

# The Standard Bearer

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# Our Christmas Joy

Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing?

The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD and against his anointed, saying,

Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us.

He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision.

Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure.

Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion.

Psalm 2:1-6

This portion of God's Word speaks of terrible things for the children of God. David describes for us the seething enmity that prompts the wicked to persecute the church. There are the raging heathen, people imagining vain things, kings and rulers confederating and counseling together against the

children of God. All of this produces the threat, "Let us break their bands asunder and cast their yoke from us." Our human reaction to all of this is retreat, in order to escape so terrible a threat.

But there is more to this Psalm, and it must not be forgotten. We must look heavenward, and formulate a correct judgment of the earthly scene. There we find that God is laughing. He is not laughing at His people, but at the heathen. This is a laughter of derision and holy wrath. The heavens begin to tremble as the voice of the Lord sounds forth: "Yet I have set my king upon my holy hill of Zion." When this defiant cry comes forth from the throne of God, the wicked begin to tremble. The hot breath of divine wrath falls upon them.

This divine judgment brings assurance to the faithful church, which is yet in the midst of the enemy, that she shall certainly be victorious.

These words are not very popular during the Christmas season. Mere lip service is paid to them. The beautiful arias and choral numbers of Handel's *Messiah* fill the air, including "Why do the nations rage?" Yet, if one proclaims the truth concerning these words, he soon sees

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that they are very offensive to the natural man. They bring untold enmity and bitterness. At this time of the year the hawkers of a universal love of God to all men dominate the airwaves and the pulpits. For them, Christmas is a time of brotherhood for all men. Piously, all men lift their heads heavenward and say, yes, somewhere there is a god that loves all men. So great is His love that He sent Jesus into the world to herald a message of kindness and brotherhood. Did not the angels sing, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men"? This is an example, they say, that as God loves all men and has sent Christ on behalf of them, so we must practice this love to one another. We must help the poor and deprived, spread cheer to the underprivileged, advocate peace among the nations, and help Christ along by carrying the banner of human kindness. Wicked men put Christ to death, but we must resurrect this Christ by carrying on the program that He intended, but failed, to accomplish, because men were so cruel that they nailed Him to the cross.

All of this, of course, is a contradiction of this text. God does not love all men and did not send Christ into the world with a view to the salvation of all men. God's love is a holy love, a love that is jealous in its very nature. The words of verse 6 are spoken in wrath against all the wicked who try to overthrow the Christ of the Scriptures. God will not allow the wicked to rest complacently in their evil design, not even when they creep into the church. He always sounds forth the terrible testimony that He is a God of consuming wrath. This leaves the wicked sore displeased, but the people of God divinely comforted.

By now you realize that we are dealing with a spiritual battle that must be viewed, first of all, from the perspective of God's sovereignty. Negatively, it is not true that God willed to establish a perfect universal kingdom of peace in Adam, but that this was spoiled by the devil and the consequent fall of man into sin. Nor is it true that God is now about to make the best of things and save as many of the human race as He can, and that He does this principally by sending Christ in the fullness of time, through whom God will put forth all His effort to save all men. If this were true, then the opposition forces of sin and darkness are sovereign in their own sphere, outside of the direct control of God. This is a blatant denial of

God's sovereignty. The battle of faith is not dualistic, made up of two forces that vie for position, as if the strongest will win.

But positively, these forces exist only because God sovereignly willed it and because He gives them strength to continue in this world. God is the source of all the power by which the enemies rage; but that power is given to them in order that they may be the unwilling servants of the sovereign God. Everything serves the purpose of God. God wills to save His church from the spiritual powers of darkness through Jesus Christ and to bring all the workers of iniquity to destruction. In this way God's justice and mercy are eternally manifest to His own glory.

Viewing this same battle from the perspective of man, we see that man, under the influence of the devil, continues to exercise his natural abilities in proud rebellion against God. Fallen man is able to think, dream, imagine, and work feverishly at his own endeavors. Since he is under the direction of the devil, all this ability is directed against God and against Christ.

Accordingly, the ungodly take counsel against Jehovah and His anointed Christ and His people, determined to destroy them. They try to do away with the true gospel of salvation by sovereign grace, thus fabricating a Christ after their own imagination. They try to replace the kingdom of Christ with the kingdom of man. They deny the atonement of Christ and replace it with a Jesus who is a good example of human brotherhood. They try to obliterate the heavenly kingdom by holding forth an earthly kingdom of peace and prosperity. All this because men hate God. They reject God and Christ and His love as revealed in the Scriptures. They seek to make God a servant of their endeavors. Thus, they try to destroy all opposition.

This is manifest in all of history. At the dawn of history the wicked tried to destroy the righteous by killing Abel. Pharaoh tried to reduce Israel to bloody subjection. David, a type of Christ, was driven from Jerusalem, in response to which he wrote this Psalm. At the center of history this raging reached a climax. In the fullness of time God sent His only begotten Son, born of a woman, under the law. On that night in Bethlehem His work of salvation began. And the wicked began to rage and to take counsel together, in that Herod sought

to kill the baby Jesus. Later we see this same bitterness in the breasts of those in Nazareth. This finally erupted into the volcano of hatred with the shout, "Let Him be crucified."

This same raging is evident today. The heathen outside and those within the nominally Christian church try to silence the faithful church that proclaims salvation by the atoning blood of Jesus Christ. That explains the turbulence of today. Everybody wants freedom, that is, from God's law, including the law of the Sabbath, of morality, and much more. If they do not get their evil way, they persecute the church.

All of this, however, is sovereignly directed. First, we see that God laughs at the wicked; He holds them in derision. This is not a laughter of pleasure, but it is God's holy derision against their feeble plot to destroy His anointed. God derides the wicked because they are so proud to imagine that they can actually destroy the witness of the anointed Christ as they live in the world. Proud man will not recognize that the very breath in his nostrils is given him by the God whom he hates. Nor will he recognize that Jehovah overrules all things so that even that opposition is not contrary to His purpose, but serves it. Man imagines vainly that he can overthrow God and Christ. But Jehovah laughs, and replies, "Impossible! I am Jehovah, and my Anointed have I set upon my holy hill of Zion!"

This is evident from history. In the days of Noah the flood came and destroyed all the wicked. Haman plotted to kill the Jews, but God placed Esther in the court of the king. The decree of the wicked Caesar was used by God to bring Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem. Herod plotted the death of Jesus, but God answers triumphantly, "Out of Egypt have I called my Son!" The Jews plotted to kill Christ secretly, but God so determined all things that His purpose was served even by the raging of Satan, who stirred up the Jews to cry out, "His blood be upon us and our children; moved Pilate to wash his hands of the whole affair, condemning to death one whom he had already declared to be innocent; and incited the people to cry, "Let Him be crucified."

A shame that Christ died? No! God directed all things. That raging crowd served His purpose in nailing Christ to the cross, so that He could make atonement for the sins of those whom the Father had given Him. God's

answer to the cross can be seen in the words of Christ, "It is finished. Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit." The empty tomb is God's final answer, for He drew Christ up into heaven and set Him at His own right hand and crowned Him with all power, honor, and glory forever.

Thus, we have our Christmas joy. Negatively, it is not found in forming an ecclesiastical union of churches that is not in harmony with the purpose of God's anointed. Nor is it to be found in a general world peace brought about by the heathen, who rage against the Anointed of God. We must take note, for they are raging now. By craft and scheming the wicked world pretends to have become Christian and claims that all the religions of the world are equal, so that all should be able happily to coexist in one world empire. The church that preaches the atoning blood of Christ and practices her Christianity shall have no place in the kingdom of the Antichrist. Jesus said, "They have hated me, they will also hate you. A servant is not greater than his lord."

But positively, our joy is that God is sovereign. He is the mighty One who has already set His King upon Zion's hill. Christ is Lord of all. Let those who walk in darkness, who vainly imagine that the world shall become Christianized, who strive day and night for this kingdom of man, hear the word of the Lord, as He breathes in His hot wrath, "I have set my King upon my holy hill."

This means that the wicked shall fail; they shall be destroyed forever by the rod of iron. To them Jehovah will say, "Depart from me, I never knew you." For the church, this means that she shall surely be saved. Everyone whom God freely willed to be included in the decree of divine election, and for whom Christ died and who reveal themselves as anointed by Christ, shall surely be saved. Even the gates of hell shall not prevail against them. They shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, for all things work together for good to them that love God.

As we once again celebrate the birth of Christ, what greater joy could we have. 

# Namibia: Two Books, Two Believers, and Six Small Churches

This editorial is the story of a delegation from the PRCA's Contact Committee, two books from the Reformed Free Publishing Association (RFPA), two Reformed believers (husband and wife) who zealously witness to their business clients, and how these all intersect in six small churches in the desert country of Namibia, Africa (which to most Americans is still the "Dark Continent.")

The story is an editorial because it is more than the story of a fascinating trip in a beautiful land teeming with wild animals. The story is a report of a denomination seeking out other true churches in the world, in obedience to Jesus Christ, in order to show both the unity and catholicity of the church. The Protestant Reformed Churches believe that this is their sacred duty. The Constitution of the Contact Committee (the official name is the *Committee for Contact with Other Churches*) expresses the PRC's conviction that "it is their sacred duty to manifest the true unity and catholicity of the church on earth in as far as that is possible, not only in their denominational fellowship but also in conjunction with all churches which have obtained like precious faith with us, both domestic and foreign." (See the sidebar for the entire Constitution that governs our work.)

When Professor Russell Dykstra and the undersigned ("Oom Russell" and "Oom Barry" to the Namibians) travelled to Namibia in June and July, 2010, it was in response to an official request from six small and scattered churches there in a relatively large Reformed denomination. These six churches have withdrawn from what they judge to be an apostatizing classis in their departing denomination, and have joined a more conservative classis in South Africa, the country bordering theirs to the south and east—in the same denomination. After some deliberation and some months of informal contacts, these churches wrote to the Contact Committee: "We therefore ask the PRCA to...send delegates to our churches to discuss the following issues..." Then followed not only a list of grievances regarding doctrinal and liturgical departure in their classis and denomination, but a heartwarming statement of "our common confession and calling for closer ties on the basis of that confession, Heidelberg Catechism Lord's Day 21." What attracted these churches to the PRCA, in addition to the *official* confession of the PRCA, was "the testimony we have from all of the literature and pamphlets of the PRCA, sent to us by certain members of the PRCA..."

In response, the Contact Committee commissioned us to spend three weeks in Namibia to determine what

## Constitution of the Committee for Contact with Other Churches

### Preamble

The Protestant Reformed Churches in America, in obedience to Scripture as interpreted in our three forms of unity, confess that there is one holy, catholic church. They believe, further, that it is their sacred duty to manifest the true unity and catholicity of the church on earth in as far as that is possible, not only in their denominational fellowship but also in conjunction with all churches which have obtained like precious faith with us, both domestic and foreign.

With a view to the achievement of this calling, the synod shall maintain a Committee for Contact with Other Churches; and for said committee the following constitution is hereby ordained and established.

### Constitution

#### I. Name

This committee shall be called "Committee for Contact with Other Churches."

#### II. Constituency and Tenure of Service

This committee shall be composed of eight members: three elders, three ministers, and two professors. The committee shall be elected by synod for a term of three years and are eligible for re-election. Vacancies which occur between synods shall be filled by the next succeeding annual synod.

#### III. Functionaries

At its first meeting after the annual synod, the committee shall choose from its membership a president, a vice-president, a secretary, and a vice-secretary, who shall carry out the usual functions of such officers.

#### IV. Principles

In negotiating and arriving at any official relationships with other churches, the following principles shall be determinative for the committee:

A. In general, Holy Scripture, together with the subordinate standards of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America.

B. Specifically, the Heidelberg Catechism, Question and Answer 54; the Belgic Confession of Faith, Articles 27-29; the Church Order of the Protestant Reformed Churches, Article 85.

## V. General Mandate

In laboring toward the establishment of official relationships with other denominations, the committee shall observe the following guidelines:

A. A full official relationship with other domestic churches (i.e., in the United States and Canada) would imply organic union. Less complete ties may be established as circumstances may require and indicate.

B. A full sister-church relationship with foreign churches implies:

1. Mutual acknowledgment of offices, so that ministers of sister churches are allowed preaching privileges in one another's congregations and are eligible to be called by congregations in sister churches. However, if ministers from a sister church who have not met the requirements for candidacy in the Protestant Reformed Churches in America accept a call from a Protestant Reformed congregation, they shall submit to an examination by the classis in which the congregation resides, which examination shall also receive the approval of the synodical deputies from the neighboring classis.

2. Mutual acknowledgment of membership attests.

3. The delegation and reception of delegates to the broadest assemblies of such sister churches.

4. Taking heed to one another's life as churches; constantly acquainting one another with decisions of their broadest assemblies; mutual decisions as to revisions of and additions to the creeds, the Church Order, and liturgical forms.

Such a full sister-church relation shall be established only with those foreign churches of whom we are assured not only that they accept the Reformed standards\* as their basis, but that they indeed maintain them in their ecclesiastical life.

(\*“Reformed standards” has been interpreted by synod [Acts 1985, Art. 23] to include the Westminster Confession and Catechisms.)

C. Corresponding Relationships with Other Churches.

1. Where significant and broad agreement exists between the Protestant Reformed Churches and other churches, and yet differences are important enough to preclude a sister-church relationship, a corresponding relationship may be established.

- a. These relationships may

may be the possibility for ecclesiastical relations. Although one visit is not sufficient to make such a determination, what the delegates heard and witnessed was most encouraging. A small group of believers is determined to maintain the Reformed *faith* embodied in the Three Forms of Unity, Reformed *liturgy* as we know it, and Reformed *church government* according to the Church Order of Dordt (indeed, the very same Church Order that the PRCA uses). This certainly is a good start for seeking proper ecclesiastical contacts.



On June 17, after a nine-hour flight from Washington DC to Africa's northwest coast (Dakar in Senegal), it took another *nine* hours to get to Johannesburg in South Africa, so massive is the continent. South Africa is the southernmost *country* in the continent of Africa.

June is winter in the southern hemisphere, and the Antarctic cold was pushing up into these otherwise moderate climes. We spent three cold days in Pretoria, South Africa's capital, warmed by the hospitality of both old and new friends who asked us to stay a few days with them and give public lectures. Saturday morning Prof. Dykstra lectured on the doctrine of the covenant, and I on Sunday night on the doctrine of common grace, to two very interested audiences. This short stay in South Africa was an unexpected bonus, and the contacts made there may be as promising as those in Namibia.

Because Namibia was our goal, early Monday morning we left Johannesburg and flew north and west about 800 miles to Windhoek, Namibia's capital. Windhoek's airport is some 30 miles outside the city in the “high desert,” so our plane landed in a place as barren

and desolate, but as strikingly beautiful as any in the southwest United States. It was also much warmer than South Africa—sunny and comfortable for three weeks.

The six churches in Namibia have only two ministers, and one of them, Rev. Niel Prinsloo, met us at the airport. He immediately put us at ease with his fluent English—accented, but fluent. Even though English is Namibia's official language, the daily language of most of the people we met is Afrikaans, a language very similar to Dutch. But almost all of them are able to communicate well in English, which they graciously did for us. Afrikaans is similar to Dutch because the Reformed folks in Africa have Dutch heritage, both nationally and religiously. In the same era when our Reformed forefathers emigrated from Holland to North America, they also emigrated to South Africa, settling there and establishing Reformed churches already in the 1600s, shortly after the Synod of Dordt. This explains their language, so similar to Dutch. It explains their Reformed heritage, which they are so determined to maintain or restore. It also explains these settlements of *white* Europeans in a country we usually think of as black.

Rev. Prinsloo serves as pastor for the three northern churches. So after lunch in Windhoek, and after picking up some of their literature for evangelism from a printer, we began our four-hour drive north to his home. During drives like this through their beautiful country we were able to have very profitable theological discussions and learn both the history of their churches and their current struggles to maintain the Reformed faith and proper worship. Interrupted at times

in our conversations by sightings of warthogs, baboons, kudus, or other bucks, we learned about their protests at broader assemblies against apostasy, their rejection by former friends and acquaintances, and other suffering for their commitment to the old paths. These discussions taught us much more than letters could do.

Among the northern churches we met with consistories, fellowshipped with families in their homes, saw the beautiful Etosha National Park, and slept in a guest room with a family's pet leopard pawing at our door. Surprising and distressing as the leopard was, most impressive and beautiful to us were the convictions of these Reformed believers, so similar to ours. Time after time our hearts leaped as we heard ministers and members quote the Reformed confessions, refer by number to articles in our Church Order of Dordt, and weep with sorrow at the departures from proper worship in their denomination.

After a week with this pastor and the saints in the three northern churches, the pastor of the three churches in the central part of the country introduced us to consistories and members all the way from the west coast (Henties Bay and Swakopmond), to the east border near Botswana, ten hours across the country. The congregation on the west coast, made up mostly of retired folk, is near the famed "Skeleton Coast," and we saw why it was named so. Many generations ago, trade ships from European nations, bound for India around the southern cape, often shipwrecked along this coast. The sailors usually survived the shipwreck, but did not survive the sand dunes and desert that reach for a hundred miles inland.

A four-hour drive inland is Windhoek, where the largest of the six churches is and where some members express hope for a Christian school. As interested as the saints were in our churches, some were nearly as interested in our Christian schools. In Windhoek we had our lengthy and semi-official meetings with representatives of the churches. We lectured on and discussed at length four major themes: the history of the PRCA, common grace, the covenant of grace, and Reformed worship. In this way, the leaders of the churches could learn of the PRCA, and we could get to know them as they responded to our speeches. In the next editorial I will explain more about these discussions. Here I can say, generalizing only slightly, that they were keenly interested in our *history*, intrigued by our explanation of *common grace*, thrilled by our exposition of Reformed *worship* (one of their major concerns in their denomination, following Calvin, who said that proper worship had priority even over orthodoxy), and surprised by our testimony about the *unconditional covenant*—surprised, because formerly they had heard only caricatures of the PRC's rejection of the conditional covenant.



But we take the last leg of our journey into the Kalahari Desert to the "two believers" who are the origin of our contacts in Namibia. Four hours south and east of Windhoek is the little town of Aranos, one of the many very small towns in the middle of this vast desert land. Namibia is the second most sparsely populated country in the world, like four or five Wyomings or South Dakotas joined together. Most of the cities are like

be arranged as circumstances may dictate provided:

1) That whatever relationship be arranged, the stipulations thereof shall be clear and unambiguous.

2) That no merely formal ties shall be established, but only such relationships as will serve the actual welfare of the churches involved and the manifestations of our unity in the Reformed faith.

b. These relationships shall be established only with those churches that not only accept the Reformed standards, or confessions consistent with the Reformed standards, but also maintain them in their ecclesiastical life.

2. That activities of corresponding relationships shall consist of:

a. Exchange of information which shall enable the churches to become better acquainted with each other. This exchange shall be implemented in the following ways:

1) Exchange of observers at the broadest assemblies, if it is feasible.

2) Exchange of minutes of the broadest assemblies.

3) Exchange of denominational yearbooks and/or church directories.

4) Exchange of the most recently published edition of the Church Order or Constitutions.

5) Exchange of the most recently published edition of the confessional standards.

6) Exchange of songbooks used in public worship, including the forms used for various occasions in public worship.

b. Discussion by means of correspondence, committee visits, and conferences in order to confirm and strengthen our unity in Christ.

D. No relationship shall be considered as established until it has been approved by the broadest assemblies of the churches concerned.

#### VI. Meetings

The committee shall meet as often as its labors require. The time and place of meetings shall be decided by the committee; however, any member who desires a special meeting may ask the secretary to call such a meeting, and this request shall be honored.

The committee shall be required to meet twice annually: once as soon as possible after the annual synod, for the purpose of reorganization; and once in sufficient time before the annual synod

to prepare and adopt an annual report for inclusion in the synodical agenda.

VII. Task

A. The committee shall carry out all mandates of synod with respect to the investigation and negotiation of contacts with other churches.

B. The committee shall study the advisability of seeking official relationships with other churches, even without any specific synodical mandate; and when it deems this proper, it shall put forth every effort to contact such churches, in harmony with the principles and requirements set forth in this constitution.

C. The committee shall diffuse our Protestant Reformed literature to churches or groups of believers with whom we have no official relationship either on a limited or a full basis, for which financial provision shall be made by synod.

D. This committee shall serve synod when that body shall deem it necessary:

1. to negotiate a conference of delegates of our own and other churches in the interests of seeking, establishing, and maintaining official ties with other churches.

2. to implement projects of mutual interest, such as translations of literature, publication of literature, preaching tours, visiting professorships, etc. for the edification and instruction of sister churches and other churches should they request this.

E. The committee shall present a complete report of all its activities to the annual synod, and it shall advise synod on all matters reported on or referred to it.

F. The committee shall have the right to call to the attention of consistories any emergency financial needs toward which the benevolence of our congregations should be directed.

G. The committee shall annually submit a proposed budget to the synod. No money not specifically budgeted shall be expended by the committee without consultation with and approval of the synodical Finance Committee.

(Cf. Acts of Synod, 1972, Art. 157, Suppl. XXXVII; Acts of Synod, 1980, Art. 57; Acts of Synod, 1987, Arts. 25, 40; Acts of Synod, 1998, Art. 38; Acts of Synod, 1999, Art. 26; Acts of Synod, 2000, Arts. 20, 30; Acts of Synod, 2001, Art. 37; Acts of Synod, 2009, Art. 15.)

Isabel or Forbes, and Aranos is only a little larger than that. One grocery store, gas station, post office, and a small community hospital that fifteen years ago did not have hot water. Eighty miles east of Aranos, over gravel roads and sand dunes, live Michael and Tienie Duvenhage with their three children.

Michael is an elder in the Aranos congregation. By occupation, he is a sheep farmer who supplements his income by guiding big game hunts, as many of the game animals of Africa roam freely on his land. For the last part of our trip, we stayed with these believers, and came to know and love this very kind and gracious Christian family.

Determined as they are to witness their faith to their hunting clients, the Duvenhages constructed a fine website (find their great site by searching “uitspan hunting”) that not only advertises their professional hunting services, but also gives glory to the wisdom and beauty of God in creation. They also asked a minister in South Africa, Rev. Slabbert LeCornu, for a recommendation of a book to give as a gift to their hunting clients. Rev. LeCornu recommended the RFPA’s *Doctrine According to Godliness*, by Rev. Ronald Hanko—one of the “two books.”

Then, in the providence of God, one of the Duvenhage’s contacts “happened” to live next door to a Protestant Reformed family in Hudsonville, MI. Conversations with this hunter led the Protestant Reformed mother to contact the Duvenhages. And eventually, to make a long story short, Internet friendships were established and boxes of RFPA books and pamphlets were sent to these new friends in the Kalahari. These determined Reformed believers spread the word about the PRCA to the other churches in their fellowship, and

last spring these churches sent the invitation that brought us to Namibia.



The value of good Reformed literature, the importance of personal Christian witness, and the sovereign providence of God directing both of them, are wonderful to behold. Next time I want to evaluate the contact, summarize the delegation’s official report to the Contact Committee, and point out what PRCA members can do to promote these efforts. But because this issue of the *SB* is the last before year’s end, and some believers are looking at tax deductible donations, I may briefly mention a need here. Rev. Prinsloo and Rev. LeCornu are beginning the process of translating into Afrikaans and publishing both *Doctrine According to Godliness*, and *Saved by Grace*, (Prof. Ronald Cammenga’s and Rev. Ronald Hanko’s exposition of the five points of Calvinism—the second of the “two books” I mentioned). The Afrikaaners need literature in their own language. According to their judgment, *Doctrine According to Godliness* would be most helpful to their witness of the Reformed faith. And *Saved by Grace* was most influential to leading Rev. LeCornu to the doctrines of grace.

If a reader has interest in donating to this cause of translating, please write the secretary of our Contact Committee, Rev. Garrett Eriks, at [garryeriks@sbcglobal.net](mailto:garryeriks@sbcglobal.net) 

**Kingdom language**

Thank you very much for your recent editorials regarding the pressures that our young people face in Christian colleges. We especially appreciated the proper Reformed response to their kingdom language and ideology. The pressures faced by our young people in these institutions are overwhelming. (It is our intention that

when our children attend college, they will attend one near home, so that we can “debrief” them often!) Our hope is that the *SB* will periodically address these issues in future years.

*Philip and Karen Van Baren*  
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## The Book of Ecclesiastes: Introduction (2)

**W**e considered last time the authorship of the book of Ecclesiastes. Before turning to an exposition of the book, we do well to consider its central theme. That theme is the vanity of man’s life in a fallen and sinful world. This theme, however, must be approached from a certain point of view. God is sovereign in the life of men. That sovereignty extends to the smallest details of life, so that not a hair falls from our head or a sparrow to the ground but by the will of God, as Jesus taught us. The vanity of man’s life is due to sin and God’s judgment upon it. God in His judgment has subjected the life of the creation and therefore also of man to vanity, Romans 8:20. Although hidden from us in the day-to-day affairs of life, God is realizing His counsel and purpose. Life has value and meaning in the light of that purpose, which is known by faith in Christ.

The writer of Ecclesiastes is not an unbelieving skeptic but a believing child of God who walks in God’s fear and whose treasure is in heaven. Indeed one of the purposes of the book is to guard us from the folly of a world that seeks its life and happiness here below. As the book is written by Solomon at the end of his life, there is indirectly a testimony to his sorrow for his own sin. This is

not expressed directly, as David’s confession in Psalms 32 and 51, for that is not the purpose of the book. Rather, like David, he would guide us with his eye, Psalm 32:8, in the way of wisdom.

By way of introduction, therefore, it is well to consider what is meant by this idea of vanity, which stands at the heart of the book. Rev. G. Ophoff, in Volume 22 of the *Standard Bearer*, gives an able treatment of this theme and a valuable synopsis of the book as a whole. Without apologies, we quote his article in full.

—TCM

**“Vanity of vanities”**

We turn to the second verse of the first chapter of Ecclesiastes and read, “Vanity of vanities, saith the preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity.”

Doubtless, no other book in the Bible has suffered so many misapprehensions from a theological point of view, as the book of Ecclesiastes. It has been accused of many contradictions within itself, of being inconsistent, and of lacking unity and coherence on account of absence of plan and connection. The inspiration of its contents has been attacked. Very early this was doubted on account of the supposed moral levity and skepticism of its teachings—a skepticism that was said to extend to a perfect despairing of all order and aim in human life. But these accusations are untrue. The book is consistent. It has plan and connection indeed. There is not a single con-

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tradition to be found in it. If there were, it could form no part of the infallible Scriptures. It was composed not in unbelief, but in a flowering faith. Its doctrine is pure, as only the doctrine of the infallible Word of God can be pure. And this book, too, holds forth to God's believing people the only comfort in life and death. The truth of these statements is borne out by the sequence of this Bible book.

The fundamental thought of the book is set forth in its topic sentence, the sentence with which the preacher begins his discourse and which reads: "Vanity of vanities; all is vanity." This exclamation appears no fewer than twenty times, and is a paraphrase of the superlative idea, "extreme vanity." What may be the thought conveyed by this expression? Not, as some have imagined, that this world is in a state of continual flux, that, as Greek philosophy at one time affirmed, change, movement, is the lord of the universe, even so completely as to exclude the possibility of an unchanging substratum. Nor would it be correct to place in the room of the term vanity the word sinful, and read, "sinful, sinful, all is sinful." For the sacred writer views the things included in the "all" of the expression "all is vanity" from the angle, not of their sinfulness, but of their vanity. The meaning of the exclamation is precisely that all is vanity, that is, empty, idle, useless, futile.

But there is this question: What does the sacred writer, the preacher, include in this "all"? The answer is contained in the following verse. It reads, "What profit hath a man of all his labors which he taketh under the sun?" Thus the "all" in the exclamation "all is vanity" includes all the labor that man taketh under the sun, the whole of his daily pursuits, all his engagements of the hour, of the day, of whatever character and in whatever sphere of life, the sum and total of all man's occupations and strivings in whatever field of human endeavor, in the field of industry, science and invention, economics, philosophy, art and learning; it makes no difference, absolutely no difference, all is vanity, idle, futile.

This is truly an amazing appraisal, is it not, of this natural, earthy life under the sun, as man in this present dispensation of the world lives it. It is terrifying, is this appraisal, in its depreciation and disparagement of all human endeavor. It provokes the question, "Is it true?" Taking cognizance of the grounds upon which the preacher bases his appraisal of all the labor that man taketh under

the sun, we shall have to admit, whether we like to or not, that it is true. Let us have regard, then, to the preacher's grounds for this amazing appraisal of life encountered in this Bible book. We can only touch upon these grounds. There is no time for delineation.

The first of these grounds is contained in the verse last quoted, "What profit hath a man from all his labor, which he taketh under the sun?" The question is rhetorical, and is thus equivalent in meaning to the positive statement: "Man hath absolutely no profit whatever from all his labors which he taketh under the sun." All his labors are profitless, gainless, and on this account vain, empty, futile. To be sure, the reaction of sinful flesh on hearing this is to decry the statement as absurdly untrue. But let us hearken unto the Preacher and be instructed.

Says the preacher: All man's labor is profitless, because one generation passeth away, and another generation cometh, and, such is the thought conveyed, with the generation that passeth, there passeth also its works, its achievements, its learning, its systems of thought, the thing that men call civilization. All wax old and vanish away and the only thing that abideth is the earth. It all waxes old, becomes outmoded, and thus useless, and it vanishes away, to be replaced, with the coming of the new generation, by new works, new systems of thought, a new civilization, which again in turn waxes old and disappears with the waxing old and disappearance of the generation that so recently came. Wrote the columnist Ray Tucker in his daily column of yesterday: "The arrival of the atomic bomb struck the braided gentlemen of the American Navy in their solar plexus, for it may mean the eventual abolition of such craft as battleships, cruisers, and destroyers. The fleet of the future may consist mainly of submarines and aircraft carriers."

Indeed, the new waxes old and is forgotten, but, mark you, the new is but the old that again reappears in a new dress. It is not essentially new. Thus it is true, what the preacher says in the sequence of his discourse, "The thing that has been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun.... There is no remembrance of former things; neither shall there be any remembrance of things that are to come with those that shall come after" (Eccl. 1:9, 11). It all adds up to this: All man's labor is profitless indeed and therefore vain. For in all his endeav-

ors man reaches no lasting goal, attains no enduring purpose; the new is old; man goes in circles. He is chained to a treadmill. In the language of the preacher, Like the sun, he riseth, goeth down, and hasteneth to his place where he arose. Man is like the wind, which goeth toward the north, turneth about to the north. It whirleth continually and returneth again according to his circuits. Man is like the rivers that run into the sea without ever filling it, and that return again unto the place whence they come. And so full of labor is man, that no tongue can utter it (Eccl. 1:5-8). Such is man's plight in all his labor that he taketh under the sun. Wherefore his labor is profitless and on this account vain.

Secondly, man's labor is profitless and therefore vain because, says the preacher, in all his striving he does not make straight and he cannot make straight, and he cannot even will to make straight, and he may not make straight, the crooked.

There is, then, the crooked. Due to the entrance of sin into the world, and because the curse of God stalks the earth and permeates man's existence, changing his day into night, life, this natural, earthy life, is crooked, disarranged, abnormal, dislocated, hectic, says the preacher. Wickedness, he saw, was in the place of judgment, and iniquity in the place of righteousness. Then, says he, there are all the oppressions that are done under the sun, and the tears of such as are oppressed and have no comforter. Verily, the straight has been made crooked; and, mark you, God made it so, says the preacher. Can man, then, by all his labors, by all his effort, however mighty, make straight the crooked?

Let us state the matter otherwise. Assuredly, the only cure, if there is any, but there is none for the men of man's world, I say, the only cure for oppression, the only cure for wickedness in the place of judgment, and iniquity in the place of righteousness, the only cure for war between the nations, the only cure for graft in government, for corruption in politics, and for dishonesty in business, the only cure for the class struggle between capital and labor, the only cure for the evil of divorce, juvenile delinquency, and crime in general, I say, the only cure for all these evils is the true fear of God in men's hearts. But can man administer this cure? Can he remove his stony heart by giving himself a heart of flesh? Can he establish within him and within his fellowman, God's heavenly kingdom

and inscribe its laws upon the table of men's hearts? Can he cleanse a single depraved human from his native corruption, and create in him a new spirit? Can he shed abroad in men's hearts the love of God? In a word, can man make straight the crooked?

If he can, why doesn't he? He cannot. He will not. Thus war will continue as long as the earth endureth, for God will make crooked the straight. Craft in government, corruption in politics, dishonesty in business, all continue as long as the earth endureth. Crime will continue as long as the earth endureth.

Well, then, if man stands utterly powerless over against all these evils, if by all his efforts he can bring in no improvement, what real profit hath man from all his labors that he taketh under the sun? None whatever, says the preacher. So far is man from having profit from all his labors, that all they yield him is pain and vexation of spirit. We quote him, "Then I looked upon all the works that my hand had wrought, and on the labor that I have labored to do: and, behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun" (Eccl. 2:11). Man's labor that he taketh under the sun yields him no true happiness. After having done all, the great void in his life, in his spirit, is still there. Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.

But this is not all. Arriving at the end of his vain days on earth, vain man dies. Says the preacher, "I said in mine heart concerning the estate of the sons of men, that God might manifest them, and that they might see that they themselves are beasts. For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath; so that a man hath no preeminence above a beast; for all is vanity. All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again" (Eccl. 3:18-20). This is the prospect that vain man faces. And, says the preacher, man must then leave his labor, with all its earthy gains, unto the man that shall be after him. And who knoweth whether he shall be a wise man or a fool? (Eccl. 2:18, 19). Vanity of vanities, all is vanity. That which befalleth the sons of men befalleth the beast. All turn to dust again (Eccl. 3:19, 20).

No, this is not the babbling of an unbeliever, denying life after death and the resurrection of the dead, but the inspired teachings of a preacher of God. Mark the

statement, “That God might manifest them, and that they might see that they themselves are beasts.” This certainly is not the prating of a skeptic but the exclamation of surprise and indignation of a true believer, struck with amazement and sorely vexed by the stupid blindness of the natural man, who will not, in his vain estate, seek after God, but who insists that this estate is the only and highest good, and that it will abide forever.

But let us understand the preacher well. Certainly it is not gnostic heresy and anabaptist philosophy with which we deal in this Bible book. It is not grace that is being opposed here to nature, as if nature, man’s earthy estate, all his labor that he taketh under the sun, were, as such, depraved, sinful as to its essence, and therefore contemptible. To the contrary, says the preacher, there is nothing better for a man than that he should eat and drink and that he should make his soul enjoy good in his labors. This also I saw that it was from the hand of God. For God giveth to a man what is good in his sight, but to the sinner he giveth travail. Eating and drinking, buying and selling, marital and family life, as such, are not corrupt. Only as the labor of fallen and depraved man is it wicked, indeed thoroughly so.

Nor is it the teaching of the preacher further, that, whereas all man’s labor that he taketh under the sun is vain, the thing for the believer to do is to give up his labor and retreat into monastic seclusion. Though all man’s labor under the sun is vanity, man must labor, he must travail. It is his calling, his duty. Says the preacher, What-

soever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest (Eccl. 9:10). Man must labor. It is that, says the preacher, which God hath given the sons of men to do, to be exercised thereby.

This, says the preacher, is the conclusion of the matter, “Fear God and keep his commandments,” or, in the language of the New Testament Scriptures, “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and through Him, and in His Father the triune Jehovah, walk all the days of thy vanity as a child of the light.” This God’s people, by God’s mercy, and by the power of His grace, and under the constraint of a faith that is His gift, also do, in principle. And so all things, thus also this vain earthy estate, and all the crooked that characterizes this estate, work together for good to them. From the vain estate of this sinful earthy life, they even now are in principle delivered.

And their works shall follow them. When the house of this their earthy tabernacle shall be dissolved, and with it their vain earthy estate shall be dissolved, they receive from God a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens, a house in which nothing is crooked, but in which everything is straight with the straightness of a heavenly perfection, a house in which they face always, not life through the grave, for then they shall have passed through the grave, but just life, life everlasting, life with God in His sanctuary, where they shall see God with heavenly eyes and thus see Him as He is, and where He shall satisfy them with His likeness. —G. M. O. 

## ALL AROUND US

## REV. NATHAN LANGERAK

### The URC Report on Federal Vision (2)

In the first article, I introduced an analysis of the recent synodical report of the United Reformed Churches (URC) on the federal vision heresy. The 2010 Synod of the URC received the report for information and adopted the fifteen doctrinal recommendations of the report.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The report can be found at [https://www.urcna.org/sysfiles/site\\_uploads/pubs/pub5243\\_2.pdf](https://www.urcna.org/sysfiles/site_uploads/pubs/pub5243_2.pdf).

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I said that the report is fatally flawed and dangerous because, while the report declares certain federal vision teachings to be contrary to the Reformed creeds, it leaves untouched the vicious root of that heresy in the federal vision’s doctrine of the covenant.

What the report actually says about the federal vision’s doctrine of the covenant is a clumsy dance around the issues.

In this dance the federal vision is described as a movement that defines the covenant as “salvation,” denies that the covenant is merely “a means whereby God accomplishes...salvation,” emphasizes “the saving significance

of the covenant,” and teaches that “all covenant members without exception” receive the promise.

At the same time the federal vision is described as teaching that every baptized child is savingly united to Christ, and that many fall away from the covenant and are not saved.

In this dance the covenant doctrine of the federal vision, which the report identified as the cause of its error with regard to justification, is not actually condemned, but only cautiously described.

The URC report describes the federal vision’s definition of the covenant and its emphasis on the “saving significance of the covenant”:

In the writings of proponents of the FV, the saving significance of the covenant that God establishes with His people is strongly emphasized. The covenant relationship, especially the covenant of grace that God initiates between Himself and believers and their children, is not simply a means whereby God accomplishes the salvation of fallen sinners. The covenant relationship itself is a saving relationship, which unites believers and their children in true communion and fellowship with God through Jesus Christ, the Mediator of the covenant of grace. The covenant relationship is salvation, and all who are members of the covenant people of God—believers together with their children and all whom God calls into membership in the church of Jesus Christ—enjoy all the benefits of saving union with Christ.

According to the report, then, the definition of the covenant as a “saving relationship, which unites believers and their children in true communion and fellowship with God through Jesus Christ” is evidently problematic because the definition is closely tied with the federal vision’s “strongly” emphasizing the “saving significance of the covenant.”

But the emphasis on the saving significance of the covenant is not the problem. The truth of the covenant is that it is not “simply a means whereby God accomplishes the salvation of fallen sinners,” but that “the covenant itself is a saving relationship, which unites believers and their children in true communion and fellowship with God through Jesus Christ.”

The covenant is salvation itself.

The logical conclusion of this definition of the cov-

enant is that the saving significance of this covenant must, therefore, be strongly emphasized. All those who are joined to that covenant are saved—certainly saved.

The Scriptures emphasize the saving significance of the covenant: “And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: For this *is* my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins” (Rom. 11: 26–27).

The creeds emphasize the saving significance of the covenant: “The synod rejects the errors of those...who teach that the new covenant of grace...does not herein consist that we by faith...are justified before God and saved.”<sup>2</sup>

The Reformed form for baptism emphasizes the saving significance of the covenant: “God the Father witnesseth and sealeth unto us that He doth make an eternal covenant of grace with us, and adopts us for His children and heirs, and therefore will provide us with every good thing, and avert all evil or turn it to our profit.”<sup>3</sup>

The definition of the covenant as “salvation” is not the error of the federal vision, nor is the federal vision error that such a definition would logically demand that the saving significance of the covenant be emphasized.

The error of the federal vision heresy is that, while defining the covenant as communion with God in Jesus Christ, it does *not* teach *nor* emphasize the saving significance of that covenant, but emphasizes the conditionality of that covenantal relationship.

The federal vision teaches that every single baptized child receives the promise of the covenant, is incorporated into Jesus Christ, and is a member of his covenant.

*We affirm* that God formally unites a person to Christ and to His covenant people through baptism into the triune Name, and that this baptism obligates such a one to lifelong covenant loyalty to the triune God, each baptized person repenting of his sins and trusting in Christ alone for his salvation.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Canons of Dordt, 2, Rejection of Errors, 4, in *The Confessions and the Church Order of the Protestant Reformed Churches*, 165.

<sup>3</sup> Form for the Administration of Baptism, in *The Confessions and the Church Order of the Protestant Reformed Churches*, 258.

<sup>4</sup> [http://www.federal-vision.com/resources/joint\\_FV\\_Statement.pdf](http://www.federal-vision.com/resources/joint_FV_Statement.pdf), 5.

By baptism God “formally unites” a person to Christ and to His covenantal people. Every single baptized child is a covenantal child, has received the promise of the covenant, and is a member of the covenant.

Because of that general, conditional promise, the federal vision teaches a conditional covenant. The federal vision makes no secret of the fact that it teaches a conditional covenant. Indeed, in defense of their various heresies on justification, the sacraments, and the church, the proponents of the federal vision simply retreat to the protection of the conditional covenant, which is the covenantal doctrine also of many of its critics, as Douglas Wilson, a popular proponent of the federal vision, has said.<sup>5</sup>

Logically, then, the federal vision emphasizes the conditionality of that covenantal promise and of that covenantal relationship, and that many who are baptized and are members of the covenant can fall away.

*We affirm* that apostasy is a terrifying reality for many baptized Christians. All who are baptized into the triune Name are united with Christ in His covenantal life, and so those who fall from that position of grace are indeed falling from grace. The branches that are cut away from Christ are genuinely cut away from someone, cut out of a living covenant body. The connection that an apostate had to Christ was not *merely* external.<sup>6</sup>

All those who are baptized are united with Christ in His covenantal life. All the baptized receive grace, and when they fall away they fall away from grace and from the covenant. If all baptized children without distinction receive the promise from God, then that some stay in the covenant and are saved is because of what the children do with the promise, and that some fall away is because of what they did not do with the promise.

That is an emphasis on the conditionality of the covenant. That is an emphasis on the general promise for all the baptized children. That is an emphasis on the ineffectiveness of the promise of God. That is an emphasis that makes the word of God—His promise—of none effect. It is an emphasis on the hopelessness of salvation in the covenant because it depends upon the child’s fulfilling conditions.

<sup>5</sup> [http://www.dougwils.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=62:As-Clear-As-I-Can](http://www.dougwils.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=62:As-Clear-As-I-Can).

<sup>6</sup> [http://www.federal-vision.com/resources/joint\\_FV\\_Statement.pdf](http://www.federal-vision.com/resources/joint_FV_Statement.pdf), 7.

But that is *not* an emphasis on the “saving significance of the covenant.”

The matter of a general promise in the covenant to every baptized child is exactly the issue in the federal vision controversy. If the promise is to every baptized child, there is no “saving significance of the covenant” to emphasize, because the covenant is dependent on the child. If one teaches that the promise of the covenant is to every baptized child—offered or otherwise—the logical conclusion of that doctrine of the covenant is the heresy of the federal vision.

Regardless of how the federal vision defines the covenant, the federal vision denies all of the doctrines of grace, because it teaches that every baptized child receives the promise of the covenant and is a member of the covenant. All this heresy comes from the rotten root of the conditional covenant.

The report, though, does not condemn the federal vision’s teaching of a conditional covenant with a conditional promise.

Though FV writers maintain that all covenant members are elect in Christ, they also want to stress the *conditionality* of the covenant relationship. If those with whom God covenants do not meet the conditions of the covenant, namely, persevering faith and repentance, they can lose their salvation and become subject to God’s covenant wrath. Since the covenant obliges believers and their children to embrace the promise of the gospel in the way of a living faith, it is possible that some covenant members can lose the grace of communion with God in Christ that was once theirs. The problem with the FV formulation at this point is not that it emphasizes the “conditionality” of the covenant relationship. It is undoubtedly true that the covenant promise demands the response of faith and repentance. The Reformed Confessions consistently maintain that believers and their children are ordinarily saved in Christ in the way of faith and repentance.

It is no problem in the URC report that the federal vision emphasizes the conditionality of the covenantal relationship. In fact they maintain that the Reformed confessions teach this conditionality, which the URC report identifies as being “saved in Christ in the way of faith and repentance.”

But herein is the problem. Conditions in the covenant

are not the same as “in the way of” and being saved “in the way of faith and repentance.”

The federal vision’s use of the word *conditions* ought to make the term itself suspect, as the Arminians’ use of the term *conditions* made it suspect for the fathers at Dordt. Dordt used the term to describe the Arminian error and condemned that error.<sup>7</sup>

The federal vision, as the Arminians, teaches that we are saved because of our faith and because of the works that faith produces. This is what the men of the federal vision mean by conditions. Salvation is not “in the way of” but “because of.”

Teaching a conditional covenant and emphasizing conditions is not laudable, but censurable. It is essentially importing Arminianism into the covenant of grace and denying what Dordt taught about salvation.

The report comes close to the heart of the federal vision error when it exposes the federal vision as teaching that “all covenant members” receive the promise because they reject the historical Reformed distinction between those “under the administration of the covenant” and those who enjoy “communion of life.”

We have had occasion at several points to observe the claim of FV authors that *all* covenant members without exception—believers and their children who are recipients of the covenant promise and the accompanying sacrament of covenant incorporation, baptism—enjoy a full and saving union with Christ. Though Reformed theologians have historically distinguished between those who are “under the administration” of the covenant of grace and those who truly enjoy the saving “communion of life” that the covenant communicates, we have had occasion to see how FV proponents often reject as inappropriate any such distinction between covenant members.

Regardless of what one calls the distinction, there must be a distinction made whenever one is talking about the covenant of grace.

The report, however, fails to reckon accurately with the federal vision’s denial of the crucial, historical Reformed distinction between being “under the administra-

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<sup>7</sup> See Canons of Dordt, 1, Rejection of Errors, 3 and 5; 2, Rejection of Errors, 3; 5, Rejection of Errors, 1, in *The Confessions and the Church Order of the Protestant Reformed Churches*, 160–61, 165, 176.

tion of the covenant,” and enjoying “communion of life,” a distinction that is more clearly stated as being “in the sphere of the covenant,” and being “in the covenant.”

The historical Reformed distinction is not between “covenant members,” as the report indicates: “FV proponents often reject as inappropriate any such distinction between covenant members.” This definition of the distinction leaves its proponents in an odd position. Would they say that there are “covenant members” who do not receive the promise? What else could it possibly mean to be a member of God’s covenant than to receive the promise?

Rather, the Reformed distinction is between baptized children of believers. There are baptized children of believers who are in the covenant and thus members of the covenant. There are also baptized children of believers who are not in the covenant and thus not members of the covenant, but only in the sphere of the covenant.

The federal vision denies this. The federal vision teaches that every single baptized child receives the promise, is incorporated into Jesus Christ, and is a member of His covenant.

The issue is not whether “all covenant members without exception” receive the promise. The issue is not whether “all covenant members...enjoy full and saving union with Christ.”

The issue is *who* are “covenant members”? Who are the “covenant members” that “without exception” receive the promise and “enjoy a full and saving union with Jesus Christ”?

The federal vision teaches that every baptized child is a member of the covenant. Logically, all who teach a universal, conditional promise in the covenant must teach that every baptized child is a member of the covenant. Logically, too, they must teach that perseverance in the covenant is the work of the baptized child, and that many who receive the promise of the covenant fall away into perdition.

The choice in the controversy with the federal vision is between every baptized child being a member of the covenant and the elect alone being members.

But in the URC report, saying “the elect alone” are members of the covenant seems to be a problem.

To that we turn next time. 

## The Creation and Fall of Man (1)

## Adam: God's Son Created in His Image

**W**ith this article we begin a new section on the creation and fall of man. We have talked about God's act of creating all things. Now we take a look at that special creature that God made in His own image to represent Him and to rule over His kingdom.

In this section we will be considering especially what it meant that Adam was created in God's image, and what happened to man when he fell into sin. There is much debate about this today. Many redefine what it means to bear God's image. They do so in an effort to persuade people that all human beings bear God's image today. They want to maintain this because it implies that man by nature still has within him some good.

Some of the colleges that our children attend are taking advantage of the fact that many do not know what it means that man was created in the image of God. In these days of subtle deception, we and our children must be very clear on what it does mean, who bears God's image today, and what it means for God's imagebearers to exercise dominion over His creatures.

### To bear God's image is to be God's child

Man is different from the plants and animals. Unlike those creatures, man was created in the image of God.

And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness (Gen. 1:26).

God spoke within Himself before He created man. The three Persons spoke of creating man "in our image, after our likeness." What exactly does this phrase mean?

To find the answer to this question, it is good to seek another passage that speaks of a person bearing someone's image. Just a few chapters later, in Genesis 5, we read again of God creating Adam, and then we read of Adam begetting a son in his own likeness, after his image:

In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made he him.... And Adam lived an hundred and thirty years, and begat a son in his own likeness, after his image; and called his name Seth (Gen. 5:1b, 3).

Notice the reference to someone's image and likeness. Similar language is used when speaking of God creating Adam and of Adam begetting Seth. This similar language serves to point out an important relationship: If we bear someone's image, that means we are that someone's child.

That Seth bore Adam's image means that he was Adam's child. Similarly, that Adam bore God's image means that he was God's child. That is what we read also in Luke 3:38, which says that Adam's Father was God.

So to bear God's image is to be a child of God.

### Only God's children bear His image

Grasping this relationship between bearing God's image and being God's child is of crucial importance. It helps us to understand that only those born of God bear God's image today. Many say that all human beings bear the image of God. But that would mean that every human being is a child of God, which clearly is not true.

Scripture says that only some human beings are children of God. The rest are children of the devil:

In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother (I John 3:10).

Our Lord used the same language when He told some unbelievers that God was not their father:

Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do (John 8:44a).

Unbelievers are children of the devil, and bear their father's image. It is only those who are in God's Son that bear the image of God. Only they are God's children, and only they bear the image of the Father in heaven.

But in what, more specifically, does that image consist? We will consider that, Lord willing, next time. 

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*Rev. Laning is pastor of Hull Protestant Reformed Church in Hull, Iowa.*

## Go Ask Your Parents!

**Y**oung people, if you look up Proverbs 1:8; 2:1; 3:1; 4:1-5; and 7:1, you will find over and over again the call of a father to his son: “My son, listen....” These words, repeated as often as they are, might give us the impression that Solomon must keep calling his son back to him. This son might need to have his attention called back to the wisdom his father wishes to teach him. Or this son might need to be pursued by his father to turn him back to the wisdom that he must learn from his father.

You sons and daughters of the church must know your part in the wonderful transaction of wisdom set out in the whole book of Proverbs. What must your wisdom be? Your wisdom is not to go your own way until your parents get in front of you and confront you about that way in order to turn you from it. Neither is your wisdom to wait until your parents say to you, “My son!” or, “My daughter!” Your wisdom is to *go and ask your parents*.

This wisdom is part of your spiritual maturity. As you grow in the strength of youth you receive more privileges and more freedoms, but also more responsibilities. You are expected to become more responsible. That responsibility does not only mean additional chores, or that you must use the freedom you have to do good and not do evil. That responsibility also touches on the relationships that you have. You are responsible to maintain them and keep them in good shape. That responsibility is easier when it comes to relationships with your friends. How eager you are to talk to them, share with them the things that happen to you, and discuss what you think about different topics. But that responsibility is more difficult when it comes to your relationship with your parents.

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*Rev. VanderWal is pastor of Hope Protestant Reformed Church in Redlands, California.*

What makes that responsibility more difficult is that your relationship with your parents has gradually changed from the time that you were very young. As you have become older, your view of your parents has changed. No longer do you view them simply as authority figures who instruct you and expect your obedience to their instruction. No longer are you completely dependent on them for so many of your needs. You are more able to make your own decisions. You have gained more independence in your thinking and actions. You are able better to judge matters for yourself. With this growth and development, your relationship with your parents has changed. And your role in that relationship changes. You have become responsible for actively promoting a good relationship with your parents.

It is easy for you to maintain relationships with your friends, but there is temptation to put *all* your efforts into those friendships, and leave nothing for your parents. Your relationship with your parents you might neglect and take for granted. As a result, your relationship with your parents would suffer tremendous damage. So well known to your friends, you would become a stranger to your parents!

What is your relationship with your parents?

Your wisdom is not to let yourself become a stranger to your parents. Who knows you better, your friends or your parents? Whom do you wish to know you better, your friends or your parents? Whose approval and whose love do you cherish more, your friends' or your parents'?

Go ask your parents!

Why go ask your parents? Because God has given you to them and them to you. Your relationship to them is more solid and sure than any of your friendships. That relationship is of great benefit to you, and through your care for it the Lord will richly bless you. “Honor thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.” “My son, hear

the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother; For they shall be an ornament of grace unto thy head, and chains about thy neck" (Prov. 1:8, 9). "So shalt thou find favor and good understanding in the sight of God and man" (Prov. 3:4).

Your parents have been given *wisdom* by God! In God's wisdom He has determined to give you, His child, to them. He has given to them the calling to teach you His wisdom. He has given them wisdom as they read, study, and know His Word. He has given them wisdom as they have lived their lives in the light of God's Word. You honor God when you act according to His way, seeking that wisdom from your parents. See Proverbs 1:8, quoted above.

Go, ask your parents!

Your parents' wisdom is a particular wisdom. Their wisdom has been shaped and molded by their years under God's Word. The Lord has given them their wisdom through the different experiences of their lives, including their care and nurture of you. Their wisdom is especially for you. They have been prepared by God's providence especially to raise you up in wisdom and knowledge. But they also have known you your entire life. They know you as only parents can know their own children. They know you better than you know yourself.

Go, ask your parents!

Your parents have also been given *authority* to instruct you. That authority God has established in the Fifth Commandment, "Honor thy father and thy mother..." (Ex. 20:12). You honor your father and mother by going to them to ask them their opinions and judgments. You show them that you esteem them highly and that you value their thoughts. You treat them with honor and respect when you seek out their knowledge and advice. You show a delight in God and in God's gift to you of your parents by going to them and asking them.

Go ask your parents!

Show an interest in *them*. Ask them about their day. Ask them about the different projects in which they are involved. You are in a position to get to know your parents on a mutual basis. As you grow older you will find that you and your parents do have a great deal in common, far more than the same address, the same looks, and the same temperaments. You will find you have the same goals and interests, perhaps the same ways of looking at

life, the same ways of solving problems and dealing with difficulties.

Along those same lines, ask your parents if there is anything that you can do to help them. Make yourself available to them in a way that is forward instead of waiting for them to hunt you down. Show that you are completely at their disposal. Do not only ask them when there are chores to be done. Ask if you can help when they are busy in their hobby or a special project.

Ask your parents about yourself, if you dare! Ask them if there is any part of your life that needs improvement. Ask them about your clothes, your music, your appearance, your friends. Especially if you have your doubts about what is right, look for their input. If you wonder whether or not this or that friend, or even a group of friends, is good for you, ask them. Ask them about the person you're dating. Would he or she make a good husband or wife?

Ask your parents about spiritual things. Ask them to help you with your catechism homework and your Bible homework. Ask them to explain when you run across a difficult passage in your Scripture reading. When it is your turn to lead in a Bible study or after-recess discussion, be sure to get their help. Seek their advice when you see a friend going in a bad direction and ask them what you should do to help him. Ask them what they think about moral issues that come up in conversations with your friends.

You will find many benefits from asking your parents. You will find that the conflicts you might have with your parents will occur less and less and may even disappear altogether. You will notice that you will not be defensive around them. Nor will you always think they are prying into your matters. This is because you make yourself more open to them, and, as a result, the trust that they have for you grows. Your confidence in them will grow as you see the wisdom that the Lord has given them for your benefit. You will also better understand their good motives in their concern for you and your heart and walk. You will also feel less conflict and strife within yourself and more assurance. You will have your parents' approval and delight because of your good, strong relationship with them. "A wise son maketh a glad father" (Prov. 10:1; 15:20).

You will also find yourself growing much stronger

spiritually. Having a good relationship with your parents means that you are open to their godly influence. They will be encouraged to bring you into their discussions about doctrine and worship and other matters of the church. They will be much more eager and forward to share with you what they discussed and learned in their study of God's Word in their societies and in their personal devotions. For in your questions to them they will find evidence of a receptive mind, eager to grow in the knowledge of your God. In the solid, spiritual relationship you enjoy with your parents you will find much support and encouragement for your walk with the Lord.

Go ask your parents!

If this is a completely different way for you, change now. If this will surprise your parents, the sooner the better. Surprise them. It will be a pleasant surprise. This difference will not be a step backward, back to the time when you were a child simply adoring and worshiping your parents and thinking them flawless. It will be a step forward into a maturity that is the strength of a Christian, covenant son or daughter of covenant, Christian parents.

You can start now: go ask your parents! 

GUEST ARTICLE

REV. ANGUS STEWART

New Church Building for the CPRC in Northern Ireland!

## Dedication Service

**I**chabod! The glory has departed! Let that never be said of this church!

That was the thrust of Prof. Herman Hanko's moving sermon at the official dedication of the new church building of the Covenant Protestant Reformed Church (CPRC) in Northern Ireland (5 August, 2010).

The Ballymena congregation was joined on this special occasion by family and friends, neighbours, our building contractor and quantity surveyor, as well as saints from the Protestant Reformed Churches (PRC) in America and the Limerick Reformed Fellowship (LRF), plus Italy, the Netherlands, and Germany. In fact, this was the first CPRC service attended by Anganeta Dyck from Duisburg, Germany, since she moved to Northern Ireland to join the church.

The evening began with a tape-cutting ceremony, with Profs. Engelsma and Hanko cutting the red ribbon at the main entrance, thereby declaring the building officially open for the service of the triune God. Moving inside,

our two honoured guests unveiled the dedicatory plaque in the narthex or foyer. The cameraman from a local paper was on hand, along with others from the PRC and CPRC, to take the requisite photos of both opening ceremonies.

An eager crowd filled the sanctuary for the service, with even a few chairs being brought in. Rev. Angus Stewart explained that this new church was erected through faith, the believing perseverance of a body of saints through many trials and much opposition. Money was also required—money that was provided by the generous giving of the CPRC over many years and by the support of our sister church in North America (the PRC) and the Wellington Protestant Reformed Fellowship in New Zealand, as well as by the Lord's people from all parts of the British Isles, continental Europe, Australia, etc. Of course, the building is also the product of a lot of work. Appreciation was expressed to all who helped in this regard, especially Tommy Hamill, the CPRC building project manager, as well as those who organized the evening.

Elder Peter VanDerSchaaf of Faith PRC, on his third visit to Northern Ireland, read a letter of greetings from

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*Rev. Stewart is pastor of the Covenant Protestant Reformed Church in Northern Ireland.*

the 2010 Synod of the PRC, and Prof. David Engelsma, who has been of immense support to the CPRC over many years, conveyed greetings from himself and his wife.

The programme of the service is on-line ([www.cprf.co.uk/audio/dedicationprogramme.htm](http://www.cprf.co.uk/audio/dedicationprogramme.htm)), from which site one can link to video highlights, including the greetings, as well as the audio of Prof. Hanko's stirring address on "Ichabod."

After the meeting, the ladies provided tea, sandwiches, and slices of the special cakes decorated to mark the occasion. Knowing that the open space in the balcony would not be large enough, we also served some of the people downstairs in the Bible study room.

A great night was enjoyed by all. May there be many such blessed meetings in our new building in the years ahead!

### Church Building

Our own church building was over 22 years in coming. Some 12 years ago we bought a piece of land of approximately  $\frac{3}{4}$  acre at the west end of Clarence Street off the Cullybackey Road in Ballymena. First, we had to pay off the loan we had taken to purchase the land. Then we started saving to build on it.

The total area of our new building is 432m<sup>2</sup> or 516 square yards. The downstairs consists of two main parts,



both 12 metres by 12 metres or roughly 13 yards by 13 yards. One part is the sanctuary for public worship that will hold up to 130 people. The other part includes the Bible-study room, the kitchen (with cooker, fridge, dishwasher, etc.), three WCs (for males, females, and disabled, the last fitted with baby-changing facilities) with sensors for turning on the lights, the crèche, and the

boiler room, with another room containing the oil tank. From the crèche, or cry room, one can see into the main hall through sound-proof glass. A speaker carries the audio from the worship service into the crèche.

Half of the downstairs is vaulted: the main auditorium or sanctuary. A lift or stairs takes one from the other half to the first floor, which includes the council room, the catechism room with a bathroom, and the gallery from which people can see down into the main hall through a double-glazed screen.

The main car park is tarmacked; the overflow car park is stoned. The disabled or elderly are well cared for, with special parking spaces, a toilet for the disabled, and a lift to the upstairs.

The sanctuary has very comfortable pews (through the good work of the building committee), in the back of which are the Psalm-books and the green, hardback book, *The Confessions and the Church Order of the Protestant Reformed Churches*. The pews are fanned to face the pulpit, so that people don't have to crane their necks during the service. Nobody wants a stiff-necked congregation!



An attractive, wooden bookcase adorns the narthex, displaying Reformed Free Publishing Association books, PRC pamphlets, and boxed sets of CPRC CDs and DVDs.

After we pay off the remaining bills, we hope to save up to install facilities on the balcony for live webcasting of our services. This would be of great help to our members who are sick on the Lord's Day and to our friends in the British Isles and Europe, as well as providing a witness to the biblical and Reformed faith that we love.

So now, after almost a quarter of a century, our congregation has a church home—thanks to the goodness of our covenant God! Some had wondered if they would live to see the day, but Christ is faithful to us! As Prof. Hanko preached, may "Ichabod" never be written above our church's doors! ☺

# British Reformed Fellowship Family Conference 2010

For this year's BRF conference we were magnificently hosted in Hebron Hall, a grand old conference centre just outside Cardiff, and conveniently near to the airport. The general opinion of the eighty-some attendees was very much in hearty approval of the facilities. Besides the delicious food, en-suite bathrooms, comfortable mattresses, and sporting facilities, the venue was also well-situated for day-trips to historical places such as Bath in England, Caerphilly Castle, and Tintern Abbey. Some also took trips to Cardiff, and some others even went white-water rafting. Other activities included tennis, football (soccer), basketball, volleyball, swimming, ping-pong, pool, snooker, and, for the less physically active, a board-game, a psychiatric game, a Sicilian game, and a zoological game. These activities, along with mealtimes, helped people to "break the ice" and get to know each other better.

Once again, many tongues and tribes were represented at this British conference, including people from: Italy, Germany, Éire, Northern Ireland, Wales, England, Scotland, Spain, Portugal, France, and even America and China. The catholicity of the church was greatly manifested and celebrated, and the communion of the saints was greatly enjoyed and practiced. There was sweet fellowship in common confession of the truth, and in mutual edification and encouragement to love God more in thought, word, and deed. This was especially felt in the reverent singing of the God-breathed Psalms together, and in our other regular prayers together.

On the morning of the Lord's Day, after everyone had arrived the previous day, Prof. Herman Hanko preached on II Corinthians 7:1. He powerfully and practically expounded the truth about our certain, yet difficult, sanc-

tification, especially in its relation to the unconditional covenant of God. The same afternoon, a colloquium on baptism was held, chaired by Prof. Hanko. The discussion focused predominantly on children in the covenant of God, and the conditions for a valid baptism in lieu of the myriad of complicated experiences that have become commonplace in the professing church world of today. Prof. David Engelsma brought us the Word of God in the evening from John 10:34-36. He thoroughly explained how Scripture is utterly unbreakable, directing us to the absolutely certain foundation upon which all the speeches that would follow were to be built.

The first conference address was given by Prof. Engelsma under the title, "The Reformed World and Life View." The speech explained how the Reformed believer sees the world, from its beginning to its end. A case was argued for the Antichrist to be an enemy of everything supernatural, and, in this vein, the Reformed world-view was contrasted with that of atheistic materialism represented by the views of the infamous misotheist Richard Dawkins. While the misdirected dreams of postmillennialism were denied and refuted, believers were exhorted to be in the world, yet living as spiritually separate people. This particular speech led to many eschatological questions afterwards, but always underpinned with the certain knowledge of the absolute reign of Christ over all of history and all things for the good of His people.

On Tuesday, there were two speeches: Prof. Hanko on the organic development of sin, and Prof. Engelsma on postmodernism. The development of sin was explained as man's progressively greater manifestation of his total depravity, as an acorn growing into an oak tree. This development was traced through Scripture's history, and through Scripture's teaching about the time until the end. A somewhat more complicated speech was heard in the evening, as Prof. Engelsma outlined the sheer absurdity and yet deceptive power of postmodernism. Denying

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*Mr. Watterson is a post-graduate student in the University of Limerick and a member of the Limerick Reformed Fellowship.*

the authority of Scripture, ungodly men invent their own authorities, create their own world-views (attempting to take the place of the only Creator), in order to live as they please. Whereas modernism gloried in individual “freedom” (i.e., freedom from the authority of God’s Word), postmodernism is totalitarian, and will not tolerate the intolerant Christians!

These heavy but very worthwhile topics were followed the next day with a special, and much appreciated, lecture from the Trinitarian Bible Society on God’s preservation of the text of Scripture.

“The Reformed Believer and Money” was the title of the fourth conference address, given by Prof. Hanko. The relationship of the things of this world to the elect and to the reprobate was contrasted. All that is not consecrated unto the Lord is an accursed thing, and believers were exhorted to use all the good creation of God in the service of the kingdom of Christ. The error of asceticism was strongly condemned, as was all the abuse of God’s creation.

In the second to last speech, Prof. Engelsma spoke about what he called “The Sexual Revolution.” The positive truth about the institution of marriage was first set forward, against the backdrop of a world that is rampant with divorce and remarriage, and a world that exerts great efforts to promote all manner of fornication and eliminate any possible undesired consequences—and it will not stop at murder, even the murder of defenseless children still in the womb. The rise of homosexuality was also considered, especially with regard to its forceful agenda to enact legislation to outlaw those who stand for the biblical truth about marriage. Again the recurring theme was that as this wicked world manifests its wickedness more and more, the saints will also face an increasing intensity of persecution.

The final lecture (by Prof. Hanko) dealt with the rise of Antichrist, and the development of a one-world government under Satan’s man. This development was traced through biblical history to the present time, in which we can identify various movements, philosophies, and organizations aiming for this goal. There was Babel, at which time God smote the ungodly kingdom and scattered the tribes by the confusion of languages. God will not allow a one-world government to develop before the appointed time, because every one of His elect must first be brought to repentance. We can see typical pictures of

this kingdom also in the Old Testament, most notably, Babylon. A case was made for the contention that this present time may be in the little season and the end of the millennium (that symbolic number for the time between Christ’s ascension and second coming), in which Satan is loosed, so that he may deceive the nations once more, to bring them into a one-world government under him.

Much more than all this was said in these speeches, and, Lord willing, there will be a book published to contain it all, but these are included to give readers a taste of what the speeches and the BRF conference were like. This is in the hope that many will purchase the book and benefit greatly from it, and also consider coming to the next BRF conference to be as edified and strengthened by it as I have been. The audio and videos of the conference speeches will also (DV) be available online from the British Reformed Fellowship website ([www.britishreformed-fellowship.org.uk](http://www.britishreformed-fellowship.org.uk)), which is soon to be revamped.

The next BRF conference is being planned (DV) for 2012 in Ireland, with the same gifted speakers, around the end of July and beginning of August as usual. The topic for the conference will be “Ye Are My Witnesses,” concerning how a Christian must be a witness in whatever situation that God has appointed for us. If it pleases the Lord to grant the means to travel, do consider attending this spiritually enriching conference. It is a very great encouragement to spend the week with like-minded believers, mutually edifying one another—especially for those who come from nations in which the Reformed faith is scarcely to be found in these last days.

“Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding” (Prov. 3:13). We are exhorted in Scripture to grow in the knowledge and grace of Jesus Christ, and the BRF conference is an excellent aid to this growth in finding wisdom and understanding, so that we would love God more and eschew evil, as the world around us waxes worse and worse. This year’s conference was a testament to the inestimable blessing of being granted the grace to take heed to the “more sure word of prophecy” (the Holy Scriptures), until the day dawns. 

### Evangelism Activities

We start this issue of the “News” where we left off last issue with more Reformation Day lectures sponsored by various of our churches.

Prof. D. Engelsma, retired professor of theology in our PR Seminary, was able to present his lecture, “Federal Vision, Unconditional Covenant, and the Reformation’s Gospel of Grace,” four times this fall. He spoke first at the First Christian Reformed Church of Byron Center, MI on October 29 at the request of the Evangelism Committee of the Southwest PRC in Grandville, MI. This was followed on November 5 at the Hull, IA PRC, sponsored by the Reformed Witness Committee. Prof. Engelsma next gave the lecture on November 12 at the invitation of the Evangelism Committee of the Randolph, WI PRC, followed closely on November 19 by a presentation in the auditorium of the PRC of Crete, IL.

The Evangelism Committee of First PRC in Edmonton, AB, Canada hosted a Reformation Day lecture on October 29 at their church. Their pastor, Rev. J. Marcus, spoke on the topic, “Brave New World: A Christian’s Response.”

Prof. R. Cammenga traveled to the Covenant of Grace PRC in Spokane, WA in late October. While there he not only preached for the congregation on October 31, but also presented a lecture

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

entitled “Calvin’s Reformation of Worship,” on October 29.

The Evangelism Committee of the Calvary PRC in Hull, IA looked for volunteers to man two booths that displayed information about their congregation and the truths they confessed as Christians and as PR churches. One booth was set up at the Kiwanis Poinsettia Sale on November 19, and another during the Hull Winterfest on December 4.

### Denomination Activities

On Tuesday, November 16, Revs. Koole and Eriks flew to Pompton Plains, NJ as representatives of our Contact Committee, to attend a meeting of the association of North American Presbyterian and Reformed Churches (NAPARC), an association of conservative churches that seek to keep each other informed about important decisions within their own denominations and to discuss common challenges and dangers being faced. There are eleven member denominations and several others who were invited to attend as observers. The PRC Synod of 2010 accepted the invitation to send representatives as observers and to participate per the invitation. The conference concluded Wednesday afternoon. More information can be found in the 2010 Acts.

### Mission Activities

November 19 and 20 the Pittsburgh, PA Mission Fellowship hosted a family conference in Sugarcreek, Ohio. The theme of the conference was, “Guided by God’s Counsel.”

Missionary pastor Rev. W. Bruinsma and Rev. A. den Hartog were the two speakers at this conference.

Another news item from Pittsburgh was that their 12<sup>th</sup> annual Reformation Day lecture, held October 29, was a great encouragement. Rev. Bruinsma spoke on the topic, “Martin Luther: Captive to the Word.” Besides full participation by the members of the mission, there were twenty visitors. The audience almost filled the little church building and was the occasion of great excitement.

Rev. M. McGeown, missionary pastor of our sister church, the Covenant PRC of Ballymena, NI, laboring with the Limerick Reformed Fellowship in Limerick, NI, gave a public lecture on “God Is Love” in Limerick on November 11.

### Congregation Activities

We had opportunity on Saturday, November 13, to stop at the newly-acquired property of the Providence PRC in Hudsonville, MI for a cup of coffee, a cookie, and a look at their property. Providence has purchased a total of ten acres, just south of Hudsonville, with easy access to all major highways in the area. Included in this purchase is a three-year-old home and a somewhat older pole barn. What makes this property somewhat unique is that the home is attached to the pole barn. With a little work, Rev. and Mrs. Bleyenbergh will be able soon to move into the home. With a little more work, the congregation could also use the pole barn for

weekly catechism and society meetings, and with even more work, possibly even Sunday worship services. At this point no timetable has been established, other than for the use of the home as a parsonage. Providence has made no formal decisions regarding additional possible use. With a Michigan winter coming, the time for upgrades to the barn is short. But one thing is certain, the Providence congregation has purchased property that should serve them well in the years to come.

The congregation of the First PRC in Edmonton, AB, Canada enjoyed their annual Car Rally and Soup Supper sponsored by the Covenant Ladies Circle on Thursday, November 11. The car rally began at 11:30 A.M., with the soup supper at about 4:00 P.M. First also invited neighboring Immanuel PRC in Lacombe to join them.

### School Activities

On November 12, Hope Christian School in Redlands, CA held their annual Fall Banquet. This year's theme was "Remembering 35 years" of Hope Christian School. We pass along our congratulations on their reaching this milestone in their history (Ps. 16:6).

### Young People's Activities

The Young People's Society of the PR Church in Crete, IL sponsored an organ recital/singspiration on November 12. Guest organist was Jared Langerak. A collection was taken for the young people to help with the cost of next year's convention.

The Young People of the Grace PRC in Standale, MI held their annual Christian Service Day on Saturday, November 13. Anyone in their congregation needing some

yard-work done was encouraged to fill out a request for help, and the young people would do the rest.

### Minister Activities

Rev. Daniel Holstege, pastor of the First PRC in Holland, MI, was united in marriage to Miss Leah Regnerus of the Randolph, WI PRC on November 5. We rejoice with them and pray the Lord's richest blessings on them as they serve Him as joint heirs together.

Since our last "News," Rev. Lanning declined the call to serve as pastor of the Wingham, ON PRC. Rev. Haak declined Cornerstone PRC in Dyer, IN, and Rev. Bruinisma declined calls from the Edgerton, MN PRC and Trinity PRC in Hudsonville, MI.

Rev. G. Eriks received the call to serve as pastor of Hope PRC in Walker, MI. 

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### Resolution of Sympathy

■ The Adult Fellowship of Hope PRC, Redlands, CA expresses Christian sympathy to Dennis and Beth VanUffelen and to Duane and Esther Huisken in the death of Beth and Esther's mother,  
**JEANETTE VAN BAREN.**

May they find comfort in the words of John 11:25: "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live."

Rev. Martin VanderWal, President  
Beth Feenstra, Secretary

### Classis East

■ Classis East will meet in regular session on Wednesday, January 12, 2010, at Trinity Protestant Reformed Church, Hudsonville, Michigan.

Jon J. Huisken  
Stated Clerk

### Resolution of Sympathy

■ The Lord in His wisdom was pleased to take

#### MR. ROGER BERENDS

to his eternal home on November 13, 2010. Through God's amazing work of grace, Roger was delivered from all suffering, sorrow, pain, and sin, and rejoices instead in the blessings of heaven. The Council and congregation of Holland PRC uphold his family in prayer during this difficult time. "Blessed be God, even the father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the father of mercies, and the God of all comfort" (II Corinthians 1:3).

Rev. Daniel Holstege, President  
Jack Warner, clerk