often huddle in small groups afterwards. These people from the neighborhood are often intimidated.

The church and her members must obey Jesus’ command to “Go!” As we live in different neighborhoods, work in the world’s workplaces, shop in their stores, and eat in their restaurants, we must be friendly, approachable, caring about and listening to our fellow human beings and their life situations. As the Canons teach, “As to others, who have not yet been called, it is our duty to pray for them to God, who calls the things that are not, as if they were. But we are in no wise to conduct ourselves towards them with haughtiness, as if we had made ourselves to differ” (Canons III/IV, Art. 15). One way to reach those in our communities is to set up Bible studies and personally invite folks to join us in seeking the truth from the Scriptures.

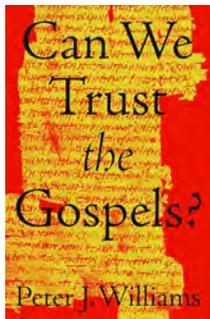
And we might then ask, what is our missionary doing? Your missionary seeks to encourage and inspire our churches in this work by preaching ‘mission sermons’ and doing mission presentations. The missionary is also available to help the churches set up these Bible studies and pick material to be used. We are also writing material or tracts that will be more easily understood by those with a limited knowledge of the Bible. Just finished is a series of nine tracts on the subject of the person of Jesus Christ. It is entitled, “Who is Jesus?” And when contacts come in to the missionary and the DMC, the New Fields Committee does investigative work to determine if this is where the Lord is opening up a door for us to labor. The missionary then goes to such contacts and begins a Bible study there.

May the Lord Jesus be pleased to continue to cause His church to love the truth that we have been given and to love our neighbors as ourselves, to seek and to save the lost. This is *our* work in home missions.



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



Can We Trust the Gospels? by Peter J. Williams. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018. ISBN 9781433552953. 153 pages. \$17.99. Softcover. [Reviewed by Prof. Douglas Kuiper.]

Subscribers to the *Standard Bearer* believe the four gospel accounts to be the inspired and inerrant Word of God and, therefore, trustworthy.

Peter Williams does also; his answer to the question expressed in the book's title is "yes." It is unfortunate that this book does not have a subtitle that lets the reader know his position.

This book falls into the category of apologetics, which is the defense of the Christian faith. The book defends the believer's conviction that the gospels did in fact record what Jesus and others truly said and did.

Its purpose is not to convince unbelievers. What Williams says regarding miracles in particular is true regarding all of God's revelation in the gospel accounts: to believe it requires prior convictions of faith regarding God, Christ, man's need for salvation, and Scripture (131). Reading this book will not *create* these convictions, but can *strengthen* these convictions. The book's purpose is to demonstrate to believers that our faith is reasonable.

Williams begins by noting that some unbelieving writers who lived in the first century confirmed the basic historical facts of the gospel accounts (chap. 1). He then notes that the gospels all agree in substance, even though they are four distinct historical accounts, penned by four different men at four different dates and for four different immediate purposes (chap. 2).

That Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John knew geographical details of Palestine, names of people and their family relationships to each other, botanical terms, matters of finance, and unusual customs, indicates that these four men knew of what they spoke (chap. 3). In this respect their accounts differ from the apocryphal gospels, such as the Gospel of Thomas. The four gospel

accounts agree in small details that only those familiar with the land and times would know. Yet, these gospel writers did not corroborate with each other when writing their accounts (chap. 4). In chapter 5 Williams gives reasons why we can be sure that Jesus actually spoke the words attributed to Him in the gospel accounts. Chapter 7 explains the presence of apparent contradictions in the gospel accounts. Williams argues that these are only *formal* contradictions, that is, they are contradictions only when the same words, phrases, and sentences are assumed to have the same meaning in different contexts. However, as he demonstrates, the same word can have different meanings, and the same words strung together can have different meanings in different contexts. In chapter 8 Williams explains why the record of various miracles need not be a reason for us to think the gospel accounts are not reliable.

One who does not understand what textual criticism is will receive a brief education regarding it in chapter 6. Briefly stated, the original gospel accounts were copied, and these copies were copied again and again throughout history. In the process of copying these by hand, scribes made mistakes. Because the original manuscripts no longer exist, we cannot go back to them to find what the gospel writers actually wrote. Textual criticism is the specialized task of determining as best we are able what the original manuscripts said.

The fact that the various manuscripts contain errors leads some to say that the gospels are not reliable. Williams argues the opposite: the carefulness with which the scribes copied the Scriptures, and the agreement of manuscripts in the vast majority of the New Testament text, is reason to trust the gospel accounts as reliable.

Why read this book if you already believe the gospels to be trustworthy? First, because Williams makes some observations that help us understand specific gospel texts better. I especially found this to be true in chapter 3.

Second, because we live among and work with those who say that the gospels are not reliable. Perhaps you have a coworker, family member, or other acquaintance

who tells you that the gospel accounts cannot be trusted. A good response would be to assert that the gospels can be (must be!) trusted because they are the Word of God. A better response would be to make that assertion and add specific arguments to support it. This book will provide you those specific arguments.

Books that defend the Christian faith are not an attempt to prove the Christian faith, but do demonstrate that the Christian faith is rational.



News from our churches

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

Trivia question

Four current ministers in the PRCA have a last name beginning with the letter B. Can you name them and tell in which congregation they labor? Answers later in this column.

Minister activities

Grandville PRC announced a new trio of Revs. J. Engelsma, G. Eriks, and B. Huizinga from which to call a minister-on-loan to our sister church in Singapore. Rev. Joshua Engelsma, pastor in Doon, IA PRC received this call and planned to answer by August 18.

Immanuel PRC of Lacombe, AB Canada announced their new trio of Rev. D. Lee, and Candidates Matt Kortus and Jacob Maatman; from this trio they called Cand. M. Kortus.

Rev. Brian Huizinga preached his farewell sermon in Hope PRC of Redlands, CA on July 21. Later that week he and his family moved to the Grand Rapids, MI area, as he has taken up the transitional work of becoming a professor in the Theological School of the PRCA. Hope, Redlands announced the trio of Rev. J. Mahtani and Candidates Matt Kortus and Jacob Maatman. Hope called on July 21 and Cand. Kortus received their call.

Southeast PRC of MI announced the very same trio as Hope PRC of Redlands and on July 21 they extended a call to Candidate J. Maatman.

Missionary activities

Rev. and Leah Holstege traveled to Brisbane, Australia from July 16-24. Rev. Holstege was invited to speak at a conference on the 400th anniversary of the Synod of Dordt sponsored by the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Australia (EPCA) who are in a “corresponding

relationship” with the PRCA. He also preached for them and give a presentation on PRCA mission work in the Philippines.

From the bulletins of the churches in the Philippines: “The Theological School Committee (TSC) (Committee 1) requests the Consistories of the PRCP to hold one worship service on August 11, 2019 dedicated to the beginning of seminary school and entrusting our school to the blessing and care of our sovereign God, and asking our pastors to preach texts related to the ministry of the Word and seminary instruction.”

Young people’s activities

The Western Young People’s Retreat in July was a great success! The speeches by Rev. S. Regnerus and Rev. R. Hanko were well-received. The families attending from Lynden, Spokane, Lacombe, and Edgerton had good fellowship together. The Young People gave a good Christian witness. We thank God for all our young people and pray for His continued care over them!

The annual Young People’s Convention took place from August 12-16 at Camp Michindoh in Michigan with the theme “Watching and Waiting.” Look up prc-convention.com for all the details!

Denominational activities

Need for Ministers: Synod 2019 took a decision to place the urgent need for seminary students before our churches. Nine of our 39 active ministers are 63 years of age and older. The next prospect for seminary graduates in our churches is not for another four years. Then those nine ministers will be 67 and older. Please remember in your prayers to petition the Lord of the harvest for pastors.

Sister-church activities

The denomination of the Protestant Reformed Churches in the Philippines (PRCP), consisting now of four churches, adopted as their official mission work the Protestant Reformed Fellowship of Albuera, located on the Philippine island of Leyte. Recently, a trio was announced from which to call a missionary to Albuera. This trio consisted of Rev. Vernon Ibe, pastor at the Berean PRC, Rev. John Flores, pastor at the PRC of Bulacan, and Rev. Leovino Trinidad, pastor at Maranatha PRC. From this trio the calling church in Bulacan selected Rev. Ibe to receive the call to be missionary in Leyte. This call was announced on July 7, and on July 28 Rev. Ibe revealed his acceptance of the call. We are thankful that God led Rev. Ibe to a clear indication of His will in this matter. We pray also for the Berean PRC in the months ahead.

Evangelism activities

On Wednesday, July 31, a delegation of Prof. R. Cammenga, Rev. R. Kleyn, and Rev. C. Griess made a trip to Mexico to give lectures in two different denominations of churches. Doner Bartolon (First PRC, Grand Rapids) and Samuel Vasquez (Redlands PRC) assisted with translating. Susanna Bartolon, Lael Griess, Rhonda Cammenga, Bryan Pastoor, Madelyn Monsma, and Lydia Monsma helped in other ways as well. This visit was to include conferences at the Lluvias

de Gracia Church (National Presbyterian Church) and the Juan Calvino Seminary (Independent Presbyterian Church), as well as speeches at the General Assembly of the NPC and among the IPC congregations in Chiapas. The visitors also had opportunity to preach in these two denominations. Conference and speech topics included: Eschatology, training for officebearers, women in office, the sacraments, the Synod of Dort, and a critique of Reformational Theology. The delegation returned August 12.

Seminary news

One of the new students entering seminary this Fall is Isaac Peters from the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Australia. Isaac and his wife Rebecca and four children recently arrived in Grand Rapids, MI. They will be attending Grace PRC during their time in the USA.

Trivia answer

The four ministers whose last name begins with B and their congregations are: Rev. Ryan Barnhill of Peace PRC in Dyer, IN; Rev. Heath Bleyenbergh of Providence PRC in Hudsonville, MI; Rev. Wilbur Bruinsma in Pittsburgh, PA PRC; and Rev. Allen Brummel in Calvary PRC of Hull, IA. More trivia next time.

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

Announcements

Resolution of sympathy

The Ladies' Society of Hudsonville PRC wishes to express our sympathy to the family of **Mrs. Martha Holstege**. Martha was a lifetime member of our Ladies' Society and faithfully attended even at the age of 93. We will miss her presence this coming society year, but we rejoice that she has been taken to her eternal home. Psalm 116:15: “Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints.”

The Ladies' Society of Hudsonville PRC
Mrs. Rachel Dykstra, Secretary

Classis East

Classis East will meet in regular session on Wednesday, September 11, 2019, at 8:00 A.M., in the Southwest Protestant Reformed Church, Wyoming, Michigan.

Gary Boverhof, Stated Clerk

Seminary Convocation/Installation

On Wednesday, September 4, a special worship service for the installation of Rev. B. Huizinga as professor of theology in the Protestant Reformed Theological Seminary will be held in Grandville PRC at 7 P.M. Prof. R. Cammenga will lead the service. Seminary convocation will also be included, with the students being introduced and a time of fellowship afterwards. The service will be live-streamed on Grandville PRC's Sermonaudio channel.

Classis West

Classis West of the Protestant Reformed Churches will meet in Calvary PRC, Hull, Iowa, on Wednesday, September 25, 2019, at 8:30 A.M., the Lord willing. All delegates in need of lodging or transportation from the airport should notify the clerk of Calvary's consistory.

Rev. J. Engelsma, Stated Clerk

Announcements continued

THE BELGIC CONFESSION

— Volumes 1 & 2 now available —

by DAVID J. ENGELSMAS

With the publication of volume two is completed a Reformed, full-scale, commentary on the Belgic Confession, of which there are only a few in English today.

An orthodox commentary on the confession, that is, one that is in wholehearted accord with the teachings of the confession, and resolutely faithful to them, will be profitable to Reformed Christians and churches in the twenty-first century, not only for invaluable instruction in the Reformed faith, but also for the maintenance and defense of Reformed orthodoxy.

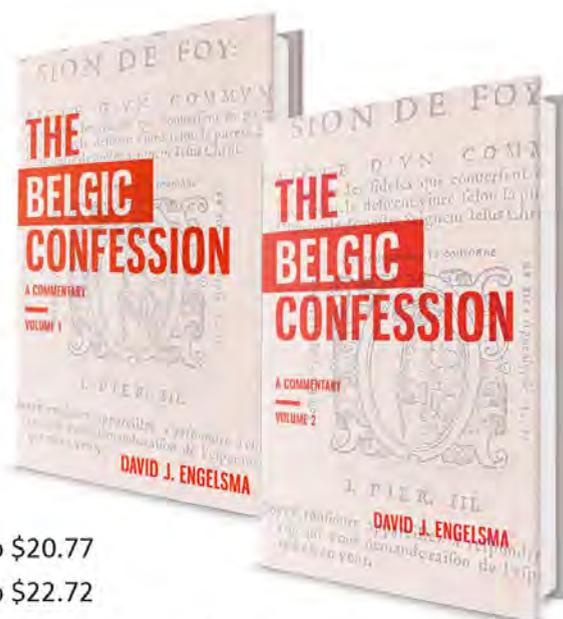


REFORMED
FREE PUBLISHING
ASSOCIATION

Volume 1 retail: \$31.95 | Book club \$20.77

Volume 2 retail: \$34.95 | Book club \$22.72

To order these books, visit www.rfpa.org, call (616) 457-5970, or email mail@rfpa.org.



RFPA ANNUAL MEETING

REV. JUSTIN SMIDSTRA

*Training our Children in
the Discipline of Reading*

Sept. 26 — 7:30 pm— Zion PRC

Reformed Witness Hour

Revs. C. Griess, H. Hoeksema, C. Haak

- September 1—“Whosoever Will May Come”
Revelation 22:17
- September 8—“Preservation of the Saints” (2)
John 10:27-29
- September 15—“Youth, Remember”
Ecclesiastes 12:1
- September 22—“Spiritual Lethargy”
Song of Solomon 4:16
- September 29—“The True Christian Life”
II Timothy 4:7, 8