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Thanksgiving Always

Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 5:20

As can be seen from the Heidelberg Catechism, the giving of thanks is a way of life for the child of God. However, that does not make it a mere formality in our lives. Many people go through the motions of thanksgiving, but do not know what it really is. Many simply do not have the right to do so. This may seem a bit strong, but this is a scriptural truth.

Thanksgiving is a spiritual exercise that only the believer in Christ can perform. The Scriptures reveal this in several passages. In II Corinthians 4:15 we read, "For all things are for your sakes, that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God." Then two passages in the letter to the Philippians. In chapter 4:4 we read, "Rejoice in

the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice." And two verses later, "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplications with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God." Then also in I Thessalonians 5:16-18, "Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you."

From these passages three ideas stand out very clearly: first, that thanksgiving is not a matter of particular occasions; secondly, that it is not concerned with some things while others are excluded from the giving of thanks; and thirdly, that it is the fruit of grace in Christ Jesus our Lord.

From the above texts it is clear that the giving of thanks is not limited to Thanksgiving Day, whether celebrated in October (Canada) or in November (USA). When we celebrate Thanksgiving Day, we are reminded of the three great truths just mentioned. But because Thanksgiving Day is a national holiday, we are in danger of imagining that on that day, at least, to give thanks is a national affair, that is, something

in which all the citizens can participate. But this is not true on Thanksgiving Day any more than on any other day.

There was a time when a nation was also the church of God. That is no longer true, for the church is among all nations. No nation is the church. Even on Thanksgiving Day it is only those within the nation that are in Christ Jesus that are able to give thanks. Instituted as a harvest feast Thanksgiving Day comes only once a year, leading many people to regard thanksgiving as a matter only for special occasions. We celebrate, they say, with a view to harvest, so we concentrate on material things, setting aside things that we consider evil in order to give thanks for the good.

Our text, however, instructs us to give thanks *always*. Giving thanks must be characteristic of our entire life and walk—every day of our life and every moment of our existence. It must not be centered in things, for thanksgiving is joy in the Lord—and not only for some things, but for all of God's dealings with us in Christ Jesus. There is nothing ex-

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cluded. For all of our experiences in life, no matter what they may be, regardless of whether they be pleasant or unpleasant to the flesh, we must give thanks.

Looking at the good side, we include our earthly life and all its gifts, powers, and talents. In addition, there is our health and strength to labor, our daily bread, clothing, shelter, and abundance. We can add still more, the rain and sunshine, the fertility of the soil, growth of the seed, the grain of the field, and the fruit of the trees.

On the other side there are those things that we consider bad or evil. As our Baptism Form has it, "this life is nothing but a continual death." Death surrounds us on all sides. Alongside of joy there is also sorrow, health but also sickness, pain, suffering, and agony. There is abundance, but also scarcity and want. We experience peace, but also wars and rumors of wars. There are fruitful and barren years, rain and sunshine but also scorching heat, hail, and fire. All these are included in the exhortation to give thanks.

This seems strange and paradoxical. How absurd it would seem if our President or Prime Minister would enumerate all these things as ground for thanksgiving. Instead, we more than likely will hear how "kind providence has supplied us with an abundance of good things." Or maybe we would hear that "the Almighty has filled our barns with plenty, the wheels of industry are spinning." And from many we hear that "in spite of sorrows and sufferings, troubles and anxieties, there are many things to be thankful for."

Thinking about that, we perhaps are inclined to agree. Who would give thanks for wars, for the Iraqs and Afghanistans? Who that has been sick for weeks gives thanks to God for the very bed of languishing? What farmer prais-

es the Lord for the hailstorm that destroyed his crops in a matter of minutes?

It seems also a paradox when we look at the meaning of giving thanks. To give thanks presupposes that we have received good things, that we are conscious of them, and that we count and name them one by one. It implies that we rejoice because of the good we have received and do receive, and also that these things are all good gifts, gifts of God, not one of which we have merited, for we are unworthy of the very least of them. It presupposes that we point to the Giver of all these things and praise His holy name for all the goodness, grace, mercy, and lovingkindness to usward, as they become manifest in all His benefits.

To give thanks "in everything" implies that we give thanks on the ground of everything, because of everything, that we rejoice because of everything that we receive, including that which we consider bad. And finally, we acknowledge that our God is the giver of it all.

We ask, How can that be possible? It is, of course, not possible for natural man. By nature men are rich in things, but not in God. We are reminded of the rich fool and the warning of Christ, "So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God" (Luke 12:21). It is foolish "to men of this world, which have their portion in this life" (Ps. 17:14). They think that their houses shall continue forever. To all these it is foolish and impossible; they do not give thanks at all. They rejoice in things, but never in the Lord. A joy for the measure of the *abundance* of our thanksgiving dinner is quite different from the joy of thanksgiving. A cruel thanksgiving it is if measured by the abundance of things, because then it would be only for the rich, with nothing to say for the poor. The

rich eat, drink, and are merry, for tomorrow they die. They glorify God not as God, neither are they thankful.

True thanksgiving is possible only for the believer. Does the believer rejoice in evil, in pain and suffering, sorrow and grief, war and depression? Or does he by sheer will power set his face like a flint and show himself victorious over the sufferings of this present time as did the Stoic of old? We answer with a resounding, "Of course not."

How then is it possible to give thanks in everything? *Because he belongs to Christ.* Christ is Lord of all. He was anointed before the foundations of the world to be heir and Lord of all things. He is the firstborn of every creature and of the dead. Unto Him and by Him were all things created. He is the head of His body, the church. In the fullness of time He came to redeem His people by taking upon Himself their sins on the accursed tree, carrying them away forever. Being laid to rest in the grave He was raised from the dead on the third day as proof of our justification. Finally, He shall take us to the heavenly tabernacle where we shall see Him face to face. To belong to Him means that He is our Lord in everlasting love. We were in Christ when He died and was raised. And now we who are in Him by faith look for His return.

This is why it is possible for us to give thanks in everything. To belong to Christ does not only mean redemption and comfort during this life concerning my sins, but also that what is evil in this present time is in reality good. "Therefore let no man glory in men. For all things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's" (I Cor. 3:21-23). Then there are the familiar words of Paul in Ro-

mans 8:28, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." That is why we give thanks in everything, always.

Our joy is in the Lord. And with the prophet of old we confess, "Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall

yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation" (Hab. 3:17, 18). 

The Road to Rome Is Paved... (3)

As we stated in the last article, evangelical churchmen who in the interests of developing closer ecclesiastical ties with Rome have justified making concession after concession to Rome, have labored under a grand delusion, namely, if we as Protestants, in the spirit of brotherhood, would only show a willingness to make doctrinal concessions to Rome, she surely would reciprocate in kind.

Suffice it to say, this has not materialized.

Rome has made it clear that, for all her willingness to allow some of her officials to draw up carefully-crafted documents in concert with her "estranged brethren," she has no intention of ever conceding one thing Romish.

Any questions about Rome's willingness to make concessions on doctrinal points in the interests of ecclesiastical oneness and presenting a united front to the world should have been answered in the early 1990s.

As early as 1981 a joint commission of twenty men composed of both Romish and Anglican churchmen presented to their

respective assemblies a carefully-worded document called *The Final Report*. The General Synod of the Church of England approved it in 1986. The Vatican delayed until 1991, and then

...required that the Catholic teaching—especially on the Eucharist (the Mass)—be spelt out specifically. It wanted assurance that there was agreement on "the propitiatory nature of the eucharistic sacrifice," applicable to the dead as well as the living; and "certitude that Christ is present... substantially when 'under the species of bread and wine these earthly realities are changed into the reality of his Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity.'" ...The Anglicans assured the Vatican that the words of the Final Statement... did indeed conform to the sense required by the official Roman teaching (I. Murray, *Evangelicalism Divided*, p. 220).

The evangelicals evidently had hoped to hide behind a vagueness of language so that it *appeared* as if Rome was making some concessions too. Rome would have none of it. Rome's approach has always been, "It does not matter what is written, be it God's Word itself, what our Magisterium decides something says, is what it says."

So it was to be with this *Final*

Report (about which Rome had the final word).

In the name of ecumenicity the Anglicans, evangelicals and all, 'genuflected' and expressed a willingness to swallow Rome's doctrine of the Mass whole.

And note well that phrase, "*applicable to the dead as well as the living*"! The fires of purgatory were to continue burning, and, as well, the sacrament of the Supper was to be *applicable* to the dead, meaning, to serve as an indulgence!

If such language was not enough to make clear what 'concessions' Rome was willing to make, there can be no disputing the recent pronouncements that have issued from the Papal See.

In July of 2007 the Vatican released a document titled "Responses to Some Questions Regarding Certain Aspects of the Doctrine of the Church." Its purpose was to send a clear signal, both to liberal, agitating churchmen within Rome herself and to ecumenically-minded Protestants, where Rome's Magisterium stood on this vital matter of Rome's doctrine of the church. The document amounted to a reiteration of Rome's dogma that she was and is and forever shall remain Christ's one, only true church.

If this recent document made nothing else clear, this much has

Previous article in this series: November 1, 2008, p. 52.

been—no one may labor under the misguided hope that Rome intends to divest herself of one iota of the power that she, over the centuries, has acquired to herself by craft and guile and painful labor.

The document posited five questions concerning the doctrine of the church and gave Rome's "Responses." These responses make plain that any spirit of accommodation is foreign to Rome.

The first question was most significant. "Did the Second Vatican Council [of the early 1960s] change the Catholic doctrine of the Church?"

Those who have sought to justify pursuing ecumenical relations with Rome always assured the skeptical that it had.

Well, Benedict XVI and his Magisterium beg to differ. In unambiguous language the "Responses" declare that the Second Vatican Council "neither changed nor intended to change this doctrine, rather it developed, deepened and more fully explained it."

What is this doctrine of the church that Rome has always asserted and still defends? This, as spelled out in the document's second answer:

Christ "established here on earth" only one Church...in which alone are found all the elements that Christ himself instituted.... [This Church] subsists in the [Roman] Catholic Church, governed by the successor of Peter and the Bishops in communion with him.

Such a view leaves precious little room for any other church to claim a biblically valid identity apart from Rome and to justify

not being reabsorbed into Rome. Rather, Christ places upon every Christian congregation one solemn calling, to place itself and her members under the apostolic authority of Rome's "Christ-appointed" Supreme Bishop and his colleagues once again.

That this is precisely what Benedict XVI and his henchmen are saying is plain from the fifth question and its response.

...let no one labor under the misguided hope that Rome intends to divest herself of one iota of the power that she, over the centuries, has acquired to herself by craft and guile and painful labor.

Q. 5 - Why do the text of the Council (of Vatican II) and those of the Magisterium since the Council not use the title of "church" with regard to those Christian Communi-

ties born out of the Reformation of the sixteenth century? (emphasis mine - kk)

The Response declares that

.... These Communities do not enjoy apostolic [!] succession in the sacrament of [priestly] Orders, and are, therefore, deprived of a constitutive element of the Church. These ecclesial Communities which, specifically because of the absence of the sacramental priesthood, have not preserved the genuine and integral substance of the Eucharistic Mystery, cannot...be called "Churches" in the proper sense.

Shortly after the document was made public, Benedict XVI declared that churches outside of the Roman Catholic Church are "wounded churches," because they were not in communion with the Roman papacy.

And how is the wound of separation to be healed?

How else but by reunification with Rome, submitting to the authority of her apostolic clergy,

and by partaking of Rome's eucharistic sacrifice of Christ once again.

Where, pray tell, is there any element of concession in all of this?

One is reminded of that poem about a well-dressed lady in India riding off on the back of a tiger into the jungle with a smile on her face. Not so long afterwards the tiger returned, *sans* lady, but now with a smile on *his* face.

To say that the advocates of renewing ecumenical relations with Rome were taken aback by the clarity and candor of Benedict XVI's language is to put it mildly. Stunned might be a better word. It placed them in an awkward position, to say the least. Their reassuring words about Rome's openness to change and readiness for biblical renewal were suddenly exposed for what they were, so much blarney.

The simple fact is that those promoting the renewing of ecumenical relations with Rome should not have been surprised by this latest 'revelation' out of Rome. Already back in 1970 Rome explained to her clergy the strategy behind its new (spurious) ecumenical policy, a policy according to which Rome had begun expressing an interest in seeking unity with those estranged from her and an openness to dialogue with Protestant churchmen.

Richard Bennett, a former Catholic priest, converted to biblical Christianity in the 1990s (and a man who is simply appalled by what influential Protestant leaders are doing to Reformation truths in the interests of pursuing closer ties with Rome), explains it well:

With....[her] new strategy, the Church of Rome set out to win the world back to herself. This was necessary after the controversial reign of Pious XII

[1939-1958] and the uncompromisingly severe image that his pontificate had presented to the world.[A] main approach was [to be] by dialogue. In 1970, the Catholic Church carefully spelled out the goals and rules of [this] dialogue. The method of incremental advances into Bible believing churches was to be by means of "dialogue," the purpose of which is clearly stated by the Catholic Church.

And then he quotes the policy of 1970 that lays bare what Rome's strategy has been all along.

Dialogue is not an end in itself.... [I]t is not just an academic discussion. Rather,...it serves to transform modes of thought and behavior and the daily life of those communities [non-Catholic churches]. In this way, it aims at preparing the way for their unity of faith in the bosom of a Church one and visible: thus 'little by little' [!], as the obstacles to perfect ecclesial communion are overcome, all Christians will be gathered, in a common celebration of the Eucharist, into the unity of the one and only Church [!] which Christ bestowed on his Church from the beginning. This unity, we believe, dwells in the Catholic Church [!] as something she can never lose.

Could anything be clearer? Does Rome have to affix K-Mart's blinking blue light to her decrees and make an announcement over the intercom what "ecumenicity" she is selling?

How blind and self-deceived can intelligent men be?

And yet, these men of reputation and Reformed knowledge continue to justify modifying (corrupting) the most basic doctrines for Rome's sake and continue to press for on-going dialogue with Rome's prelacy.

They, evidently, have convinced themselves that the final victory of the biblical, apostolic faith and gospel, which is to say, Christ's victory, hinges on unity with Rome.

The Ascended Christ of Revelation 6, who has sent out the great White Horse and its conquering rider, needs Rome?

This is what they would have us believe?

Evidently it is.

And they imagine they honor the Ascended Lord Christ?

Astounding!

One could wish that as the 'ghost' of Samuel appeared to King Saul long ago, during a dark period of church history, so the 'spirits' of Latimer, Ridley, and Cranmer, to name but three, wrapped yet in the rags of their

martyrdom, would appear to James I. Packer and John Stott, to name just two, and ask them, "You are making concessions of doctrines and manner of worship to whom? In the interests of what? And we gave our blood for this? For shame!"

But understand well that our purpose in stating all this is not to marvel at the willful blindness of certain churchmen of stature and reputation. Rather our concern is with the evil they are sowing and what damage they are doing to what is left of Christ's church on earth by the doctrinal concessions/corruptions they have made as they travel on the road back to Rome (and seeking to lead all of Protestantism with them).

That being so, it might be profitable that we devote at least one more article to this issue of the road back to Rome and make plain just how far those who are now part of the ECT (Evangelicals and Catholics Together) have gone in doctrinal compromise.

It is most interesting, because the doctrinal compromises they have made mesh well with the 'new' heresies of the Federal Vision movement as well.

This we intend to address next issue. 

All Around Us

Rev. Jason Korterling

The Financial Crisis

It seems that this is foremost on the minds of most people today, so if I am going to write a current article in this department, it ought to focus on the financial crisis. An alternative might be the election of '08, but even the

election is rather intimately interwoven with the financial crisis.

I do not write as an economist, nor as a financial expert. In fact, the opposite is true: I have precious little interest in money. But that doesn't mean I am disinterested or indifferent to what is taking place in America and in the world today. It means, however, that I must turn to others and glean from them what they say and do regarding this crisis.

There is plenty of sensational writing about the crisis. An example of this is a *Time Magazine*, October 7, 2008 article by John Flowers entitled "Wall Street's Crisis: When All News is Bad News." The article reflects on the 778-point fall of the Dow on September 30, 2008, a record of all time. The efforts of the government to raise it had some success, but soon it plunged again.

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Even hints from Federal Reserve Chairman Ben Bernanke, testifying on Capital Hill today, of a possible rate cut did not help. His prognosis that slow growth in the American economy, not inflation, is now the Reserve's primary concern only added bad news to a day that included fall-out from yesterday's after-hours Bank of America announcement that it will need to cut its dividend and raise \$10 billion in capital....

All this took place a day after many of the world's major stock indices had experienced their largest percentage point drop since the October 1987 crash. American investors, it seems, are still worried about what may be on financial companies' balance sheets. The ad-hoc nature of the European response to its banking crisis has also raised concerns. Investors were clearly worried that even if a global financial meltdown is averted, a broad recession may be inevitable. And so, as governments attend to one crisis, the markets discover another to fret about—and the cycle of panic continues.

Summarizing the events mentioned above, *Newsweek* writer Len Hudson Teslik, connected with the Council of Foreign Relations, writes an article entitled "Europe's Banks Buckle."

For months, as global financial woes spread, U.S. banks stood front and center amidst the chaos. October 6 provided something of a counterpoint. Following Germany's announcement that it would temporarily insure all holdings in German bank accounts to protect against a run, European markets led a sharp global stock plunge that carried over into the United States. Leading indices in France and Germany dropped over 6 percent, and Britain's FTSE 100 index fell nearly 8 percent; the Dow Jones Industrial Average subsequently plunged in early trading, falling below the 10,000 mark for the first time in four years. Concerns about the imple-

mentation of the bailout plan factored into the day's declines, but analysts say the losses also reflect an emerging recognition that financial problems in Europe are significantly deeper than had previously been thought.

No reader of the *Standard Bearer* can take an indifferent attitude to such reporting. Most of us are affected by this whether we live in the USA or not. When the entire world economy is deflating, we think not only of our income to pay bills, but things like job security, foreclosure on our houses and business, the effect all of this will have on our families, churches, and schools. For retired folks there is the question of 401K's and retirement benefits. It is reported in the local press that most of them fell by up to 40% in the last few days.

It is heartening to read a sober assessment of the crisis in *Christianity Today's* web page. In an article entitled "A Christian View of the Economic Crisis," dated September 29, Al Mohler writes:

The headlines tell the story as recent days have seen the American economy and its financial system buffeted by seismic failures and the virtual disappearance of major investment banks. The debate raging in Washington these days concerns the form and extent of government intervention that will be required in order to restore stability to the financial markets.

Comparisons to the Great Depression are inevitable, but today's crisis bears little resemblance to the total economic collapse of the late 1920s. Capitalism is not in crisis and the fundamentals of the American economy remain strong. When President Franklin D. Roosevelt took office in 1933, the nation faced a genuine crisis and economic collapse. For the most part, the banks were closed and the nation was out of business.

Nothing like that is happen-

ing now, but the financial system is clearly in need of reform and realism. The fundamentals of the economy remain intact. These include American innovation, a dedicated labor force, strong consumer demand, vast natural resources, and unlimited intellectual capital.

More than anything else, this crisis has to do with what happens when the markets come to terms with the excessive valuations. Put bluntly, wildly inflated valuations led to risky financial adventures and worse. The sub-prime mortgage collapse came as more realistic real-estate valuations forced market corrections. The vast global financial system had accepted the inflated valuations as real and traded in the risky mortgages as if the game would go on forever. This was a fool's errand.

The question that everyone is asking is, How did we get our finances in such a mess? In attempting to answer this question, we plunge into the blame-game. This is done especially by the politicians as they face the election in November 2008. The two major parties blame each other. Both presidential nominees want to be free of any fault, especially when they have served in congress for some years. Almost all the periodicals include some sort of analysis. I found the one in *World Magazine* most helpful. Timothy Lamer wrote one entitled "Anatomy of a Crisis" on October 4, 2008. I quote the six steps he outlines in the article:

The current financial crisis gripping Wall Street is head-spinning in its complexity. But economists and analysts have been able to identify several steps along the way that helped lead the country to where it stood last week, on the brink of a massive government program to buy hundreds of billions worth of bad mortgages. Here are some of the steps:

Step 1: Trying to avoid a recession brought on by the

bursting of the tech bubble and 9/11, the Federal Reserve under then-Chairman Alan Greenspan began aggressively easing monetary policy. From 2001 to 2003, the Fed Funds rate fell from 6 percent to 1 percent, a 45-year low.

Step 2: With interest rates low and money easy, mortgage lenders started marketing loans to people with questionable credit histories. These "sub-prime" loans often required no down payments, had adjustable interest rates, and featured exotic elements like "negative amortization" (in which "homeowners" would initially pay less than the interest owed each month, causing the loan's principal to grow with each "payment"). With these loans fueling demand, housing prices rose, prompting speculators to enter the market and "flip" houses (buying them with debt and then selling them quickly at higher prices). A speculative bubble began to inflate.

Step 3: Mortgage lenders sold their suspect loans to others, especially Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac. Congress had over the years allowed the two government-sponsored enterprises to grow very large and become major players in the mortgage market, and in the name of increasing home ownership the two behemoths encouraged subprime lending. Fannie and Freddie packaged these loans into mortgage-backed securities and sold them to investors. The pair "fueled Wall Street's efforts to securitize subprime loans by becoming the primary customer of all AAA-rated subprime-mortgage pools," writes economist Kevin Hassett for the Bloomberg news service. "In addition, they held an enormous portfolio of mortgages themselves.... Their large presence created an environment within which even mortgage-backed securities assembled by others could find a ready home."

Step 4: With investment banks using these subprime assets to take on high levels of debt, the financial health of Wall

Street became linked to the ability of people with poor (or no) credit histories to make monthly house payments.

Step 5: Interest rates couldn't remain at historic lows forever. As interest rates began to rise, housing demand fell and the bubble deflated. Subprime borrowers found interest rates on their mortgages adjusting upward at the same time as the value of their houses either fell or flattened. Unable to make payments, many defaulted. Investment banks on Wall Street were left holding the bag—the bag being debt backed by assets with falling values.

Step 6: Fearing a full-scale collapse and severe recession, the Bush administration began engineering bailouts of some of these firms and, finally, proposed a \$700 billion macro-bailout. Under the proposal, the Treasury secretary will buy the bad assets from the banks and then sell them. (How much the government makes selling them will determine how much of the \$700 billion the government will recoup.) "This staves off judgment day," Anthony Sabino, professor of law and business at St. John's University, told the Associated Press. "This is a detox for banks, and will help cleanse themselves of the bad mortgage securities, loans and everything else that has hurt them."

The plan gives the Treasury secretary (currently Henry Paulson, most likely someone else in January) enormous power, which prompted a debate last week in Washington about how much oversight he or she should come under and how much time he or she should have to get the government out of the real estate business.

The fundamental dynamic is this: Washington and Wall Street helped people buy houses they could not afford on such a massive scale that simply letting the lenders and debtors take their lumps would arguably do grave harm to the economy. They will take some lumps (Wall Street isn't exactly a hot job market right now), but most of the losses

will be "socialized," or spread out among everyone who pays taxes. This includes those who exercised restraint during the bubble. That's how it is.

It is too early even to speculate where all of this will lead. It is useless to speculate whether the efforts put forth by those who are in positions of power and influence will really work. From this point of view, it is important that we as Christians come to terms with who really is in control of this crisis. There is here an amazing demonstration of God's sovereignty and man's responsibility. God is sovereign over all the nations, over governments, over peoples, all of whom are involved in some way to contribute to this financial mess. From the point of view of God's sovereignty, He has a divine purpose. And He accomplishes that purpose in two ways. He works judgments upon the wicked and chastisements upon His people. He does this through the works of man's hands. Man cannot simply shake his trembling finger in the face of the Almighty and challenge Him for bringing to the earth a way that man does not want or like. He has to look at himself and see that God's judgments and chastisements are always right and good.

We do not deserve any divine favor in ourselves. We all deserve judgment and justice, of which this financial crisis is a harbinger for future destruction. Ultimately the words of Revelation 18:2ff. ring true: "Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird. For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication [the great whore of chapter 17], and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed

rich through the abundance of her delicacies.”

Only the Christian who flees to Christ as a refuge has any hope that even though this world must needs come to an end under the judgment of the righteous God, the words of Revelation 18:4 apply: “And I heard another voice from heaven saying, come out of her my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not her plagues.” The people of God know that their redemption comes in the final appearing of Jesus upon the clouds of heaven, when He will destroy this world with fire and create a new heaven and earth for them.

While trying to assess the cause and outcome of this financial crisis, and also trying to assess the responsibility of all of us in it, it is too simplistic for the Christian to say with a sweep of the hand, it is all greed. This is most poignant for those of us within the church who may personally experience financial loss. Is it simply greed if we lose our jobs, lose our homes, lose our investments? There is no doubt that greed is involved in the big picture, but most of us are such little financial pipsqueaks that it is hardly fair to us to lay that responsibility at our feet. *Christianity Today* has the article of Al Mohler mentioned above. It is entitled “A Christian View of the Economic Crisis,” and has the subtitle, “Is the economy really driven by greed?” Some of his ideas are worthy of note.

The development of vast global economic systems simply builds upon the simple principle that all participants are willing to trade one good for another they want even more and to invest in the hope of future gain.

Is this greed? In and of itself, this is not greed at all. The desire for a profit, for income, and for material gain is not in itself greed. The Bible clearly teaches that the worker is wor-

thy of his hire and that rewards should follow labor, thrift, and investment.

Greed raises its ugly head when individuals and groups (such as corporations or retirement funds) seek an unrealistic gain at the expense of others and then use illegitimate means to gain what they want. Given the nature of this fallen world and the reality of human sinfulness, we should expect that greed will be a constant temptation. Greed will entice the rich to oppress the poor, partners in transactions to lie to one another, and investors to take irrational risks. All of these are evident in this current crisis.

Christians should think seriously about this economic crisis and ponder what it would mean to come to a Christian understanding of what it means to be participants in this economy. As Adam Smith recognized, the economy is a moral reality. Human beings actualize their moral selves in making economic choices and through participation in the economic system—and we are all participants.

Indeed, one of the defining differences between the current crisis and the crisis of the 1920s and 1930s is that the vast majority of Americans are now, in effect, investors. Our retirement accounts are, by and large, mingled with the investments of the titans of industry. Through their pension funds, school teachers are investors right alongside Warren Buffet. This was not the case in the run-up to the Great Depression. We all want and need the stock market to do well, and the outcome of any market crisis affects both Bill Gates and the worker in the local medical clinic.

Christians should look at the economy as a test of our values. The Bible values honest labor and dedicated workers, and so should we. The Bible warns against dishonest business practices, and we must be watchful. False valuations are, in effect, lies. Dishonest accounting practices are just sophisticated forms of lying. Insider information is a form of theft.

The Bible honors investment and thrift, and Christians must be wary of the impulse for short-term gains and pressure for instant profit. Over the long-haul, the entire economy must prosper if the vast majority is to do well and realize a responsible gain.

Thus, the current crisis sheds light on what happens when things get out of control, when various pressures distort the proper operation of the markets, and when irrational valuations entice investors to make poor investments. Dishonesty enters the picture at many levels, and the individual investor is too often left in the dark.

When these things happen the economy is threatened by a lack of trust, and trust is the most essential commodity of all when it comes to economic transactions. Without trust, the entire system collapses.

The big debate in Washington is over the extent of government intervention. Prudence would indicate that the less government intervention, the better. Adam Smith was confident that a “hidden hand” within the economy would rectify excesses and punish bad actors. I think he is basically right, but the government is, like it or not, one of the actors in this economic system.

The problem with letting the markets solve this problem and letting the “hidden hand” punish the bad actors and unwise decisions is that, in this situation, the small investor is crushed along with the tycoon. Furthermore, the entire economy could face a crisis of confidence.

So watch the debates in Washington with interest and consider how a Christian should understand the economy and our economic lives. The free market is not perfect, but capitalism has brought more wealth to more people than any other system. It rewards investment, labor, and thrift and rises on innovation. Better ideas and better products push out inferior ideas and inferior products. Given the reality of human sin, we should not centralize economic control in the hands of the few, but distribute

economic power to the many. A free market economy distributes power to multitudes of workers, inventors, investors, and consumers.

No economy is perfect, but the American economy remains a marvel. The present crisis is an opportunity to rethink some basic questions and restore trust. There are no easy ways out of a crisis like this, and no painless solutions. Yet, would you trade this system for any other?

This current crisis should also remind Christians that we are not called to be mere economic actors, but stewards. Everything we are, everything we

do, and everything we own truly belongs to God and is to be at the disposal of Kingdom purposes. This world is not our home and our treasure is not found here. We are to do all, invest all, own all, purchase all to the glory of God.

Finally, this current economic crisis just might help Christians to focus on another issue—retirement. Where in the Bible are we told to aspire to years and decades of leisure without labor? There is nothing wrong with saving for what the world calls retirement. Indeed, that is just good stewardship. Furthermore, there is nothing wrong with workers enjoying the fruit

of their labor. But Christians should think of retirement as an opportunity to be redeployed for Kingdom service.

Today's crisis in the financial system should not be a threat to the long-term health and vitality of our economic system. There is cause for concern, but no justification for panic. Rather than hit the panic button, spend that energy thinking about how Christians should glorify God in our economic lives. We should watch the developments and debates in Washington and New York with interest, but we should investigate our own hearts with even greater urgency. 

The Fruit of the Spirit (6): Peace (2)

Pace certainly is a precious gift of God.

As the fruit of the Spirit, it is a gift of grace by the operation of the Spirit of Christ in our hearts. It is the gift of the knowledge and assurance of our peace with God through the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In addition to the knowledge and enjoyment of our peace with God, there is also that part of peace which affects our relationships with our spouses, children, fellow believers, and all whom God is pleased to bring upon our individual and unique pathways. In fact, the enjoyment of peace in our earthly relationships is the

perspective that Galatians 5:22 emphasizes when it speaks of peace along with the other parts of the fruit of the Spirit.

One place in Scripture that describes that place of peace in the daily life of the believer is Colossians 3:15. There the Lord admonishes the redeemed and justified believer to "...let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body."



There is only one true peace, and that is the peace of God. We noticed in our previous article that this peace cannot be found in the world and that this peace the world will never have. The peace of God is the peace that Christ leaves with us and gives unto us by His Spirit on the basis of His perfect and complete atonement. This is the peace in which

we know that we are right with God by faith alone, and not by or because of our works. This is the peace that passes all understanding (Phil. 4:7) and for us is very precious. It is the prayer of the saints in Psalm 122 that this peace flourish in the church. Sweet, spiritual harmony and unity in the doctrinal truth and the new life of our Lord Jesus Christ is the peace that we desire to be enjoyed among the brethren.

Now, how shall we enjoy that peace in this life? Just as we know the forgiveness of our sin by our heavenly Father in the way of our forgiving the sins of those who sin against us, so also we enjoy our peace with God in the way of being a blessed peacemaker (Matt. 5:9), by doing those things "which make for peace" (Rom. 14:19), and by letting the peace of God rule in our hearts.

The kind of spiritual rule or

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government that we must desire for the peace of God in our life is illustrated by an umpire. The word "rule" in Colossians 3:15 refers to the work and position of an umpire or referee. We know that an umpire in a baseball game, a judge in a track and field event, or a referee in a hockey game determines whether the contestants compete fairly, applies the rules of conduct and fair play, and resolves any disputes between athletes or teams in order to maintain proper conduct and orderliness during the game or event. The umpire, judge, or referee ensures and promotes orderliness as the teams compete for the ultimate prize of the contest.

Unlike the goal of many ball teams and athletes today, the goal of the believer is peace in his relationship with his neighbor, especially in the home and in the church. His goal in life ought to be the enjoyment of the peace of God. Sometimes that goal is sought through spiritual warfare against spiritual enemies. Often it is pursued through the things that make for peace among the brethren. Whatever the situation may be, the ultimate goal is true peace.

At the very same time, that peace of God must be honored as the umpire or referee in our pursuit of peace. The peace of God ought to be enthroned as the referee to regulate and govern the conscience, thoughts, motives, reasons, decisions, speech, and attitudes. The peace of God is needed to remind us constantly that we must remain within the boundaries of love, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, meekness, faithfulness, and self control, which make for peace among the brethren. This is the peace that must be the umpire and must rule in our life.

It is not the fruit of the Spirit that we allow the peace of man to be umpire, to which we are

prone. In our sin, we do not want to turn the other cheek or forgive seventy times seven. We are prone to let the referees of revenge, retaliation, pride, selfishness, and love of earthly glory govern our hearts, minds, souls, and strength. Instead of the peace of God as umpire, we are prone to let the principle of making the one who sins against us to pay for his offense and to suffer great misery because of it. When we are offended, we are prone to fight back in a sinful zeal for our own interests and pride. It is not difficult for us to examine our own lives and conduct and find examples of our failures to let the peace of God rule and instead to allow sin and unbelief to enforce their rules in our speech and conduct.

When the peace of God rules in him, the believer lives and behaves in submission to the peace of God. When true peace is umpire, the believer does not retaliate in kind, but he follows the example of Christ, who did not retaliate when He was unjustly afflicted by wicked men (I Pet. 2:23). When the peace of God rules in his life, the believer lives in the truth that God did not make war with us when we sinned against Him. In fact, when we were guilty of war with Christ, He died for us in order to redeem us from our warfare against Him and to unite us to Himself in the bonds of love and peace.

That truth determines that our conduct towards those who sin against us ought to follow the truth of what God has done to us in Christ. Since God made peace with us through the blood

of Christ, so must we, in response to those who sin against us, make peace and reconciliation at the foot of the cross with brother, sister, spouse, child, fellow member in the church, and whatever neighbor the Lord may be pleased to bring upon our pathway.

As umpire, the peace of God ought to govern our attitudes towards those who do us good and towards those who do evil against us. When we remember the peace of God and submit to the truth that God made peace with us, our attitude towards those who do evil against us will become characterized by humility, love, and calmness. This fruit of the Spirit of peace is the opposite of a flaring, fire-cracker temper and a contentious, bullying spirit.

As a result, the peace of God as umpire will affect the manner of our conduct towards others. It guides us away from the extremes that are poisonous and toward those things that make for peace in the church and the home. It guards us from conduct that is overzealous, like a ram-

When we step outside the boundaries of godly conduct, the spiritual referee of God's Word functions as a mighty blast, like a shrill-sounding, heart-pricking referee's whistle!

bunctious bull in an antique shop, and from conduct that is spiritually lazy, like a slimy slug crossing a sidewalk. The peace of God guides us down the paths of wisdom and prudence in our life with one another. When we step outside the boundaries of godly conduct, the spiritual referee of God's Word func-

tions as a mighty blast, like a shrill-sounding, heart-pricking referee's whistle! If necessary, we need the referee of peace to prick our hearts by the Word and, if necessary, to chastise us with a firm rebuke.

The peace of God has as its ultimate goal the glory and honor of God. Peace may never be bro-

kered at the expense of God's glory, honor, name, and truth. The true peace of God, which shines forth with the truths of His sovereign, irresistible grace, honors the name of God. And when that peace rules in our hearts, we are directed unto the same goal of God's glory and in the same way of faithfulness to the truth of our peace with God in Christ Jesus.



Now, where does the desire and obedience that the peace of God rule our relationships in life begin? This begins in the heart. The Spirit must work this remarkable and sweet fruit of peace in us. He must work not only the peace of the forgiveness of our sins, but also the peace of the forgiveness of those who sin against us.

For the growth and maintenance of that peace with one another, there is the gift of prayer. Faithful submission to the preaching the Word of the gospel develops and maintains this peace. In the way of thoughts that are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report, this peace is nurtured. Another chief way is living with one another in the way of confession of sin, forgiveness, and reconciliation in the blood of Jesus Christ. Living in contentment and in humility serves the enjoyment of the gift of peace among brethren in the Lord.

Our daily experience shows that the maintenance of peace in the home and in the church is always accomplished through struggle. The Lord has it that way for us in this life so that we do not boast in ourselves and, instead, continually seek and trust Him alone for the grace to live in this fruit of the Spirit.

In that regard, we may understand that the reason for the rule of peace in our hearts is that we are called into one body (Col. 3:15). We are not created and called by Christ into a body of

disunity, but into His fellowship and life, which is one life. Since we are called into that one body of Christ and the life of that body is the peace and unity of Christ, it follows that then we ought to pursue the expression of that unity in the home and in the church. We ought to desire even that unbelievers who are brought providentially upon our pathway be called out of the disunity and enmity of their sin and unbelief into the unity of repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ alone. Furthermore, with that as the reason for our pursuit of true peace, we will seek the peace and prosperity of the church first. That may require that we deny ourselves, swallow our pride, and sacrifice our preferences, lest we injure and interrupt the peace of the home or the congregation. The blessed peacemaker will at the expense of himself let peace rule and reign.

When we consider how this fruit comes to visible expression in God's people now, it is evident that we depend upon the Spirit of Christ to produce this blessed fruit in us and to make the means of its growth effective in our hearts and lives. What a blessing it is when the Spirit by His grace gives us the opportunities to harvest and taste this fruit in our lives. The taste of peace and unity with the brethren is of great delight!



However, the difficulty of the enjoyment of this peace in this life is shown by examples in Scripture. For example, do you remember the sharp disagreement between the apostles Paul and Barnabas over the question of whether John Mark should be taken on the second missionary journey? Barnabas was determined to take John Mark. The apostle Paul determined that it would not be good to take John Mark because of his past depar-

ture from the missionary team on the earlier journey. The lines of disagreement were clear. The contention between the two was so sharp they were forced to part ways. There is no question in our minds about the orthodoxy either of Paul or of Barnabas. They were equally committed and faithful servants of Christ. Yet, in God's providence, for the peace of the church and the good of the church, they parted ways according to the Lord's good pleasure (Acts 15:36-41).

I am quite sure that you can readily think of such situations in your own lives where for a time, due to struggle, sin, or controversy against false doctrine, the enjoyment of peace was affected adversely and even interrupted for a time.

Nevertheless, it is through such struggle and through reconciliation in the Lord, in faithfulness to the truth of God's Word and to a life that follows from the truth of God's Word, that by the grace of God the peace enjoyed afterwards becomes more precious and dear to those who truly desire in prayer and pursue in word and deed the peace of Zion here below.

You and I do take the blessed fruit of peace for granted all too often. We learn that fault especially when the Lord humbles us and withholds from us the enjoyment of His peace in times of testing, controversy, struggle, and our own sins. May we pray all the more earnestly that by the power of the blood of Christ and His Spirit peace may reign in our hearts and lives, and that we may delight to have Christ, our Peace, so rule in and among us.

*How pleasant and how good it is
When brethren in the Lord
In one another's joy delight
And dwell in sweet accord.*

(Psalter No. 369,
stanza 1)



The Heidelberg Catechism: Its History, Character, and Value

In this column I plan to comment, Lord's Day by Lord's Day, on the Heidelberg Catechism. As an introduction, in this article, I will write on the history, character, and value of the Catechism, but in reverse order.

To see the value of the Catechism, we must first understand the value of having "creeds" in a confessing Reformed church. The Heidelberg Catechism is one of the three creeds that constitute our Three Forms of Unity, the other two being the Belgic Confession (sometimes called the Netherlands Confession), and the Canons of Dort. A creed is an adopted statement of a church or denomination that summarizes the beliefs of that church. The teachings of the creed form the doctrinal foundation and confession of that church and its members.

In our creeds we have a summary of what we believe the Bible teaches. A creed is not a statement above or besides the Scriptures, but a summary of what we believe the Scriptures teach. We have creeds because we want to be faithful to biblical doctrine. Whereas Scripture has an inherent authority (it is the Word of God Himself), the creeds have what we can call a "derived" or "dependent" authority. Their

authority is dependent on their faithfulness to the Word of God. Insofar as those creeds are faithful to the Word of God, they are authoritative in their teaching.

Because a church has adopted a certain creed as its own summary statement of the doctrines of Scripture, that creed has binding authority in that church or denomination. It is not that the creed cannot be challenged or changed, but the only proper way for that challenge or change to come is by a member or officebearer addressing his concerns and questions to the governing bodies of the church—to his consistory, and through them to classis and synod. In such a case, the Scriptures themselves become the final court of appeal. A member and officebearer may not publicly contradict what is in the adopted creeds of his church. To do so would not only be an act of rebellion against Christ-ordained government in the church, but also an act of schism in the church.

One important reason for having creeds is that we want to recognize the work of the Holy Spirit in guiding the church in its history into all truth (John 16:13). The church in its history has gone through countless struggles against false doctrine, and out of those struggles the Spirit has led the church to understand what the teaching of Scripture is in certain areas of doctrine. The creeds are the positive fruit of the struggles of the church in the past. Because we recognize these

struggles of the church in the past, because we want to stand in the doctrine of the apostles and prophets (Eph. 2:20), and because we want the church to be founded on its only Cornerstone, Jesus Christ, we have and we value these confessions that have been written and adopted by the church in the past. A creed identifies the church today with the church in the past. Any given church or congregation is not an island, standing all alone, but the church has a unity in Christ that extends from the beginning to the end of the world. In having creeds, we stand united with the church of the past, confessing our unity in Christ.

The value of the creeds has to do, not only with the past, but also the present and the future. A creed is a confession that binds churches to each other, and so they are an expression of our unity in the present with other believers and churches. A change in the confessions is something that a church should make with great care, hesitation, and reluctance, and in consultation with other churches that hold that creed. When churches change the confessional statements of their church, they are moving away, not only from the church of the past, but also from other churches that hold to the same creeds. The creeds are not only the foundation of a particular church's confession, but the creeds are also the ground and starting point for churches that work together in

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interchurch relationships toward ecclesiastical unity.

Another aspect of the present value of the creeds is that they are an excellent teaching tool in the church, not only for new converts, but also for the covenant youth of the church and the general membership. This is something we acknowledge every week in our use of the Heidelberg Catechism as the foundation for one sermon each Lord's Day.

Every believer will have questions about the meaning of Scripture in different areas, and the creeds help and guide us in answering these questions. They do this because they take the whole of the Scripture's teaching on one particular doctrine and bring it together in a summary statement. For example, someone may ask, "What does the Bible teach about the Trinity?" and we can direct them to Articles 8 and 9 of the Belgic Confession and to Lord's Day 8 of the Heidelberg Catechism. From here a person can look at all the different passages of Scripture that are given as proof or support of the creeds' teaching and can see what the Scriptures teach on the Trinity.

This is particularly important with regard to the youth in the church, because it gives them the same doctrinal foundation as their parents. This bodes well also for the church in the future. If a church does not build on the doctrinal foundation of the past, then a church will go backwards. A church develops and grows doctrinally and is led into all truth by the Spirit, by using the creeds written down in the past as the foundation for subsequent expression and development of doctrine.

The creeds also serve the purpose of guarding the church against error. I think of Psalm 125: "As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about his people from henceforth even for ever." The creeds are one important

means that God uses to protect and maintain, not only truth, but His church and its members.

The church has and has always had enemies. These enemies try to destroy the church and people of God especially by undermining the doctrinal foundation of the church. Sometimes this is overt, when a heretic teaches something that is explicitly unbiblical. At other times this is more subtle, when an important biblical doctrine is minimized or rarely if ever preached and taught. In both cases, the creeds help to protect the church against such attacks. The creeds are the church's answer to heresy and heretics. They guard against the rise of false teachers, because whenever a person begins to teach something that is in error, he is immediately opposed, not only by people, but by the standard that the church has adopted in her confessions. Creeds give very little wiggle room for a heretic in the church.

This highlights the importance of knowing our confessions and having their content regularly taught, studied, and explained. When the teaching of the creeds is minimized or ignored, the church soon loses its commitment to truth. A regular explanation of the creeds, such as is practiced in Heidelberg Catechism preaching, forces the church to deal with all the major doctrines or teachings of Scripture, and in this way keeps us from ignoring important doctrines.

Of our Three Forms of Unity, the Heidelberg Catechism is the most well-known and loved. This is in part due to its regular use in preaching, but also because of its warm and personal approach to doctrine. The motif of the Heidelberg Catechism is comfort, and the approach is personal. Each Lord's Day seeks to show how truth has application in the life of the believer by putting its questions and answers in

the first person (I, my, we, our). This makes our confession in the Heidelberg Catechism real and personal. A creed could simply, and rather abstractly, state that the Bible says such and such on a particular doctrine. It could state all the doctrines with accuracy and explain them quite completely, and yet not have this personal flavor. But then it would not be a "confession," but only a "summary" of doctrines. A "confession" is a personal agreement with doctrine, and therefore a creed should be personal.

When a young person makes confession of faith, he is sometimes asked, "Why are you making confession of faith, and why in this church?" Sometimes an answer will be, "Because this church teaches the doctrines of Scripture faithfully." That is a good answer, but it is not a complete answer, because there is nothing personal in it. A personal confession says, "I know my sin, and I know that Jesus is the only way to the Father and that I need Him, and I believe in Him with all my heart and trust in Him for all my salvation."

And here the Heidelberg Catechism shines above every other Reformed confession with which I am familiar. It is personal. It is a statement of what the individual believes and confesses about himself. When it treats the subject of man's depravity, it is personal. Not, "Is man able to keep God's law?" but "Canst thou keep all these things perfectly?" And the answer, "In no wise, for I am prone by nature to hate God and my neighbor" (Q&A 5). Not, "Is man so corrupt that he is wholly incapable of doing any good, and inclined to all wickedness?" but, "Are we then so corrupt that we are wholly incapable of doing any good and inclined to all wickedness?" (Q&A 8). And so the Catechism goes on in every area of doctrine.

This approach is rewarding

because it brings comfort to the child of God, it brings him hope, it increases his faith, it brings assurance and peace. Any explanation of the Catechism, whether in preaching or in writing, must do justice to the personal character of the Catechism. Every teenager who learns the Catechism must hear the words coming out of his mouth, must recognize the personal, first-person nature of those words, and must learn to express all his faith in this personal way.

We are not very good at this. We are good at understanding and articulating doctrine, we are good at defending truth from Scripture, the history of the church, and the creeds, but we

are not very good at confessing our faith in a personal way. This is dangerous because it creates a disconnect of mind and heart, a division of faith and life. And when that happens, then a person, or a church, though its stated confession may be pure, really has no love for God and sees no value in maintaining a doctrinal position or in living in a godly way. If our faith is personal, then we will also have a close personal life and walk with the Lord from day to day, like Enoch, who walked with God.

Historically, the Catechism was written as a manual for the catechetical instruction of

the youth. Frederick III, of the German Electorate of the Palatinate, commissioned two young preachers (in their twenties), Zacharius Ursinus and Caspar Olevianus, to write it with that purpose. As I close this article, I want to encourage you to have the young people in your home or congregation read these articles. How often isn't it the case that they are "bored" or "looking for something to do" or involved in things detrimental to their spiritual growth? I hope to write these articles in a clear, practical, understandable style, so that they may also benefit the young. And I hope that you will put them in front of the young. 

David Brainerd: Missionary to the North American Indians

Throughout history God raised up men and women who were willing to forsake all personal comfort for the promotion of the gospel. The sacrifices and suffering to which these men and women willingly subjected themselves for the sake of the gospel cause me to blush with shame. As a modern-day missionary in the United States, I have every creature comfort imaginable and am required to make few physical sacrifices for myself and my family. But such was not always the case. God raised up David Brainerd in the 1700s to preach to the American

Indians. Although Brainerd's missionary career lasted a mere four years, and he died at the young age of 29, his selfless devotion to Christ is an inspiration to us today.

By the early 1700s there were many thriving towns in America along the Atlantic coast and inland along the waterways. But outside of these tamed areas there were miles of wilderness that were occupied only by American Indians who were steeped in paganism and superstition. As immigrants landed on the shores of America, one would have expected there to have been more interaction with these natives. There were some who sought to be a spiritual influence for good to these natives, but the main influence was negative. John

Thornbury writes: "Most of the 'Christian' Englishmen, with whom they came into contact, taught them to shoot instead of read, and drink instead of pray. Far from instilling in their minds the principles of Christian honesty, they cheated them out of their furs and ornaments, and instead of teaching them to love their fellow men, they drove them like beasts from their homelands."¹

Brainerd was not the first to establish a work among the American Indians. Already in 1631 a certain John Elliot immigrated to America from England and devoted his life to ministry among the Indians. Elliot spent

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¹ John Thornbury. *Five Pioneer Missionaries*, "David Brainerd." Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1965, p. 15.

over fifty years translating the Bible into the Mohican dialect, translating theological works into their language, as well as preparing an English grammar for them. Before Elliot died in 1690 there was a considerable community of believers among the natives. Brainerd, however, was one of the first to go into the wilderness and try to live with the Indians.

David Brainerd was born on April 20, 1718 as the third son of Hezekiah and Dorothy (nee Hobart) Brainerd. Both Hezekiah and Dorothy were strong Puritans, with Dorothy coming from a long line of pastors. God blessed Hezekiah and Dorothy with five sons and one daughter, and four of the Brainerd sons were ordained into the ministry.

David's father passed away when David was only eight years old, and about five years later his mother died, leaving him an orphan by the time he was fourteen years old. After living with friends, David, at the age of nineteen, moved back to farm the family land in Durham, Connecticut, but shortly thereafter decided to pursue an education at Yale. During his teen years David was a serious-minded young man who was deeply concerned about his own sin and spent much time reading the Bible and praying.

During this time of his life Brainerd struggled with especially three doctrines—the strictness of the law, faith alone as the condition to salvation, and the sovereignty of God. By the summer of 1739, after considerable prayer, fasting, and study, Brainerd was brought to confess the absolute sovereignty of God; his own inability to keep God's commandments; and the awareness that all his attempts to merit the favor of God by religious experience or exercises were completely worthless. The great doctrines of grace became the source of great joy and delight to him. Now he

desired to promote the unspeakable glory of his Redeemer.

Brainerd was caught up in the extraordinary religious upheaval that shook New England in the 1730s and 40s under the ministry of Jonathan Edwards and George Whitefield. Yale opposed the special meetings being held, but Brainerd attended them, in part leading to his being expelled from Yale. Brainerd later apologized to the authorities for his actions. But God had a purpose in directing Brainerd's thoughts to the Indian tribes scattered around his homeland and in the vast areas to the west.

In the summer of 1742 David was examined and licensed to preach. As he began to preach in the churches, he made known his interest in working among the Indians. About the same time, the Society in Scotland for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge started working on behalf of the American Indians. Local men in New York and New Jersey were appointed to oversee the work, and funds were given for two missionaries. Azariah Horton was first called to the work, and then Brainerd was commissioned to begin work among the non-evangelized Indians living in Kaunaumeeck, New York. After a long, difficult horse ride, he came to the first group of Indians and began preaching to them on April 10, 1743.

Within a short time Brainerd was discouraged by the poverty, loneliness, and difficult travel, coupled with the lack of interest by the Indians. He began to pick up more and more of the language of the Indians and finally was aided by an interpreter. After a year in Kaunaumeeck he had built himself a small hut to live in and was able to provide for himself and his horse. He had learned the Indian language well enough to communicate. But by the spring of 1744 things did not appear to be developing in

Kaunaumeeck. Brainerd decided to make a trip south to the Forks of the Delaware.

While Brainerd was making the journey to Delaware, messengers arrived from New York who wanted him to come to be their pastor. They offered him a very attractive opportunity in one of the wealthiest churches of Long Island. But Brainerd resisted this temptation to settle down in a pleasant community and labor among an appreciative people. Brainerd also met and was tempted to settle down and marry Jerusha Edwards, daughter of Jonathan Edwards. But David Brainerd believed that God wanted him to remain in the difficult life in the wilderness with the Indians.

After a year of spreading the gospel along the Forks of the Delaware, there was again little fruit on his labors. Although there were some emotional responses to his preaching, there were no converts to Christianity. He learned of some Indians living eighty-five miles south in Crossweeksung. He made the difficult trip there and from the beginning experienced a tremendous response. Interest in the preaching increased every day, until they requested him to preach twice a day to them. He labored for a few weeks, and the number of hearers continued to increase.

By the end of 1745 there were outstanding instances of the power of the gospel at Crossweeksung. "On August 25, with a considerable crowd of Indians and whites looking on, Brainerd baptized the converts. After the spectators were gone he reminded the new-born souls of the solemn obligations they were now under to live to God, and warned them of the dangerous consequences of careless behavior after a profession of faith. The evangelist was now becoming the pastor of a believing flock."¹ For the next

¹ Thornbury, p. 48.

years Brainerd labored among both groups of Indians, but the traveling back and forth increasingly took its toll on him.

In June of 1746 Brainerd prepared a detailed report for his mission board that gives us an insight into what he saw were the biggest difficulties involved in mission work among the Indians. It is interesting that most of these continue to be challenges to the work of evangelism today.

First, the Indians were strongly antagonistic toward Christianity. This animosity came in part due to the nominal, worldly white Christians. The immorality and wicked behavior of so-called Christians caused the Indians to believe that this was characteristic of Christianity. Attempts to condemn lying, stealing, drinking, immorality, etc. were met with the accusation that the Indians were worse off now that they had met the white Christians. Rather than Christianity being of help to them, it had made the Indians more wicked and miserable than they were previously. Brainerd was constantly distinguishing nominal Christianity from true Christianity. The Indians were also fearful of being enslaved to others. The Indians were suspicious of acts of kindness, fearing that these were attempts to take them into bondage and to take from them their land.

Second, communication was difficult. There was no uniformity in their language and no written record. It took a long time to learn their many unrelated dialects.

Third, the filthy living, lack of manners, and laziness made it hard to preach and teach among them. Not only would their homes be smoky, cold, and filthy, but the Indians made no effort to improve things. They were poor, but had little ambition to learn a better way of life.

Finally, in addition to the difficulties caused by the nominal

Christians, Brainerd found opposition from other white men to his labors. Those who hated Christianity tried to brainwash the Indians and spread lies about the missionary and his motives.

Brainerd's health continued to fail. After many more difficult trips through the wilderness fighting sickness and coughing up blood, Brainerd was taken in by Jonathan Edwards and nursed by Jerusha as he lay dying of tuberculosis. As he became weaker he expressed his earnest desire for the coming of Christ to deliver him and bring him to glory. These expressions became common in the Edwards home: "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly. Oh, why is His chariot so long in coming!" Brainerd entered his heavenly rest on September 11, 1747. Jerusha ended up dying four months after David, from tuberculosis as well, which she had contracted during the nineteen weeks she selflessly nursed David Brainerd.

Brainerd was an outstanding example of self-sacrifice and suffering for the sake of the kingdom of God. His strength was also his fault in that he did not take care of the body that God gave him.

Brainerd realized this fault at the end of his life and warned his brother who succeeded him in his mission to the Indians to take better care of himself.

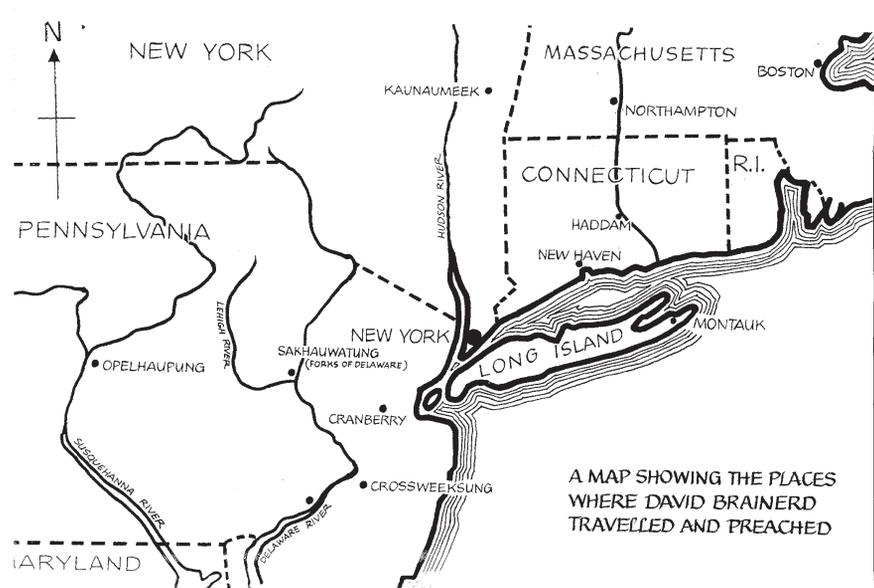
Brainerd's extensive diaries reveal a man who knew his own weaknesses, battled discouragement, and persevered through tremendous hardship. We can learn from Brainerd the need to live with the local people, to be constant in prayer, and to trust the power of the gospel alone to change the hearts and lives of the heathen. May God continue to raise up young men and women who love the truth and are willing to sacrifice for the sake of the spread of the gospel. 

Further Reading:

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An Introduction to Proverbs (1)

Introduction

The book of Proverbs is unique among all the different books of holy Scripture. Like Job, Psalms, Ecclesiastes, and Lamentations it is poetry, but its content is completely unlike that of any of the other poetical books. It is usually grouped with Ecclesiastes as a one of the wisdom writings, but other than sharing an author, is not much like that book either. It resembles Paul's New Testament epistles in that it begins with an intensely doctrinal section and concludes with a practical section, but it is a book that clearly belongs in the Old Testament. Yet, like the books of the New Testament, it focuses on Christ, not as one to come, but as one personally present and speaking. In the Old Testament, only the Psalms compare to it in that respect, but it is unlike the Psalms in almost every other way. It is a unique and wonderful book.

The English and Hebrew names of the book do not really do justice to its content. It is described in chapter 1:1 as "the proverbs of Solomon the son of David, King of Israel," and both the Hebrew and English names come from that verse, "Proverbs" in Hebrew and "The Proverbs" in English, but that does not tell us all we need to know about the book. Proverbs are wise sayings, but the book is not just a collection of wise and

pithy sayings. Perhaps "Wisdom" would be a better title, but it would be hard to find a title that did justice also to the book's prophetic character.

Our purpose in the following articles is not to give a verse by verse explanation of Proverbs, but to give an introduction to the book, focusing on chapters 1-9. These nine chapters are the doctrinal foundation of Proverbs and make the book much more than a collection of wise sayings. The wise sayings or proverbs for which the book is best known are found to some extent in chapters 1-9 but especially in chapters 10-31. Those proverbs are a practical application of the doctrines found in the first nine chapters. The practical and wise sayings for which Proverbs is best known ought not, therefore, be studied except in the light of the doctrines taught in the first nine chapters.

The Poetry

When we think of Proverbs we do not ordinarily think of poetry, but the book is poetry as well as wisdom. Every proverb is a poetic statement, and the book can be thought of as a kind of long poem or collection of poems.

The nature of Hebrew poetry, however, is very different from the kind of poetry to which we are accustomed. There is no rhyme or meter to Hebrew poetry. Its characteristic is something called parallelism. All Hebrew poetry, including Job, Psalms, and Lamentations, as well as portions of the prophetic books, are in this form.

Parallelism makes similar statements that complement and explain each other. This makes it very easy to turn Hebrew poetry into proverbs, so that the parallel statements not only explain each other, but are pithy and wise sayings. The parallelism can be very brief, as in chapters 10-22, where almost every verse is an individual proverb made up of only two parallel statements. But the parallelism can also be longer, as in chapter 26:24-26, where there are six parallel statements that explain each other in three verses.

There are three different kinds of parallelism, usually described as synonymous, antithetic, and synthetic. In synonymous parallelism the statements say the *same* thing but in different ways. In antithetic parallelism they say the *opposite* thing, and in that way explain each other. In synthetic parallelism the statements add to and complete each other, one statement giving part of the truth and the other the rest of it. These different kinds of parallelism can be mixed together in different proverbs, however. The proverb just mentioned, chapter 26:24-26, is a good example. The first statement, "He that hateth dissembleth with his lips," and the second, "and layeth up deceit within him," are synonymous. They say almost the same thing. The third statement, "When he speaketh fair, believe him not," and the fourth, "for there are seven abominations in his heart," are synthetic. They add to and develop the thought of the first two statements. The fifth statement, "Whose hatred is covered

Rev. Hanko is pastor of the Protestant Reformed Church of Lynden, Washington.

by deceit," and the sixth, "his wickedness shall be shewed before the whole congregation," are an example of antithetic parallelism. They say the opposite of each other.

Along with the ordinary proverbs found in the book, there are six proverbs that are very different and can be described as numerical proverbs (Prov. 6:16-19; 30:15-17; 30:18-20; 30:21-23; 30:24-28, and 30:29-31). These begin with a parallel statement of number such as, "there be three things...yea four..." and conclude with a parallel list of the things being numbered. These are unique to the book and are notable for using examples from nature. Most of them are found in the section of Proverbs ascribed to Agur the son of Jakeh. Two of the most striking are found in chapter 30:24-31.

Both in the numerical proverbs and in the all the rest the parallelism is both a teaching tool and a memory aid. That is the case also in the Psalms, in Job, and in Lamentations, though for different reasons. The Psalms are important for memorization because they are church's book of praise. Lamentations is in this form because it speaks of Zion's woes, something that may never be forgotten, that even God does not forget. Proverbs is in the form of parallel poetry because it is so full of the practical wisdom that must be kept in mind in order to live life in the service of God.

The Author

There can be no doubt that Solomon is the principal writer of the book, since he is named in chapter 1:1. Whether there are other secondary writers is a matter of dispute. Also named in Proverbs are Agur the son of Jakeh (30:1) and Lemuel the King (31:1, 4). It is likely that Lemuel, because he is identified as a king, was indeed Solomon, and the

name a symbolic name for him. It is possible that Agur too is another name for Solomon, but it may also be that Agur, which means "gatherer," was not a writer but a compiler of the book. Solomon is the principal human writer, but it is not impossible that material from others was added, since the book was not put together until many years after Solomon died. In the end, though, it makes little difference, since the book is part of the inspired and infallible Word of God. The Holy Spirit is the author of it all.

The book itself tells us that it was not actually written in the days of Solomon, at least not all of it, but in the days of Hezekiah. Proverbs 25:1 says, "These are also proverbs of Solomon, which the men of Hezekiah king of Judah copied out." Whether that refers to what follows or to what precedes or to the whole book is not clear, but at least part of the book was put together about 300 years after Solomon, around 700 B.C. Solomon is the author of the book, therefore, only as the one who spoke many of the proverbs contained in the book. He is not the one who wrote them down, though many of the proverbs may have been written down and preserved while he was still alive.

The Arrangement and Content

I Kings 4:32 tell us that Solomon spoke three thousand proverbs. We have only a selection of his wisdom in the book of Proverbs, therefore. Depending on how one counts, and recognizing the fact that many proverbs are longer than just one verse, there are somewhere between 500 and 600 proverbs recorded in the book. These are interspersed with discourses and exhortations (the main content of chapters 1-9), a story (24:30-34), a confession (30:1-6), a prayer (30:7-9), and the description of a virtuous woman, which is found in the last chapter (chapter 31).

The book falls into two main parts, chapters 1-9, composed of a series of speeches by two different persons, and chapters 10-31, which are composed mainly of individual proverbs. In the first part we find the doctrinal teaching of Proverbs, and in the second part the practical application of the doctrine, though there is also application in chapters 1-9. In these two main parts, Proverbs further divides itself into six different sections: (1) an introduction to the book: chapter 1:1-7; (2) a father's speeches to his son in which wisdom and foolishness are characterized as two women: chapters 2:1-7:27; (3) wisdom's speeches: chapters 1:8-33; 8:1-9:18; (4) wisdom set forth in proverbs: chapters 10-29; (5) the wisdom of Agur: chapter 30; and (6) the wisdom of Lemuel: chapter 31 (including the description of the virtuous woman).

The first section, chapters 1-9, therefore, is all speeches, a father's exhortations to his son, and the three speeches of wisdom. These are in the form of a conversation between a father and his son, who is identified as Wisdom. The father's exhortations are eleven: chapter 1:7-19, and, after wisdom's first speech, the other ten in 2:1-22; 3:1-10; 3:11-20; 3:21-35; 4:1-9; 4:10-27; 5:1-23; 6:1-19; 6:20-35; and 7:1-27. Wisdom's first speech is found in chapter 1:20-33 following the father's first speech, and then, after ten more exhortations by the father, two more speeches in chapter 8:1-36 and chapter 9:1-18. In these discourses and exhortations, wisdom is portrayed as speaking in response to his father's advice and good counsel, and these three speeches or discourses are the heart of the book of Proverbs.

The Theme

The message of the book can be described in one word, "wisdom." Wisdom as a necessary

virtue and gift of God can be described as the spiritual ability to use and do everything in the service of God and for the glory of God, and certainly Proverbs teaches wisdom in that sense. But to describe wisdom only in terms of its practice does not explain what wisdom really is. In proverbs, wisdom is not only *something* but *someone*. It is not only a spiritual gift, but a person, Christ himself.

Chapter 8 especially shows us that wisdom is not only being *compared* to a person, but *is* a person, one who was with God from eternity (8:22-31), God's only begotten Son. Just as He is the living Word of God (John 1:1, 2), so He is also the living Wisdom

of God. He is "Christ, the power of God and the wisdom of God" (I Cor. 1:24). It is He whom we hear speaking in chapters 1-9.

This makes the teaching of Proverbs more than mere moralizing.¹ Because wisdom is Christ and Christ is wisdom, Proverbs is the gospel, and in Proverbs the call of the gospel is clearly sounded. Proverbs reminds us that to have wisdom one must have Christ, and that without Him a person remains forever a

¹ Moralizing is a very common form of legalism in which people are told to be good, without being shown in Christ's saving work the only possibility of being or doing good. It is the law without the gospel and has never converted a single soul or made anyone holy.

fool who will perish in his folly. Wisdom is necessary to deliver us from hell, and wisdom is possible only in the person and work of the Son of God.

Proverbs does not speak explicitly of Christ's suffering and death on the cross, but that lies behind the identification of wisdom and Christ. It is in the cross, as Paul points out in I Corinthians 1:23, 24, that the wisdom of God is revealed and that Christ becomes the revelation of God's wisdom. The cross demonstrates for all time that God is able, by a wisdom that transcends the thinking of this world, to make fools wise and to do all that is necessary to teach them true wisdom. 

Henry Danhof (5)

Standing in the Gap in Kalamazoo

In her spiritual warfare against the hosts of darkness, the church of Jesus Christ needs men to stand in the gap. The idea of standing in the gap is scriptural. God told Judah's prophets that Judah was taken captive because, "Ye have not gone up into the gaps, neither made up the hedge for the house of Israel to stand in the battle in the day of the LORD" (Ezek. 13:5). The figure is that of an army defending a city against the attack of an enemy. The "hedges" are the city's walls and fortifications.

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Previous article in this series: August 2008, p. 443.

The "gaps" are those places where the enemy concentrates its attack, so as to break through the defenses and gain control of the city. If no man will stand in the gaps to oppose the enemies as they try to break through, the city is lost.

So it is with the church of Jesus Christ. She has her bulwarks and defenses, which are the doctrines of the Word of God, as confessed and summarized in her creeds. The enemies concentrate their attack first on this truth, then on that truth, and then on the godly life that follows from yet another truth. The church must have men, raised up by God, who will stand in the gap and defend the truth of God's Word.

Even in Judah's day, that was a thoroughly spiritual activity. It was the *prophets* who failed to stand in the gap and proclaim the truth of God, instead "prophesying out of their own hearts" (Ezek. 13:2). The nation was not overcome by a physical army so much as it was by falsehood and wickedness (Ezek. 22:29-31). If standing in the gap was a necessary spiritual activity in Old Testament Judah, then it is still the New Testament Judah's need today. The church must have men to stand in the gap.

Such a man was Henry Danhof during his early years in Kalamazoo, Michigan. God raised up this man to defend and develop the truth in opposition to several attacks upon it. God

raised up this minister to stand in the gap.

In July of 1918, Henry Danhof accepted a call from the First Christian Reformed Church of Kalamazoo to leave Dennis Avenue CRC in Grand Rapids and come over and help.¹ While in seminary, Danhof had supplied the pulpit for First CRC of Kalamazoo a number of times, so he was somewhat acquainted with the members. By the beginning of August, he was hard at work in his new charge. During this time, God gave the Danhofs their fifth and final child, Helen.

By the time the Danhofs arrived in Kalamazoo, the Christian Reformed denomination was already suffering attacks on the doctrine of the antithesis, and the godly life that goes hand in hand with it.² One element in the denomination contended that the mostly-Dutch CRC should not resist the culture of America as inherently evil, but should work to conform itself to the American environment. The word they used to describe their position was "Americanization." One historian characterized Americanization as the process that "served both to bring to an end the exclusive preoccupation of the Christian Reformed people with specifically Dutch problems and to allow the impact of their American environment to strike them with concentrated force."³

¹ Many of the biographical details in this article come from several anniversary booklets of the First Protestant CRC of Kalamazoo, later known as Grace CRC.

² This history is chronicled in two works: James D. Bratt, *Dutch Calvinism in Modern America: A History of a Conservative Subculture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 93-104; and David J. Engelsma, "An Introduction to Henry Danhof's 'The Idea of the Covenant of Grace,'" *Protestant Reformed Theological Journal*, XXIX, no. 2 (April 1996), 53ff.

³ John Kromminga, *The Christian Reformed Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1949), 86.

However, the real aim of the Americanization party was not quite so innocent as all that.

The deceptive watchword of this party was "Americanization." The word was deceptive because that which this party sought was not conformity to the innocent ways of America—language and clothes—but conformity to the corrupt ways of the world: the higher critical doctrines regarding the Holy Scriptures of European unbelief, as well as other distinctly un-Reformed teachings; the principles and practices of the ungodly labor unions; fellowship with the works of darkness in worldly amusements.⁴

Danhof stepped into the gap with a speech delivered to a Christian Reformed Ministers' Conference in 1919. Assembled were some of the most influential Christian Reformed ministers of the day, including Jan Karl Van Baalen, an outspoken defender of Americanization. Danhof's speech was entitled, "*De Idee van het Genadeverbond*" ("The Idea of the Covenant of Grace"). His purpose was to show that the doctrine of the covenant has a definite application to the life of the antithesis. The race of man is "organically bound together during this earthly dispensation."⁵ Although this race consists of an elect seed and a reprobate husk, it yet remains one race, and as one race it grows and develops. Nevertheless, the members of this race

differ radically...in their spiritual relation to God.... [T]hat different relation to their Creator, the Fount of their life, is the wedge which causes them, with their opposing world-and-life views,

⁴ David J. Engelsma, "An Introduction to Henry Danhof's 'The Idea of the Covenant of Grace,'" 53, 54.

⁵ The quotations from Danhof's speech come from Prof. David Engelsma's translation, published in Volumes 29-32 of the *Protestant Reformed Theological Journal*.

to separate to the right and left in every sphere, even to the smallest details, and with compelling consequences.

The church, although living as one race with the world, must not rush into the arms of the world. Rather, there is a life of antithesis dividing the two, resulting in a spiritual battle. "As covenant companion of God, [the regenerated man] fights the Lord's battle." The conclusion to such a speech must be that Americanization, in the sense of intimacy with the wicked, ungodly practices of the world, is not possible. The wicked develop as friends of Satan, the righteous as friends of God. There is no room for spiritual cooperation as the two develop toward their respective ends. Van Baalen and those of like mind were furious. But the gap had been defended.

The second main attack Danhof had to face was that of higher criticism. Higher criticism is an attack on the reliability and truthfulness of Scripture itself. The result is that Scripture is set aside in favor of the teachings of worldly specialists. In 1921, Danhof wrote an article in the December issue of the periodical *The Witness*, entitled "Faith in the Spade." In it, he contended that God's Word must not be set aside in favor of the findings of archaeology and science. Echoing this same theme years later, Danhof wrote,

The modern mind is inclined to faith in man. Present-day notables in the realm of science and research have faith in themselves and in their tools. By means of their own instruments they seek to explore, discover, compare, correct, reconstruct, and establish. Most liberals of recent times trust in the spade.... Modern historical-scientific research has strong leanings to subjective, rationalistic, humanistic higher criticism.⁶

⁶ This article appeared in one of Danhof's undated church bulletins.

The battle for Scripture's reliability became especially heated during the Janssen controversy.¹ At Calvin Theological Seminary, Dr. Ralph Janssen was coming under increasing suspicion by his fellow professors. In 1919 they sent a request to Calvin Seminary's Board of Trustees to have Professor Janssen's views examined, although they did not lodge any specific complaints with the Board. The Board of Trustees refused to consider this request because the professors had not first talked to Dr. Janssen. The four professors, L. Berkhof, W. Heyns, S. Volbeda, and F. Ten Hoor, next appealed to the 1920 Synod of the Christian Reformed Church, where their appeal was

¹ A thorough history of this case can be found in: Herman Hoeksema, *The Protestant Reformed Churches in America* (Grand Rapids: First Protestant Reformed Church, n.d.), 14-26; and in Herman Hanko, "A Study of the Relation Between the Views of Prof. R. Janssen and Common Grace" (Master's Thesis, Calvin Theological Seminary, 1988), 9-39.

soundly defeated. However, suspicion against Dr. Janssen soon began to grow, as more and more of his views surfaced. He was suspected of teaching higher critical views of Scripture and of denying the supernatural aspect of miracles. It was during this time of growing suspicion that Rev. Danhof entered the scene via his signature at the bottom of a pamphlet entitled "*Waar het in de Zaak Janssen om Gaat*" ("The Point at Issue in the Janssen Case"), which was published as a reply to one of Dr. Janssen's writings. It was also signed by the four professors and three other ministers, one of whom was Rev. Herman Hoeksema.

By 1921 the matter was becoming so heated that the Board of Trustees of Calvin Theological Seminary again took up the case. Rev. Danhof, along with Rev. H. Hoeksema and five other Christian Reformed ministers, was assigned to a committee to investigate the teachings of Dr. Janssen. Poring over student notes that had been collected largely

by Rev. Hoeksema, the committee soon found itself divided over whether Dr. Janssen was in error or not. Rev. Danhof and Rev. Hoeksema were among those who believed that Dr. Janssen's views must be condemned, and they submitted their majority report to the Board of Trustees, which report "was throughout critical of Dr. Janssen and condemnatory of his views."² The case came before the Christian Reformed synod in 1922 in Orange City, Iowa, at which synod "Dr. Janssen's views were condemned and he was relieved of his professorship at the Theological School."³

The third main gap in which Henry Danhof had to stand was the "common grace" controversy. A brief history of Danhof's part in this struggle will have to wait until next time. 

² Herman Hanko, "A Study of the Relation Between the Views of Prof. R. Janssen and Common Grace," p. 31.

³ Herman Hoeksema, *The Protestant Reformed Churches in America*, p. 20.

News From Our Churches

Mr. Benjamin Wigger

Mission Activities

Rev. M. VanderWal, pastor of the Hope PRC in Redlands, CA, became the first pastor of our denomination to preach for Tucson PR Fellowship after the DMC decided to send supply there for the next few months. He preached for them on September 28. The DMC is presently working on supplying preaching for various weeks during November. Beginning in December there will

be more consistent labor, with Rev. S. Houck there for the first three weeks in December, and then Rev. J. Kortering for January through March. You can learn more about this group from their website www.tucsonprotestant-reformed.org. The DMC encourages members of our churches to visit these saints and worship with them.

On Sunday, September 21, the congregation of First PRC in Grand Rapids, MI enjoyed a light lunch after their evening service, followed by a brief presentation from AIM (Active In Missions). Members of this committee informed the members of

First about their recent projects and current activities. In addition, an "Introduction to the Protestant Reformed Churches in America" DVD was distributed. This DVD was produced by AIM at the request of the DMC so that individual members could give these out to people who might be interested in knowing what our churches believe. This event was the first of a series of five Sunday-evening-luncheon events (one each month), hosted by the evangelism and fellowship committees of First Church.

Members of the Covenant of Grace PR Fellowship in Spokane, WA sponsored a special Seminar

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

and Exposition on the Covenant of Grace over two Sundays in October. This special event featured Prof. H. Hanko, who spoke four times on the covenant of grace that God establishes in Christ with believers and their seed. This seminar focused on the teaching of the Word of God and setting forth the Scriptures on this rich truth of the gospel. Prof. Hanko spoke October 3 on "The Idea or Essence of the Covenant," followed by "The Unconditionality of the Covenant" at the Sunday evening worship service of Covenant of Grace on October 5. The following Friday, October 10, Prof. Hanko lectured again on the covenant under the theme, "The Unity of the Covenant and the Different Administrations," followed Sunday evening, October 12, with "The Promise to Believers and Their Seed."

Evangelism Activities

On October 10 the congregation of the Faith PRC in Jenison, MI hosted an evening with Rev. J. Kortering. Rev. Kortering was there to give a speech on personal evangelism. After the speech, time was also provided for questions and answers.

The Evangelism Society of Georgetown PRC in Hudsonville, MI asked that the Sunday morning worship service of October 12 be an opportunity to hear God's Word concerning the persecution of the church (II Tim. 3:12). After the service the congregation was invited to return to the sanctuary to view a DVD from Voice of the Martyrs, which featured modern day saints who experience this horrendous reality.

The Evangelism Committee of the Kalamazoo, MI PRC hosted a potluck dinner following their Sunday morning worship service on October 12.

Rev. A. Stewart, pastor of Covenant PRC in Ballymena,

Northern Ireland, took part in a televised debate in London on October 2. Rev. Stewart debated Pastor Timothy Ramsay on Calvinism vs. Arminianism.

Rev. Stewart traveled to Limerick, Northern Ireland on October 17 to lecture on "Marriage, the Mystery of Christ and the Church."

Congregation Activities

On October 3 and 4 the Trinity PRC in Hudsonville, MI invited all current deacons, past deacons, and those who desire the office of deacon to a conference at Trinity on the topic of "The Work of the Deacons in a Tough Economy." Rev. D. J. Kuiper, pastor of the Randolph, WI PRC, gave a speech on "The Principles of the Work of the Diaconate." Rev. R. Kleyn, Trinity's pastor, spoke on "Instructing in Stewardship," and there was a panel discussion on "Being a Deacon in a Tough Economy." CDs or DVDs of the conference can be ordered by contacting Jon Drnek at 616-669-3402. MP3s of the three sessions, as well as outlines, slides, and other resources, can be downloaded from Trinity PRC's website trinityprc.org.

The Adult Bible Society of Southeast PRC in Grand Rapids, MI hosted this fall's annual Mass Meeting of the League of PR Adult Bible Societies at First PRC in Grand Rapids on September 16. Their pastor, Rev. W. Langerak, spoke on "The Unity of Scripture."

All the members of First PRC in Grand Rapids were invited to a Fall Fellowship Supper on September 10. Not only did they enjoy a time of fellowship and good food, but after the meal their pastor, Rev. J. Slopsema, gave a short talk to encourage the congregation in their Bible and catechism studies for the year.

The Southwest PRC in Grandville, MI served as host site for

this fall's annual meeting of the Reformed Free Publishing Association. On September 25, association members gathered together to review the activities of the past year, choose new board members, and hear Dr. David Torlach, a third-year student in our seminary and a member of Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Australia, speak on the origin and history of the EPCA.

Members of the Grandville, MI PRC got to enjoy a fun family evening filled with fall activities on Saturday evening, October 11, when they visited nearby Post Family Farms in Hudsonville for a hayride and bonfire.

The Young Adult Society of the Doon, IA PRC extended an invitation to members of their congregation to a special meeting in late September at which a discussion would focus on the topic of "How to Study the Bible," with the particular goal of offering some assistance in preparing for Bible studies for a new society year.

The Consistory of the Georgetown PRC in Hudsonville, MI organized an evening for their congregation to meet this year's Seminary students. After the evening service of September 28, there was a time for coffee and cake, an opportunity for fellowship with each other, and a time to get to know the young men studying for the ministry in our Seminary.

School Activities

The PTA of Hope PR Christian School in Walker, MI met on October 9. At that meeting Rev. J. Laning, pastor of the Hope PRC in Walker, MI, addressed the parents on the timely topic, "Teaching Our Children about Patriotism, Politics, and the Military." 

Announcements

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On November 29, 2008, our parents and grandparents,

**ANDREW and MARY
BRUMMEL,**

will celebrate their 40th wedding anniversary, the Lord willing. We give thanks unto our heavenly Father for blessing and keeping our parents through these past years. By God's grace, they have raised us in the fear and love of the Lord, they have brought us up in a Christian home, and have given us godly instruction and guidance. Throughout their marriage they have shown us their love for God, for each other, and for the church. We will always be thankful for that love and for the countless sacrifices that they have made for us. It is our fervent prayer that the Lord will continue to bless and keep them in His sovereign love and care. "The LORD bless thee, and keep thee: the LORD make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: the LORD lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace" (Numbers 6:24-26).

- ❖ Bob and Shelley Cammenga
Josh, Nick, Shane, and Blake
- ❖ Joel and Kristi Engelsma
Claudia and Megan
- ❖ Tim and Julie Pipe
Alycia, Olivia, Ella, Chloe,
and Aidan
- ❖ Mike and Tricia Brummel
Drew and Gerrit
Grandville, Michigan

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The council of Faith PRC expresses its deepest sympathy to Elder Gary Kaptein and Deacon Scott Koole in the death of their mother-in-law and grandmother,

MRS. CORRINE ALDERINK.

"But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (I Corinthians 15:57).

Rev. A. Lanning, President
Peter VanDerSchaaf, Clerk

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Council of Grandville PRC would like to extend Christian sympathy to John and Judy Bouma regarding the recent death of Judy's brother,

HENRY VAN DEN TOP.

May they have the same assurance as the psalmist of Psalm 61:1-3, when he writes "Hear my cry, O God; attend unto my prayer. From the end of the earth will I cry unto thee, when my heart is overwhelmed: lead me to the rock that is higher than I. For thou hast been a shelter for me, and a strong tower from the enemy."

Rev. K. Koole, President
H. De Vries, Asst. Clerk

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

It was with great joy and thanksgiving to God that we celebrated the 30th anniversary of our parents and grandparents,

JOE and MARCIA VANBAREN, on October 6, 2008. We are grateful to our heavenly Father that He has continued to provide them all that they have need of each and every day. We are truly blessed to have been raised in a home where we could witness a godly walk, and where we could receive faithful godly instruction. It is our prayer that God will continue to provide to them all that they have need of. "Withhold not thou thy tender mercies from me, O LORD: let thy lovingkindness and thy truth continually preserve me" (Psalm 40:11).

- ❖ Kyle and Marisa VanBaren
Colin, Brenna, Macie
- ❖ Ross and Jill VanBaren
Joseph, Eli
- ❖ Mike and Corrie VanderVeen
Zach, Emily
- ❖❖❖ Caleb, Anneke, Tunis
Randolph, Wisconsin

FAMILY CONFERENCE

hosted by:
The First Protestant
Reformed Church
in Edmonton, AB

from
July 2-5, 2009,

on the topic of
Calvin and the
Christian Family Life.

Plan now to attend!

Check out our website:
www.edmontonprc.org.

More details will follow.

NOTICE!!

The Protestant Reformed School Society in Wingham, of Wingham, Ontario, Canada, is planning, the Lord willing, to start a Protestant Reformed school beginning in September 2009. We are planning on including grades K through 12, and are looking for two teachers. We are seeking applicants for an administrative and upper grade teaching position, as well as an elementary grade position. Those applying should be members of the Protestant Reformed Churches. Interested applicants should contact the board vice president, Mr. Harvey Kikkert, at (519) 523-4823 or email hkikkert@hurontel.on.ca for more information.