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The Outlook

Dedicated to the Exposition and Defense of the Reformed Faith



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“And the three companies blew the trumpets...and held THE TORCHES in their left hands, and THE TRUMPETS in their right hands. . .and they cried, ‘The sword of Jehovah and of Gideon.’”
(Judges 7:20).

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It is Right to Give Thanks

A Thanksgiving Meditation on the Eucharist

Have you ever had an “Aha! Moment”? I do not mean one of those times where something you had been struggling to understand suddenly became clear. That is sometimes what we mean when we say “Aha! Moment.” No, I mean when you thought you knew something quite well, but all of a sudden it takes on a new and unique significance because you have gained an uncanny appreciation and insight far beyond anything you had had before. Before it seemed so clear and understandable—and it probably was—but now, because of some new piece of knowledge, that same concept has taken on a brand-new meaning it never has had for you before.

I had this sort of thing happen not too long ago. The Lord has blessed me with a beautiful and thoughtful wife and I often tell her that I love her and appreciate how wonderful a wife she has been. Yet, there was a moment not too long ago, while she was still pregnant with our first child that, out of nowhere and without asking her at all, she brought me a glass of iced tea. I do not know why, but this gesture of her love and care struck me; I thought to myself, *This is the most wonderful, caring, loving wife a man could have — and she’s carrying my child!*

It was like a wave of warmth rushed over me. All I could do is just praise the Lord in my heart and thank Him for His wonderful gift. It was not as though I did not love my wife before, nor was it as though I had an ungrateful heart toward our

heavenly Father, who had given such a prized gem. However, with that one very small but tangible gesture of care and love, I was brought to new heights of awe and appreciation for who God is and what He has done for me by giving me such a loving wife. Something so small and mundane as giving me a glass of tea nearly brought me to tears as my heart was moved with an exuberance of love and affection for my dear bride and thankfulness to my heavenly Father.

Many times as Christians we can have a true appreciation for what God has done for us in a particular area, but, as happens in marriage, there is a certain familiarity that goes along with that intimate knowledge. It is not that we take these precious truths and spiritual realities for granted; it is just that we think we understand so much about them that we become familiar. Pastors and church leaders can get caught up into this way of thinking, because we, of all people, have a great knowledge of the things of God and what He has done.

Our hearts have a tendency to be occupied by many other things. Giving due consideration to God’s goodness by properly praising Him and giving Him thanks for all that He has done many times gets pushed to the side in all our cares. However, the tendency is there for all Reformed Christians (who have some amount of theological grasp on who God is, how He works, and especially on what Christ has accomplished for His people) to be-

come calloused to these truths and fail to appreciate them fully.

The Lord’s Supper was meant to remedy such familiarity by giving us a small, tangible expression of who God is in Christ Jesus and what our Savior and Lord has done in redeeming us. Through this sacrament, the Lord presses into our minds and hearts the benefits He has given to us in His great love by pressing into our hands the elements that speak to the greatest of all His love-gifts: the life we have through our Savior’s death. It is meant to move us to greater thankfulness and worship of our Sovereign Lord.

For centuries, the Christian Church has called the celebration of this sacrament “The Eucharist.” In some highly liturgical traditions, the expression has been retained. Still, it is a word rarely heard in Reformed circles. Many people, when they hear the term “Eucharist,” automatically react in their minds—if not out loud—“Popery!” After all, the Roman Church calls their “Mass” by the name “Eucharist.”

There is a very good reason that the true, biblical Sacrament of Holy Communion should be called “Eucharist.” In Greek, *eucharisteo* literally means, “I give thanks.” When our Lord Jesus Christ instituted the Supper on the night before His death, He did something very significant. Before the distribution of both the bread and the wine, He gave thanks (Matthew 26:26-27). There was a certain sense in which He was consecrating the common elements of bread and wine for their sacred use. To be sure, the Christian practice of giving thanks

before all meals probably owes much to Christ's own example at the final Seder. However, what Christ was doing was joining together the thankfulness that we have toward our God, who redeemed us by the death of his Son, and the celebration of the sacrament He instituted for the very purpose of causing us to remember such a great gift (I Corinthians 11:24-25).

Calvin expresses this very idea in the *Institutes* (IV.17.37): "We previously discussed how the Sacrament of the Sacred Supper serves our faith before God. But, the Lord here not only recalls to our memory, as we have already explained, the abundance of his bounty, but so to speak, *gives it into our hand and arouses us to recognize it*" (emphasis added). He gives it into our hand, as Calvin says, not just for any reason, but to move us to thanksgiving and praise. In this sacrament, we are induced to give thanks to God our Savior and are given tangible symbols of His grace and mercy toward us undeserving sinners.

The elements certainly are not very complicated; just everyday bread (the staple of life for most people in the world) and a cup of wine (the drink of celebration for most people in the world). One could easily come to the Table with that note of familiarity, eat and drink, and having worshiped, go home. But we must allow the meal to have its proper place in our hearts and heads in reminding us to give thanks in a special way when we eat and drink, spiritually and by faith, of Christ's body and blood.

In Christian worship, one of the most ancient liturgical elements is called the *Sursum Corda*. It is a responsive call to the people to lift their hearts up to the Lord and to give thanks to Him. Our earliest knowledge of the *Sursum Corda* comes from one of the Greek Fathers, Hippolytus, in his work *Apostolic Traditions*, from around 215 AD. Other early Church Fathers mention it as well, men such as Origen, Cyprian, Cyril of Jerusalem, and others. It is one of the most universal and most permanent fixtures in Christian liturgy, even being

***In the Greek,
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literally means,
"I give thanks."***

used in many Reformed and Presbyterian Churches from the time of the Reformation on through today. It goes something like this:

Leader: The Lord be with you.

People: And with your spirit.

Leader: Lift up your hearts!

People: We lift them up to the Lord!

Leader: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

People: It is right to give him thanks and praise.

Since the time of the Greek and Latin Fathers who recount its use, the *Sursum Corda* (literally, "lift up hearts") has been used as the people prepare to receive the sac-

rament of Holy Communion. It truly is fitting that such an element be used in Christian worship at the time the Supper is celebrated (and Calvin thought so, as he retained its use in Geneva). What the *Sursum Corda* calls us as Christians to do as we approach the table is no less what Scripture calls us to do and what the Supper accomplishes by faith: to lift up our hearts to heaven; to feed upon Christ crucified, risen, and glorified; and to evoke in us a special thankfulness to our precious Savior who died to make us free from sin.

As Thanksgiving approaches, we are especially reminded of God's kindness and beneficence toward us through grand meals and fellowship with our families and friends. However, when we approach the Table of the Lord, we should be all the more reminded of His goodness toward us, His Covenant people. We approach His awesome throne to eat of the grandest meal ever known to man, and we do so with full assurance that we are His people, forgiven, cleansed, and made new by the power of the Holy Spirit.

In this simple but awesomely powerful act, we do not enter a Thanksgiving feast that celebrates the success of those who first colonized the land in which we live, but rather we enter into—in part and beforehand—the great Feast of the Lamb, the celebration of the success of our Lord Christ in defeating sin, death, and hell for us. As we sit at table with all our Christian family, let us look forward to that day when all of the Church, of all ages, nations, and peoples, will sit together to be served by our loving Spouse and

Head, our beloved Jesus, who gave Himself for His Bride to cleanse us and make us new. More than the greatest act of human kindness and love, this should make our hearts soar with thankfulness and love, and give us a newer and greater appreciation for what we already have by faith in the Son of God.

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Thanksgiving in Believing Israel and Idolatrous China

The religion of Israel was very different from its neighbors. The other nations had gods they could see. God's people were often tempted to follow the gods of their neighbors. They could be drawn into the ways of false worship and away from the Lord, the Holy One of Israel. The temptation to show a representation of their God was severe. One early form of idolatry was a golden calf to represent the Lord. They did not suggest it was a different god, just an image for the LORD (Exodus 32:1-8). To be sure of avoiding idols, God's people had to be sure they did not copy the practices of their neighbors.

Heathen Worship

Location

Idol worshippers went to a variety of places. They liked the tops of high hills. They liked being under large spreading trees (the bigger the better). They liked places lush with growth. Isaiah refers to *gardens* as centers of idolatrous worship. They might also go to graveyards.

Worship Activity

There was music and dancing. They had offerings of food, drink, and incense for their gods. They prayed and fasted, making a big show of it.

Around their shrines they had prostitution. With the gaiety of music, dancing, wine, and the availability of prostitutes, heathen worship often had all the ingredients of an orgy. The sexual activity was intended to arouse the gods to be productive in

the fertility of their animals.

They wanted children, so in gratitude they were expected to give some of them back to these idols, yet the Lord God of Israel said those children were His! They placed babies in the arms of the hideous Molech. His hollowed-out back held a raging fire so that his stone arms were heated. In those unloving arms, children belonging to the Lord were fried in their own fat like chicken on a spit in the grocery store. Not only the heathen did this; so did some kings in the line of David (2 Chronicles 28:1-4; 33:1-6).

Their Theology

Their prophets brought them false visions and lying divinations, (Ezekiel 21:29). These prophetic messages were always what the people wanted to hear. They had no view of one holy, transcendent God, sovereign over all of nature and all nations, so they concocted gods in their own image – male Baals and female Asherahs. Some worshipped the sun, moon and stars. Such gods were credited with bringing rain and good crops. To them farmers prayed for a good harvest.

Idols were local gods. The heathen pondered whether the gods of their city could deliver them from the gods of some invading army. There was not one God over all with no other god beside Him. The gods of Israel's neighbors were of the heavens above and the earth below.

I cannot think of any place in the Bible where idolaters sought forgiveness from their gods.

True Worship

The worship God commanded Israel in the Old Testament also had a location and required rituals. All images of the Lord were strictly forbidden. In fact, bowing to any image was condemned in the Ten Commandments.

The PLACE Israel gathered to worship as a nation was the Temple in Jerusalem. God said He was there in the midst of His people. There was to be only one Temple (Deuteronomy 12:4-11). Jeroboam knew that one central gathering would ensure that there would be one nation, so he erected alternatives. Worship designed to suit the agenda of the worshipper is obviously a heathen principle.

The PRACTICE was that God was to be approached with blood sacrifices He required. Only animals identified as clean were offered – offered morning and evening. They would bring some of their crops in thanksgiving to the Lord their provider. Many offerings were made to atone for their sins – all done at God’s tabernacle or temple. Israel was not to be a worshipper of nature. When they came to the Lord at His tabernacle, they turned their backs on the rising sun to approach His presence. (It is a pity to hear in a common evangelical chorus, “With my face to the rising sun, O Lord, have mercy on me.”)

Offerings could be brought by the people, but were offered only by priests, chosen by God. They could

not come to God as they might choose. Nor could they represent themselves before Him. The Lord appointed priests to intercede for the people and pronounce blessings in His Name. Since Israel’s religion was more than ritual, priests, such as Ezra, were also teachers of God’s Word (Ezra 7:1-6; Deuteronomy 17:8-13).

The people sang joyful psalms in public gatherings. They were to review and keep the commandments of God and teach them to their children.

Their week had a Sabbath to commemorate God’s finished work in creation and their redemption from Egypt. Their year had special feasts, (Leviticus 23). Three were prominent: 1) Passover, the first, began with a celebration of being delivered from bondage in Egypt. 2) Seven weeks later when the first new grain was just appearing, they offered some to the Lord. 3) They ended the year at harvest time with a big feast of thanksgiving for the goodness of the Lord. *“Celebrate the Feast of Harvest with the firstfruits of the crops you sow in your field. Celebrate the Feast of Ingathering at the end of the year, when you gather in your crops from the field,”* (Exodus 23:16).

They reviewed the past kindnesses of the Lord. He had given them the land. After leaving Egypt they lived in tents in the desert; in the land they had houses.

Once a year on a special day the high priest entered the presence of God in the Most Holy Place, (Leviticus 16). Only the high priest was allowed to do so. He entered with blood to cleanse the place and atone for the sins of the people. That blood was placed in the presence of the Lord on the lid of a box that contained the law of God. Every Israelite had broken that law. Blood was placed between the broken covenant and the eyes of avenging angels. On that special day they fasted and did no work.

The Rationale of False Worship

There must be some reason why the whole world worshipped idols! When man fell into sin, he lost fellowship with God and had no natural love for Him. Sinners are hostile to God and His law.

Probably some offerings were made to give thanks to idols, yet the main motivation was an appeal for more of what they wanted. There was a lot of activity. People really prayed to these demons, trusted them, and hoped to receive from them. They brought their gifts and sacrifices. I cannot think of any place in the Bible where idolaters sought forgiveness from their gods. Their gods were not holy and did not demand righteousness of them. They had created these gods in their own likeness. Why bother to offer sacrifices for sin? Their interest was not reconciliation with a holy God but good harvests of grapes and grain.

When the priority is food for the stomach, walking in fellowship with the Lord has no appeal. They needed cows to calve, children to

be born, and protection from hostile neighbors. Their religion was therefore mere favor-seeking. Their prayers were not the same as knowing and loving God.

They wanted the gods to do something for them; so one key element in heathen religion was to induce the gods to respond. It was a matter of manipulation. Gifts were given in order to receive. They wanted to get out of the gods something the gods might not be willing to provide without inducements. So they would impress them with music, loud cries, and offerings that were really bribes. In that way they sought to persuade the idols to fulfill their wishes. They had no assurance that these gods loved them or cared for their needs.

They met on high places because up there closer to the clouds, they had a better chance of gaining Baal's attention to bring on the rain. They liked to be under big spreading trees since they were dealing with nature gods that made things grow. They offered babies to the gods so their women could conceive. The prostitutes were intended to arouse similar activity in fertility gods. This was lobbying and cajoling reluctant gods to do their will. In true worship, the main thing was and is to believe in the Lord God and do His will.

False religion took advantage of human nature. Little children learned that these are *our* gods, the gods of *our* people. Humans naturally crave communal identity and acceptance. They feel it is treason to turn against their gods, because to do so is to turn against their people. Their religion pandered to their desires with wine, women, and

song. It was a dual strategy – solidarity as a people under gods in their image. Satan cleverly provided gods to their liking, fed their lust, and snared them in bondage.

In all of this there was no recognition of the One God Who created and controls all things. It was the God of Israel Who had placed man over creation. He alone sent rain and made their grain to grow and the olive trees to give oil. He even fed the wild animals.

The worship of the idols was a great insult to the true Provider. There were no other gods, only lying spirits with no intention to care for them. No wonder the Psalms so often credit the Lord with control of the elements. Nature gods are a farce; claims for them must be denied. The chief thing these wicked spirits could do was deceive people about God. Since God commands obedience, their worship was immoral. Since God reveals truth about Himself, the theology of Israel's neighbors was error.

The Rationale of True Worship

“... We know that an idol is nothing at all in the world and that there is no God but one. For even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth (as indeed there are many “gods” and many “lords”), yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and

for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live.” (I Corinthians 8:4-6).

Since He alone is God, there was to be one temple--His. There the Lord made His presence known; there sacrifices were to be made to Him.

All worship in the Bible is of the Lord God who commands how sinners may come to Him. True worship is not the invention of men. The activities of worship are not to be decided by man. *“You must not worship the LORD your God in their way,” (Deuteronomy 12:4).*

The people of God were not left to persuade God to help them. He had promised to feed them. He covenanted to be their God and made promises that bound Him to them. He not only said He would give rain, He said He would be their God! He was not a reluctant God but a providing Father. So His people did not need to beg or bribe for rain. He was more committed to blessing them than they were to receiving it! In love, He had given them a land of milk and honey. (See Deuteronomy 11:8-12.) The skies above them would bring rain and the land would be so productive that the reaper could not finish harvesting one crop because the planter was coming to sow another one. Their barns would be bulging. Their animals would multiply. All they needed was faithfulness to their

One key element in heathen religion was to induce the gods to respond. It was a matter of manipulation.

God. By turning to idols they lost everything.

God's true people have always been a people of His Word. In it He reveals information to adopt, promises to trust, and commands to obey. Since He even revealed how He was to be worshipped, no room is left for us to manufacture our own religion!

God will not compromise the glory of His purity by condoning our sin. For us to have any approach to Him and acceptance by Him, our sin must be dealt with to His satisfaction. God's policy is that the sinner must die, but in His grace He made a provision far greater than corn and oil; He would send a substitutionary sacrifice for them. This was illustrated in the bloodshed of many innocent animals. These continued until the day God provided the sacrifice of Christ. By the Holy Spirit, Jesus, the Lamb of God, offered Himself for His people. So God demanded and provided a system of sacrifice that addressed His holy justice concerning human sin.

Differences

Both the true religion and the false had priests, prophets, sacrifices, altars, and rituals. They had oracles, music, festivals, and identified places for corporate worship. The nations had many counterfeits. Others had lying prophets, but Israel received the Word of the Lord from holy men called to speak for Him. Idolaters tried to manipulate demons but ended up in their service. Those who believed in the God of Israel became His sons. One people lived in response to the Lord Who loved

them, while idol worshippers were always trying to get their gods to care for them. Molech had his people die for Him, but our God came here to die for us!

Each spring the emperor pleaded with gods that did not love them for a good harvest. Israel began every spring with dates in its calendar of an autumn harvest festival. That there would be something worth celebrating was a commitment made by God.

The Temple of Heaven

I have written this article because

Israel began every spring with dates in its calendar of an autumn harvest festival.

my visit to the Temple of Heaven in Beijing impressed on me two things: how similar the pleading with false gods was in the Old Testament with what the Chinese were doing; and how different their hopes for a good harvest were from the assurance the Lord gave to Israel.

I am sadly familiar with Chinese idolatry. In many Chinese homes I have seen kitchen idols, idols in the front yard, and mantles with food for ancestors between two red lights. I have a Chinese friend, baptized as a Christian, who turned his back on the true God and went to visit the Goddess of Mercy. These practices are similar to those Isaiah

wrote about. But the great difference in the Temple of Heaven is that the temple in Beijing had no physical idols!!

Merely seeing the Temple of Heaven is not what made clear to me what had gone on there. A book on sale there explained that their ancestors sought to induce the God or gods of heaven to favor them and give them good harvests. It sounded familiar. Approaching God (in a way similar to the eye appeal of the Vatican) with impressive pageantry, skilful music, ornate buildings, ritual, and sacrifice does not impress the real God. God did not promise a good harvest would be granted in that way. It is not that there is some powerful spirit out there somewhere who might help us if we can only get his attention and do enough to win his favor.

This is all backwards. It is God Who has initiated communication with His creatures. He has addressed the earth through His prophets and by sending His Son. Jesus taught us to pray to our Father in Heaven to ask for daily bread. The Lord does not require an extravagant show, with the possibility that without the fuss our petition might be denied. His promises do not tease us. He welcomes childlike prayers.

Since He is God, holy and sovereign, we cannot approach Him on our terms. In the past He instructed the Israelites how they were to come. He ordered a tent in which He would be among them. Everything had to be built according to the pattern He revealed (Exodus 25:40). Divine worship was not and never will be

the product of human creativity. He does not respect our “devices” (Isaiah 65:2). God decides how men may approach.

The people of China long ago felt they might gain a good harvest by a display of splendor. They did not realize that God’s favor is a free gift, not something sinners may win. By His grace He wins hearts to come to Him and trust Him. In Christ’s blood, God has acted to satisfy Himself concerning our sin. His blessing is promised; never is it something we manage to draw out of Him by the display of anything no matter how spectacular.

Instead of beginning by conjuring up a good harvest, the children of Israel could plant their fields in faith, assured by the promise of God of a bountiful harvest (Deuteronomy 28:1-6; 11-12). The Lord said He would open to them the heavenly storehouses. Building a massive Hall of Prayer for a Good Harvest was a (physically beautiful) waste of time and truth.

They began every year with such assurance, and they would end every year with a celebration for the gifts received. God had appointed an annual Feast of Ingathering, and He had no intention of making a fool of Himself by letting them down. By His initiative He covenanted a good harvest for His obedient people, so much so they could even give their land a Sabbath.

This principle of grace has not changed. We cannot win God’s favor. God has shown His kindness to us by sending His Son,

now found by people who did not seek Him (Isaiah 65:1). Our life does not hinge on what we use to dazzle God, nor what we wear, or compose, or play, or sacrifice. Our Thanksgiving comes from the real Temple of Heaven from whence the Son of God came. The pageantry of God’s salvation was not in the fine silk of China’s artisans, but in the Son of God taking on our human flesh. His descent resulted in a sight so abhorrent men would turn their faces. Yet in going to the cross, Christ has sprinkled many nations--and China is certainly one of them.

It is in receiving, not providing, that we are accepted as sons and daughters and guaranteed eternal life – blessings never induced from God. We need not try to ascend into heaven to gain His favor. We do not begin by begging or bargaining; rather we accept gifts we do not deserve – gifts given because of Christ.

Many Chinese now worship the true God. He has been found by millions who did not seek Him (Isaiah 65:1). The Temple of Heaven in the south of Beijing is a tourist attraction and a world historical site but no longer a center of worship. We do not reach out for Him to win Him over to us, as China’s emperors once did. In sending Jesus, God has reached for us. The heathen pleaded with their gods at a high cost to them. The real God calls on us to respond to Him. The Great Emperor in heaven has sent us the true bread to give life to the world. Jesus’ ministry was not in splendor but poverty and humiliation

that we might be made rich and glorified.

The greatest Thanksgiving harvest ever will be the final Feast of Ingathering with God’s grateful elect gathered from all nations to the throne of the Lord (Jeremiah 3:17). They will be brought one by one by the Lord Himself to the marriage supper of the Lamb (Revelation 19:6-9).

Mr. David Linden was ordained in the RPC,ES. He is a member of the Bethel United Reformed Church of Calgary, Alberta.

The Virgin Mary (I)

Mariolatry: The Great Divide

In our secular age, with its opposition to anything Christian, contemporary evangelicals and churches of the Reformation have much in common with the Roman Catholic Church (RCC). We often find ourselves on the same side of the debates that take place in broader North American culture. Some prominent American evangelical and RC leaders even undertook an independent theological initiative and developed a joint statement of commitment to public moral renewal entitled: “Evangelicals and Catholics Together.”

Many greatly admired Pope John Paul II’s rigorously pro-life stance. He fought against abortion, embryonic stem-cell research, and what he called the “culture of death.” He stood up against the secular revolution, teaching the sinfulness of homosexuality, extra-marital sex, and pornography. We join the RCC in standing up for the dignity of all human life to maintaining the sanctity of marriage, from opposing the hedonistic, even vulgar substance of much American entertainment to championing the rights of Christians to be heard in the public square.

Indeed, we share so many core beliefs that we see ourselves more as allies than as enemies. We share with the RCC the Apostles Creed, the Nicene Creed, and the Athanasian Creed. Yet we must be vigilant and remind ourselves of the great divide that separates us from the RCC. What stands between us and the RCC is the solidifying by the RCC’s officialdom of Mariology.

For most evangelicals and Reformed Mariology has become synonymous with Mariolatry. James R. White comments in *Mary - Another Redeemer?* “Giving ‘veneration’ to a saint, to an angel, or to Mary is idolatry, and if we are truly concerned about the glory of God and His truth, we will not hesitate to speak out.”

The Development of Mariology

Since the beginning of the 19th century the veneration of Mary has increased rather than decreased. There have been many remarkable developments, bringing out ever more clearly the place of Mary in the system of RCC thought.

Many RC theologians now see the veneration of the Virgin Mary not as an isolated element chapter in dogma, but as a source of life. They see Mary involved in the mysteries of Christ, exalted by divine grace above all angels and men. The crucial pillar of the Catholic argument is--Mary was chosen by God to give birth to the Savior, inaugurating our redemption. Its Mariology hinges on it. Therefore, the RCC teaches that Mary was not only a virgin before Jesus’ birth but that she remained a virgin afterwards. Mary is withdrawn from natural life.

The RCC denies that Jesus had brothers. It elevates her to a sort of supra-natural being. It teaches that Mary was conceived and born sinless and Jesus was born pure from a pure one. As Vatican Coun-

cil II (1962-65) declared: “Mary figured profoundly in the history of salvation and in a certain way unites and mirrors within herself the central truths of the faith. Hence when she is being preached and venerated, she summons the faithful to her Son and His sacrifice, and to love for the Father.”

The devotion to the Virgin Mary is expressed in the oft-repeated prayer: “*Ave Maria, mater dei, ora pro nobis...*” “Hail Mary, Mother of God, pray for us...” The question here is the legitimacy and necessity of invoking Mary’s or another saint’s prayer. And why invoke Mary’s prayer as the Mother of God? Is her prayer somehow different than the prayer of another saint? Mary has also been given many titles which are not found in Scripture. She is called “Co-redemptrix” because she cooperated directly and immediately in the redemptive process itself. She is said to be the mother of the Church since she gave birth to Him who is the head of the Church.

Pope Leo XIII said: “Most truly is Mary the Church’s mother, and guide, and the queen of the Apostles.” Mary is called the mother of the redeemed. She is also called the Heavenly queen, spiritual mother, powerful intercessor, the ark of Noah, the burning bush, our Hope, and our Guardian.

Pope John Paul II said in an address in Washington, D.C., October 7, 1979, “As a great sign that appeared in the heavens, in the fullness of time, the woman dominates all history as the Virgin Mother of the Son and as the spouse of the

Holy Spirit, as the handmaid of humanity.”

The Dogmatic Constitution of the Church (Lumen Gentium) Vatican II declares that the Blessed Virgin is invoked by the Church under the titles of Advocate, Auxiliatrix, and Mediatrix. The RCC Catechism offers this glowing description: “The Mother of Jesus, in the glory which she possesses in body and soul in heaven, is the image and beginning of the Church as it is to be perfected in the world to come. Likewise she shines forth on earth, until the day of the Lord shall come, a sign of hope and comfort to the pilgrim People of God.”

Mary in the Eastern Orthodox Tradition

Mariology is steeped in history. The idea of a Majestic Mary, her enthronement and coronation have deep roots in the Orthodox Eastern Churches. The hymns composed for the glorification of Mary belong to their official Church literature. In Orthodox services Mary is often mentioned, and on each occasion she is usually given her full title: “Our All-Holy, immaculate, most blessed and glorified Lady, Mother of God and Ever-Virgin Mary.”

This belief in Mary as the ever-virgin was decreed in 553 AD by the Second Council of Constantinople. The Eastern Orthodox believe that if Jesus represents the ultimate descent of God into human life, Mary is the supreme moment in the ascent of humanity to meet God, the conception of Christ the fruit of her free decision in humble submission to God’s will. The 7th century Syrian John of Damascus tells us that Mary “ascended to the very royal

throne of the son of God.”

The opening verses of an 8th century hymn declare: “She who is higher than the heavens, more honorable than the Cherubim, and more glorious than all creation.” In short, Mary is compared to the celestial powers and to all creation and has been given a higher, more glorious position.

The Greek Fathers in their bold treatment of the Annunciation of Christ’s birth taught that, “as the first woman might have foiled the Tempter and did not, so had Mary been disobedient or unbelieving on Gabriel’s message, the Divine Economy would have been frustrated.” They argued that Mary’s intentional act of obedience is in contrast to the willful disobedience we see in the story of Adam and Eve. The old Eve refused to cooperate with the will of God for her life. Because of the significance of Mary’s free response, she was believed to be the “New Eve.”

In The Orthodox Church Timothy Ware comments:

Among all God’s creatures, she is the supreme example of synergy or cooperation between the purpose of the deity and the free will of man. God, who always respects human liberty, did not wish to become incarnate without the free consent of His Mother.”

In popular Eastern Orthodox devotion to Mary is expressed in icons. They express the feelings of the people toward the Mother of God and also the exceptional powers attributed to her.

In early icons, of which the monastery of St. Catherine on Mount Sinai has rendered some splendid examples, Mary is flanked by saints and/or angels. In such icons she occupies the center of the composition often seated on a throne, thus giving emphasis to her within the hierarchy of the saints and angels. She is viewed as consoling, helping, protecting, bringing joy, ending suffering and pain. This view of the role of the Virgin Mary in the history or redemption did not stay in the East. Prominent church historian Jaroslav Pelikan observes that much of the devotion to the Mother of God initially traveled from East to West.

Marian Devotion

In the West the early Christians in Rome continued the Roman tradition of decorating with religious images in catacombs and churches. The first image of the Virgin and Child has come to us from the third century. It was painted on one of the walls of the catacombs of St. Priscilla in Rome and shows a veiled mother holding a child on her knees. In the course of time, Mary became the subject of art and popular devotion. The second council of Nicea (787) approved the veneration of images of Mary. The middle

Because of the significance of Mary’s free response, she was believed to be the “New Eve.”

ages saw an increase in belief in Mary's maternal influence and powers of intercession with her divine Son on behalf of sinners.

Both Mary as the nourisher and Mary as the life-giver to all humankind are alluded to in a hymn written by St. Anselm in the eleventh century:

Mother of our lover who
carried him in her womb

And was willing to give him
milk from her breast-

Are you not able or are you
unwilling

To grant your love to those
who ask it?

Extra dogmatic pious beliefs and practices were tolerated and even promoted by the RCC such as Marian shrines, the rosary, statues, icons, processions, etc. The papacy became increasingly focused on the role of Mary in the history of redemption. For example, Pius IX's intention was to further traditional piety. In 1854 he proclaimed the dogma of the immaculate conception of Mary (Mary conceived in her mother's body without original sin). Pope Pius XII proceeded extremely forcefully along the lines Pius IX with the definition of a second infallible Marian dogma (the physical assumption of Mary into heaven).

No pope in recent memory has done more to promote Mariology than Pope John Paul II. When he became Pope, he said, "I was afraid to receive this nomination, but I did it in the spirit of obedience to our Lord Jesus Christ and in total confidence in his Mother, the

No pope in recent memory has done more to promote Mariology than Pope John Paul II.

most holy Madonna." He visited nearly every major Marian shrine in the world and credited Mary with saving him from an assassin's bullet early on in his pontificate.

His personal motto, inscribed on his blue-and-white coat of arms, *Totus Tuus sum Maria*, means "Mary, I am totally yours." He even claimed that we must follow after Mary as the model of pilgrimage in our search for the unity of the Church. He visited the shrine of Our Lady of Fatima in 1982. He had gone there on pilgrimage on the first anniversary of Mehmet Ali Agca's assassination attempt, to give thanks to God and to Mary for his life being spared.

Mariology Interprets Scripture

Mariology influences the RCC's understanding of Scripture. On March 25, 1987, Pope John Paul II promulgated an encyclical *Redemptoris Mater* that focussed directly upon the Virgin Mary and the Marian dogmas of the RCC. In this encyclical John Paul II articulated the deep assumptions of what he called the long tradition of "Marian consciousness" in the church, the awareness as a singular presence within the mystery of salvation. He did so primarily by way of meditative expositions of the Bible.

Genesis 3: 15: The First Promise

According to the RCC, Genesis 3:15 foreshadows Mary's

coredemptive mission. Eve and Mary are the two great opposites. The RCC claims that the full meaning of the prophecy is only realized when we see foreshadowed in Eve the other "Mother of all the life," who herself should actually give birth to the Savior. Whereas Mary was obedient, Eve was disobedient.

Already in the second century Irenaeus, bishop of Lyon, asserted that Eve by her disobedience was the "cause of death for herself and the whole human race," while Mary through her obedience was the cause of salvation, again both for herself and for the whole human race."

Justin Martyr in his *Apology* completed the Pauline parallel of Adam and Christ by indicating Mary to be Second Eve. In other words, not only Christ but also Mary is in enmity with the devil. Mary with Christ was victorious over the serpent. The *Lumen Gentium* states: "She was the new Eve, who put her absolute trust not in the ancient serpent but in God's messenger." As the new Eve, Mary continues to fulfil a role on behalf of believers. The RCC Catechism confesses: "We believe that the Holy Mother of God, the new Eve, Mother of the Church, continues in heaven to exercise her maternal role on behalf of the members of Christ."

Luke 1 : 38: The Acceptance of the Annunciation

In the RCC there is no room for the teaching of Scripture alone, faith

alone, and grace alone. Man has to cooperate in the work of salvation through faith and obedience. In RC theology this elevated view of man's ability to cooperate with God for salvation is clearly demonstrated in the Virgin Mary's free decision to accept the task of becoming the Mother of the Son of God. Mary could have refused; she was not merely passive, but an active participant in the mystery. God waited for her voluntary response. The RCC Catechism states: "By pronouncing her "fiat" at the Annunciation and given her consent to the Incarnation, Mary was already collaborating with the whole work her Son was to accomplish."

Pope John Paul II elevated Mary to the level of a co-mediator. He wrote that she is to be found "at the center of [the salvific] event" which is God's self-revelation to the world. Mary's "yes" brought a human being, into "a union with God that exceeds all the expectations of the human spirit."

John 2: The Wedding of Cana. In his encyclical, *Redemptrix Mater*, Pope John Paul II argued that Mary as Mediatrix is brought out plainly in the incident at the wedding scene at Cana of Galilee. He wrote: "There is a mediation: Mary places herself between her Son and mankind in the reality of their wants, needs and sufferings. She puts herself 'in the middle,' that is to say she acts as a mediatrix, not as an outsider, but in her position as mother. She knows that as such she can point out to her son the needs of mankind, and in fact, she 'has the right' to do so."

John 19: Mary at the Foot of the Cross

RCC theology stresses the role of Mary at the foot of the cross, by which she participated directly with Christ in the act of Redemption through which the divine grace was won for all men. It is viewed as a logical consequence of her union with Christ from the moment of the Incarnation. On our account, Mary suffered as no mother on earth has suffered. "She cried out in pain of her innermost heart, when she came to her martyrdom at the Passion of

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her son." On the cross we see the fulfillment of what was announced at the gates of paradise lost: that the seed of the woman should crush the serpent's head. "Beneath the victorious cross of the dying God stands the woman who has won all God's battles, the holy Ecclesia, the fulfillment of Mary." In other words, Mary, the woman at the foot of the cross, is the woman of the promise (Genesis 3: 15) who would overcome Satan.

Vatican II stated: "Thus the blessed Virgin advanced in her pilgrimage of faith, and loyally persevered in her union with her Son unto the

cross. There she stood, in keeping with the divine plan (cf. John 19:25), suffering grievously with her only-begotten Son. There she unified herself with a maternal heart to His sacrifice, and lovingly consented to the immolation of this Victim which she herself had brought forth." Pope John Paul II taught that Mary's ascent of Calvary and her standing at the foot of the cross together with the beloved disciple were a special sort of sharing in the redeeming death of her Son.

Acts 1: 14: Mary at Pentecost After Christ's crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension, Mary waits with our Lord's disciples for the coming of the Holy Spirit. Although only her presence is mentioned in Acts 1:14, the RCC puts her at the center of the Pentecost event. According to the second Vatican council, we see Mary prayerfully imploring the gift of the Spirit, who had already overshadowed her in the Annunciation. RC theologians even claim that Pentecost has its origin in the innermost heart of Mary; it was there the Church was born. At Pentecost Mary reaches the very heart of her share in the work of Redemption. In her are all prophecies fulfilled, in her begins the life of heavenly glory, in her the Spirit already breathes, which shall change the world in the last days.

Revelation 12: The Woman and the Dragon

Some RC theologians are inclined to see that the woman of Revelation 12:1 is not Mary, but the church. The Dutch RC New Testament scholar Jos Keulers, states that Revelation 12: 2 cannot be applied to Mary as she gave birth to her Son without pain. Most RC

theologians, however, believe that the woman represents the Virgin Mary, who has a powerful influence on earthly affairs. Pope Pius X even made the bold claim that “everyone knows that the great woman of Revelation represents the Virgin Mary, who without blemish gave birth to our Head.”

Concluding article: “The Biblical Mary”.

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Looking Above

A Series on the Revelation of Jesus Christ

Revelation 5:5

“Elders: Able to Teach”

In his ground-breaking book, *With A Shepherd's Heart*, John Sittema writes the following concerning the state of elders in the church: “Elders today are usually committee members who attend meetings, vote the mind of their constituency, write reports on behalf of subcommittees, and long to finish out a brief but seemingly interminable stint in office so that they may reclaim what they vaguely remember as a ‘free-evening’ with people they resemble and faintly recall as ‘family.’ Conversely, in the Bible, elders are men of God entrusted with weighty and frightening responsibility, assigned by God to give human expression to the heart, the eyes, and the hands of the Good Shepherd, Jesus, as he daily cares for his flock.”

Sittema goes on to ask the question: “Why the gap between text and reality? One could probably point to many causes, but I’ve never found a more accurate assessment than this one. The church today is trying to care for the citizens of the kingdom of heaven using the leadership structures and style of the kingdom of the world. And it doesn’t work... Little Bo Peep lost her sheep and didn’t know where to find them; today’s church has lost her shepherds, and doesn’t know where, how, or why to look. And what’s worse, she doesn’t even care.” It may surprise you, but the book of Revelation provides the corrective as it sets before us the

role of Elders in the church.

We first encountered the twenty-four elders in Revelation 4:4, where we read, “Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and on the thrones I saw twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white robes; and they had crowns of gold on their heads.” We have labored the point that the twenty-four elders in the book of Revelation are symbolic of the ruling authority in the church. That is to say, the twenty-four elders are exactly that: they are elders!

As we saw in our study of Revelation 4:4, the twenty-four elders are representative of the ruling authority in the church. They are representative of the office of elder, and their primary role is that of worship.

Another Role for the Elders

Another role of the elders is set before us in Revelation 5:5, namely, the role of teaching. In Revelation 5, John sees in the right hand of the One who sits on the throne a scroll written inside and on the back, sealed with seven seals. The scroll has been identified as being symbolic of the history of redemption. John sees the scroll and then hears the voice of a strong angel crying out, “Who is worthy to open the scroll and to loose its seals?” No one in heaven, or on the earth, or under the earth is able to open the scroll, or to look at it; and so John weeps much. John weeps much

There can be no denying that one of the roles of the elders is that of teaching and instruction.

because the history of redemption will not be revealed, nor will it be carried out, unless that scroll is opened.

John's weeping is finally answered in verse 5, "But one of the elders said to me, 'Do not weep. Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, has prevailed to open the scroll and to loose its seven seals.'" John's weeping is answered by an elder—an elder who instructs John; an elder who teaches John; an elder who comforts John.

Is not Revelation 5:5 clearly setting before the church the role of the elders in terms of teaching? And is not that role of the elders in teaching confirmed throughout the pages of the New Testament? Consider a few passages. 1 Timothy 3:1-2, "This is a faithful saying: If a man desires the position of a bishop, he desires a good work. A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, of good behavior, hospitable, *able to teach...*"

2 Timothy 2:1-2, "You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men *who will be able to teach others.*" 2 Timothy 2:23-26, "But avoid foolish and ignorant disputes, knowing that they generate strife. And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, *able to teach*, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposi-

tion, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will."

Titus 1:6-9, "For a bishop must be blameless, as a steward of God, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but hospitable, a lover of what is good, sober-minded, just, holy, self-controlled, *holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict.*"

Hebrews 13:7, "Remember those who rule over you, *who have spoken the word of God to you*, whose faith follow, considering the outcome of their conduct."

And finally, 1 Peter 5:1-4, "The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed: *Shepherd the flock of God* which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock; and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away." Throughout the New Testament, and especially from the pen of Paul, comes the

exhortation to elders: you must be able to teach!

This role of the elders is found in the book of Revelation, as well. "One of the elders said to me..." and again in 7:13-14, where the elders are involved in the role of teaching and instruction. "Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, 'Who are these arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from?' And I said to him, 'Sir, you know.' So he said to me, 'These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.'"

There can be no denying that one of the roles of the elders is that of teaching and instruction. As Dr. Sittema has written, "Simply put, if you are an elder, you must be involved with the work of teaching." We see it in the book of Acts; we see it in the Pauline letters; we see it in Hebrews; we see it in Peter; and now we see it in Revelation.

But why in Revelation? Why is the role of the elders in teaching and instruction emphasized in the book of Revelation?

I remind you once again that the book of Revelation is history—it is church history. It records for us the history of the church in the world from the time of Christ's first coming to the time of His return. Like each of the seven sections in the book, chapters 4-7, with which we are now dealing, covers this time period. It is the history of the church as she lives between the comings of Christ.

During this time period, the seven seals are being opened. As we shall

see in chapters 6-7, the opening of those seven seals leaves us with unsettling and disturbing images: war, injustice, conflict, persecution, murder, death, even the very conflagration of creation itself. Such unsettling and disturbing imagery raises the question: What of the church? What of the people of God? In the midst of all this injustice, conflict, persecution, murder, and death, what of the people of God? What of the church?

How is the church to endure? How is she to persevere? Only in Christ! In Christ alone does the church endure. In Christ alone does the church persevere. And who is to shepherd the flock to Christ? The elders! This, then, is the urgent role of the elders: to teach and instruct the flock of God in the midst of a world that is no friend to grace, a world that will not help us on our way to God. It is precisely in such a world that the elders must be diligent and faithful in shepherding the flock to Christ.

Do you begin to understand something of the passion with which Paul must have labored among the elders in Ephesus for three years, warning them day and night?! “Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn

everyone night and day with tears. So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.”

Do you understand Paul’s passion and zeal? The flock that is entrusted to your care, elders, is the flock that Jesus Christ has bought with His own blood. You dare not ignore the sheep He has entrusted to you. You dare not neglect the sheep He has entrusted to you.

Why is Paul so passionate and zealous with the elders? Because he knows that the devil is at work. He knows that the flock will be attacked, both from the outside and from the inside. It is bad enough that the flock is attacked by the world. What’s worse is that it is even attacked from the inside. The devil has his minions even in the church; he has his number even in the church—those who do not seek the good of the church, but the destruction of the church—those who do not build up the church, but tear the church down—those who do not have in mind the glory of the Head of the church, but their own agendas and their own gain.

With tears, Paul speaks of such things and warns the elders of such things. With tears, he commends the elders and the flock to God and to the Word of His grace, for that Word alone is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among

all those who are sanctified.

Why does Paul emphasize so strongly the work of the elders? Consider Ephesians 4:11-16. The church is to be built up to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ! God has chosen that work to be done, at least in part, through the office of the elder. That is why we read in Acts 14:23 and Titus 1:5, that elders were appointed in every city.

Is it all becoming clear now? As those unsettling and disturbing images of the seven seals, the seven trumpets, and the seven bowls increase in horror, how shall the church be prepared but through the ministry of elders who have faithfully shepherded the flock to the Good Shepherd, Jesus Christ?!

God has not left us without instruction. He has not left us without the pattern. He has given the office of elder to the church for the purpose of teaching and instructing the flock, directing the sheep always to their Shepherd who laid down His life for them.

“Little Bo Peep lost her sheep and didn’t know where to find them; today’s church has lost her shepherds, and doesn’t know where, how, or why to look. And what’s worse, she doesn’t even care.”

Do you care?! Then take the work

In Christ alone does the church endure. In Christ alone does the church persevere. And who is to shepherd the flock to Christ? The elders!

of your elders seriously. Hold them accountable. Respect them. Honor them. Be submissive to them. “Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you” (Hebrews 13:17).

Elders, do you care?! Then take your work seriously. You are held accountable by each other, but more importantly, by the Good Shepherd Himself.

May God grant us to see, in the office of the elders, not only the supremacy of Christ, but instruction in the things of Christ, until He comes again.

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Paedocommunion in Church History (Part 1)

In my introductory article on the subject of paedocommunion, I noted that there are four typical arguments that are advanced for this practice. The first of these arguments is an appeal to the historic practice of the church. According to those who advocate the practice of admitting children of believing parents to the Table of the Lord, this practice best accords with what we know to have been the practice of the Christian church throughout its history.

Though it is true that the church’s practice ought finally to be normed by the teaching of the Scriptures, which are the supreme standard for faith and practice, the Reformed churches read the Scriptures in the company of the whole church and may not ignore the lessons of history. The historical practice of the church encourages a reconsideration of the usual Reformed practice of restricting the Lord’s Table to those who are professing members of the church.

Advocates of paedocommunion maintain that a careful study of the history of the church will show that paedocommunion was likely the original practice of the church. Though the evidence for this practice may not be wholly uniform, the most plausible interpretation of the evidence confirms the widespread practice of admitting children to the Lord’s Table. Moreover, the discontinuation of the ancient practice of paedocommunion in some segments of the western church was the result of the introduction of

unbiblical emphases into the church’s understanding of the sacrament. While defenders of paedocommunion acknowledge that the evidence from history is somewhat mixed, they insist that the preponderance of the evidence supports the argument for rather than against paedocommunion. Even though the lessons of church history are not finally determinative for the present practice of the church, they warrant a fresh evaluation as to whether the practice of the Reformed churches in this respect is not in need of further reformation.

In order to evaluate the historical case that paedocommunionists often adduce for their position, we will offer a brief survey in this article of the more important evidence that can be mustered on the question of the proper recipients of the Lord’s Supper. In doing so, we will follow a rough historical outline of several of the more important periods of church history, taking note especially of the history of the church in the West.

The Early Church

It is generally admitted that the evidence for the practice of paedocommunion in the earliest period of the church is not as clear or as ample as the evidence for the practice of paedobaptism. In the case of infant baptism, the first explicit evidence for this practice can be found in the writings of Irenaeus in the late second century. However, there are also statements by other early church Fathers (for example, Tertullian, Hippolytus, and Origen)

that imply that infant baptism was practiced in the Christian church from the beginning.

In contrast to this relatively strong evidence for the early and general practice of infant baptism, clear evidence for the practice of paedocommunion in some segments of the church only begins with a statement in the writings of Cyprian that dates to the middle of the third century. Unlike the evidence for infant baptism, which is uniformly affirmative of the practice, the reference in Cyprian to the practice of paedocommunion must be read in the context of earlier and contemporary statements that oppose this practice. Before considering the statement of Cyprian, a brief summary of this evidence will serve to place it in context.

One of the earliest references to the subject of the proper recipients of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper is provided by Justin Martyr (110-165 A.D.). Speaking of the sacrament, Justin notes in his *First Apology* that "this food is called among us the *eucharistia* [the Eucharist], of which no one is allowed to partake but the man who believes that the things which we teach are true, and who has been washed with the washing that is for the remission of sins, and unto regeneration, and who is so living as Christ has enjoined. For not as common bread and common drink do we receive these."

In this comment regarding the church's earliest practice, Justin, an early second century defender of the Christian faith, observes that the sacrament is only to be received by those who embrace the church's

teachings and resolve to live in accord with the gospel of Jesus Christ. Justin's description of the church's practice does not expressly exclude the reception of children at the Table of the Lord, though this seems to be the inference that is demanded.

Another writer in the period before Cyprian, Clement of Alexandria (c. 150-219 A.D.), also describes the practice of the church in a way that restricts the Table's recipients to active believers. In his *Instructor*, which offers a kind of short catechism of the basic tenets of the Christian faith, Clement notes that those who partake of the sacrament do so "by faith."

Similarly, in Clement's *The Stromata*, the requirements for participation in the sacrament are like those mentioned by Justin Martyr: "One's own conscience is best for choosing accurately or shunning [the Eucharist]. And its firm foundation is a right life, with suitable instruction. But the imitation of those who have already been proved and who have led correct lives, is most excellent for the understanding and practice of the commandments. 'So that whosoever shall eat the bread and drink the cup of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord'"

Shortly before the statement of Cyprian, which speaks positively of

the practice of paedocommunion, Origen, one of the most influential of the eastern church Fathers, also seems to suggest that children (*parvuli*) were not given the sacrament of communion.

Before we arrive at the provision of the heavenly bread, and are filled with the flesh of the spotless Lamb, before we are inebriated with the blood of the true Vine which sprang from the root of David, while we are children (*parvuli*), and are fed with milk, and retain the discourse about the first principles of Christ, as children we act under the oversight of stewards, namely the guardian angels.

In this admittedly highly symbolic statement, Origen makes a distinction between children, who are fed with the milk of the Word of God and are not yet able to receive the flesh and blood of Christ, and more mature believers, who are at a stage of spiritual maturity that permits them to do so. While Origen uses metaphorical language, he seems clearly to be speaking of participation in the sacrament of communion, when he speaks of being "filled with the flesh of the spotless Lamb" and being "inebriated with the blood of the true Vine." Though Origen does not spell out in any detail at what age or

The reference in Cyprian to the practice of paedocommunion must be read in the context of earlier and contemporary statements that oppose this practice.

Cyprian's statement represents the first clear testimony for the practice of paedocommunion in the churches with which he was acquainted.

under what circumstances more mature members of the church could partake of the Lord's Supper, he clearly describes a practice that would exclude children of immature years from participation. Children may spiritually be fed by Christ but they are not yet able to be sacramentally fed by means of the Lord's Supper.

On the basis of these kinds of statements in the writings of Justin Martyr, Clement of Alexandria, and Origen, scholars like Jeremias have concluded that children did not participate in the Lord's Supper before the third century of the Christian era. However, as we noted previously, there is a statement of Cyprian (c. 250) in his treatise, *On the Lapsed*, that refers to the practice. Describing the struggles of the church during the period of the Decian persecutions, Cyprian places words in the mouths of the children of believers that suggest their participation in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper:

With mutual exhortations, people were urged to their ruin; death was pledged by turns in the deadly cup. And that nothing might be wanting to aggravate the crime, infants also, in the arms of their parents, either carried or conducted, lost, while yet little ones, what in the very first beginning of their nativ-

ity they had gained. Will not they, when the day of judgment comes, say, "We have done nothing; *nor have we forsaken the Lord's bread and cup* to hasten freely to a profane contact; the faithlessness of others has ruined us.

The implication of this description of Cyprian is that the children of believers were participants in the sacrament of communion, at least in his experience as a bishop of the church. If this is correct, Cyprian's statement represents the first clear testimony for the practice of paedocommunion in the churches with which he was acquainted.

It is unlikely, however, that the practice of paedocommunion was widespread at the time of Cyprian's ministry in the church. A contemporary of Cyprian's, the author of the Syrian *Didascalia*, confirms that the practice in Syria and Palestine was in accord with what we have seen to be Origen's experience, namely, that believers were admitted to the Table of the Lord only after a period of instruction in the faith. This author writes:

Honor the bishops, who have loosed you from your sins, who by the water regenerated you, who filled you with the Holy Spirit, who reared you with word as with milk,

who bred you up with teaching, who established you with admonition, and made you to partake of the holy eucharist of God, and made you partakers and joint-heirs of the promise of God.

The implication of this statement is that participation in the sacrament of communion was reserved to those who had been properly prepared through instruction in the Christian faith. Only after the children of believers were nurtured in the word of God as milk were they permitted to partake of the eucharist.

The historical evidence stemming from the earliest period of the church's history, therefore, provides no uniform testimony to a widespread practice of paedocommunion. This evidence suggests that the ancient practice of the church likely did not include the admission of children to the Lord's Table. The evidence of this practice in some sectors of the church in the middle of the third century does not warrant the inference that it finds its roots in the antiquity of the church. At the same time that Cyprian describes a practice of paedocommunion in the sector of the church with which he was most familiar, there is contrary evidence in sectors of the church, including Palestine, Syria, and Egypt, which are the likeliest to have preserved the earliest practice of the church.

St. Augustine

The evidence from the earliest period of the church indicates that the practice of paedocommunion only began to emerge in certain

sectors of the church during the third century. In the fourth and fifth centuries, however, this practice became fairly widespread in the eastern and western branches of the church. Indeed, during this period paedocommunion became a normal practice of the church. With the development of the church's doctrine of the sacraments, particularly the sacrament of baptism, which reflected an increasingly "realistic" understanding of the sacrament's effectiveness in transforming its recipients, the argument for the admission of children to the Lord's Supper became more compelling.

Because the sacrament of baptism was viewed as a regenerating ordinance, anticipating the more developed medieval teaching of the sacrament's effectiveness *ex opere operato* ("by the work performed"), baptized children were presumed to be born again of the Spirit and properly the recipients of the nourishment provided through the sacrament of communion. This development can be illustrated from the writings of the greatest and most influential church Father of the period, St. Augustine (354-433 A.D.), and from comments of Leo the Great, bishop of Rome (440-461 A.D.).

There are a number of passages in the voluminous writings of Augustine that clearly affirm the practice of receiving children at the Lord's Table. In a sermon in which Augustine argues that children are born and conceived in sin, he notes that "[t]hey are infants, but they receive His sacraments. They are infants, but they share in His table, in order to have life in themselves." In order

During the fourth and fifth centuries paedocommunion became a normal practice of the church.

for the children of believers to enjoy life in Christ, they must participate in the sacraments, which grant the spiritual life and nourishment that is needed.

One of the principal arguments that Augustine makes for the admission of such children to the Table of the Lord is an appeal to the teaching of Christ in John 6. Because Christ insists that those who would have life in Him must eat His body and drink His blood, children must be received at the Table of the Lord, lest they be excluded from life in Christ.

And what else do they say who call the sacrament of the Lord's Supper *life*, than that which is written: "I am the *living* bread which came down from heaven;" and "The bread that I shall give is my flesh, for the *life* of the world;" and "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, ye shall have no life in you?" If, therefore, as so many and such divine witnesses agree, neither salvation nor eternal life can be hoped for by any man without baptism and the Lord's body and blood, it is vain to promise these blessings to infants without them. Moreover, if it be only sins that separate man from salvation and eternal life, there is nothing else in infants which these sacraments can

be the means of removing, but the guilt of sin.

Because children have been cleansed of sin through the sacrament of baptism, and because they as well as adults can only have life in Christ through a sacramental eating and drinking of his flesh, they ought to be received and nourished by means of the sacrament.

The influence of Augustine, particularly his view of the necessity of sacraments to grant salvation, provided considerable impetus to the practice of paedocommunion in the church in the fourth and subsequent centuries.

Further witness to the emergence of the practice of paedocommunion in the western church in the period after Augustine, is provided by Leo, bishop of Rome. In answer to a question regarding the need for the rebaptism of children who were captured by pagans after having been born into and originally nurtured in a Christian home, Leo makes the following comment: "Those who can remember that they used to go to church with their parents can remember whether they received what used to be given to their parents." Leo's answer may imply that these children could remember how they formerly partook of communion at a young age. If this is the case, then his answer attests to the practice of paedocommunion in the western church during the fifth century.

The kinds of arguments that were used by Augustine exercised a considerable influence upon this development. If children are born again through baptism and thereby initiated fully into the spiritual body of Christ, they possess the spiritual life required to be nourished at the eucharist. And if the sacrament of communion furnishes its recipients with the necessary eating and drinking of Christ of which John 6 speaks, then the children of believers should not be excluded from participation in the sacrament. The soil within which the practice of paedocommunion was to flourish was prepared in the writings of Augustine and others who shared his sacramental views.

Dr. Cornelis Venema is the President of the Mid-America Reformed Seminary. He also serves a contributing editor of *The Outlook*.

Looking Out and About

- The annual fall retreat for young people sponsored by Reformed Youth Services was held September 16 and 17 in Holland, Michigan. Pastor Jeff Doll was the guest speaker at the retreat.
- Worship services under the auspices of the United Reformed Churches in North America are being held in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. The first services were held on September 4, 2005 and were led by the Rev. Doug Barnes, pastor of the Hills United Reformed Church in Hills, Minnesota.
- A public informational meeting concerning the establishment of a United Reformed Church in Rock Valley, Iowa was scheduled to meet on September 20, 2005. The first worship service is scheduled for October 2, 2005 and will be led by Rev. Cammenga, a retired pastor in the United Reformed Church.
- Rev. Jerome Julien, a retired pastor in the United Reformed Churches, is presently working as stated supply for the Grace Reformed Church in Dunnville, Ontario. His new address is 532 Inman Road RR 6 Dunnville, Ontario N1A 2W5. His phone number is 905-701-8165. Rev. Julien was recently granted emeritation by the Consistory of the Trinity United Reformed Church in Caledonia, Michigan.
- Rev. Hans Uittenbosch and his wife, Trudy, will celebrate their fiftieth wedding anniversary on December 16, 2005. Rev. Uittenbosch has worked with Seafarers Ministry since 1965.
- Rev. Rich Kuiken, who has served the Reformed Bible Church in Pompton Plains, New Jersey since 1983, declined the call he received from the Community United Reformed Church of Schererville, Indiana.
- Rev. Theo Hoekstra, who has served the Emmanuel United Reformed Church in Neerlandia, Alberta since 1992, has accepted the call from the Grace Covenant Church of Sechelt, British Columbia, and Independent Reformed congregation.
- A church plant supervised by the Consistory of the Reformed Bible Church in Pompton Plains has begun near Lancaster, Pennsylvania. Rev. Steve Arrick leads a group of between forty to fifty people in worship each Lord's Day at the United Methodist Church in New Holland, PA.
- Mr. William Boekestein was examined by the elders of the Dutton United Reformed Church in Dutton, Michigan and was granted a license to exhort.
- The unidentified conventioneer that appears in several RYS Convention pictures has been identified as Jim Oord, the son of the editor.

Theological College Evening 2005 of the Canadian Reformed Churches

On a beautiful September evening, they came from far and near to Hamilton, Ontario, to celebrate the College Evening, which includes the annual convocation for the Theological College of the Canadian Reformed Churches.

The auditorium of Redeemer University College provided a fitting venue for the pomp and circumstance associated with such an event. After the processional and singing of Psalm 145, Rev. J. Moesker, chairman of the Board of Governors, opened the evening with reading about the ministry of reconciliation from 2 Corinthians 5:11-21. It was an appropriate reminder of the tremendous love and grace of God in entrusting to men the message of reconciliation. After prayer for blessing, the chairman gave the floor to two special guests.

Mr. Adriaan Van Leeuwen, a deputy for the Training of the Ministry of the Free Reformed Churches in Australia, spoke words of appreciation and support on behalf of those churches. The Theological College receives students and financial support from these churches. Next Dr. Wolter H. Rose, who teaches Semitic languages and ancient Near Eastern history and culture at the Theological University of Kampen, the Netherlands, conveyed the greetings on behalf of

our sister institution. He mentioned the bonds that unite us, and also commemorated that their school had celebrated 150 years of theological training.

Next, the principal, Dr. C. Van Dam, reported on the events of the past year. Besides the usual memorabilia, he noted that this had been a year of transition. Dr. A. J. de Visser, former missionary in South Africa, was able to join us as Professor of Diaconology and Ecclesiology to replace an ailing Dr. J. De Jong. Also the Lord called to Himself two emeritus professors who had served the churches with distinction: Dr. J. Faber who served as principal and taught dogmatics from 1969 to 1989, and Dr. K. Deddens who taught the pastoral and ecclesiological disciplines from 1984 to 1990.

After some uplifting singing to the praise of God, Dr. A. J. de Visser gave the keynote address dealing with the Missional Church movement. Having described this movement as a call to the church in North America to reevaluate its calling to evangelism, Dr. De Visser then proceeded to evaluate its strengths and weaknesses. He also formulated some challenges that Reformed churches on this continent face with respect to the church's missionary calling. He suggested that it should be pos-

sible to become more pro-active in the area of evangelism, while at the same time holding on to our Reformed doctrines.

After singing a prayer of thanksgiving for the Lord's ongoing care for his church, the time for the granting of the Master of Divinity degree came. This year was unique. We only had one graduate, and he was our first Korean graduate, Mr. Dong Woo Oh. It was wonderful that his parents were able to make the trip from Korea and witness this event. The graduate addressed the audience in both a serious and humorous fashion, much to the delight of all.

Another annual highlight at the College Evening is the presentation of the Women's Savings Action. This organization has representatives in the local congregations, and in their own quiet way, they collect money for the library. This year they were able to present \$30,000 for the purchase of new books. Needless to say, the whole college community greatly appreciates their efforts and is very thankful for the labor of love that the women in the churches perform.

After the formal part of the evening came to an end, the socializing continued for a long time in the excellent facilities of Redeemer College.

Some Background on the Theological College

Since the readers of *Outlook* magazine may not be familiar with this seminary, allow me to mention a few salient facts. The Canadian

Reformed Churches are convinced that the training of ministers of the gospel belongs to the task of the church. In 1968 these churches meeting in synod therefore decided to establish a seminary in Hamilton. In 1981, the Theological College Act was passed by the Legislative Assembly of the Province of Ontario, empowering the senate to grant, among others, the degree of Master of Divinity.

The full-time faculty numbers four professors. Old Testament is taught by Dr. C. Van Dam; New Testament by Prof. G. H. Visscher; Dogmatics by Dr. N. H. Gootjes; and Ecclesiology and Diaconiology by Dr. A. J. de Visser, who also serves as director of the Pastoral Training Program. Rev. J. De Gelder gives part-time instruction in Church Polity and from time to time we have special lecturers come in.

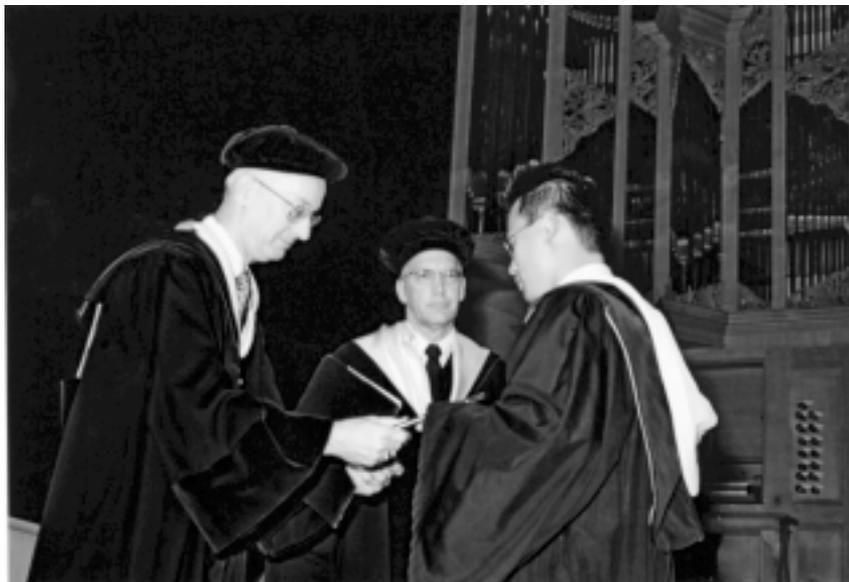
Since the churches are convinced that only the best is good enough, we strive for academic excellence, coupled with practical pastoral training. The Board of Governors takes its supervision on behalf of the churches seriously. and we enjoy regular visits by the governors to the classroom.

At present we have seventeen students, who come not only from Canada, but also from Africa, Australia, China, and Russia.

Further information can be found at our website:

<http://www.canrc.org/college/>

C. Van Dam



Dong Woo Oh receives his M.Div. degree from Dr. C. Van Dam, with Dr. N. H. Gootjes looking on.

Bible Study Materials by Henry Vander Kam

- Sermon on the Mount
- Ephesians
- I & II Thessalonians
- I Timothy
- I Peter
- I John
- Parables
- Acts (Chapters 1-13)
- Acts (Chapters 14-28)
- Amos

*\$4.00 each plus *\$2.00 postage*

Reformed Fellowship, Inc.
3363 Hickory Ridge Ct.
Grandville, MI 49418
(616) 532-8510

2005 RYS National Youth Convention



From the Director

The “Show Me” state was the site of the fifth annual Reformed Youth Services national youth convention held July 25-29 at Evangel University in Springfield. With gratitude to God, the RYS Board is pleased to announce that approximately 485 young people, sponsors, speakers and staff attended the weeklong event, which had as its theme: “Show Me Your Faith.”

About thirty-eight churches were represented at the convention, led by Dutton (MI) URC and the 1st URC of Chino (CA), both of which each sending almost thirty people. Approximately three-quarters of those attending were United Reformed, with a sizable minority also coming from Christian Reformed churches.

The Board and planning committee were particularly encouraged that nine churches were first-time attendees, and also that ten churches sent more participants this summer than to last year’s event, which was located in California.

Rev. Phil Grotenhuis, pastor of

Springfield Reformed Fellowship (URC) and Mr. Rip Pratt, pastor of youth and family at Bethel Community Church (PCA) in Dallas, Texas, served as speakers at the five plenary sessions.

“Both were excellent speakers whom I enjoyed listening to and learning from,” said one young participant of Rev. Grotenhuis’ and Mr. Pratt’s presentations. “Awesome messages, so relevant to our lives,” remarked one of the adult sponsors.

Ten related workshops were also offered, covering such topics as grace, service, speech, worship, mental discipline, movies, and life calling. Two special gender-specific workshops were led by Rev. C.J. Den Dulk (of Trinity CRC in Sparta, MI) - “Rise Up, Oh Men of God!” and Ginger Pasma (of Bethany URC in Wyoming, Michigan) - “What Kind of Character (are you looking for, anyway?).”



Rev. Phil Grotenhuis, plenary speaker at RYS.

“Excellent job on picking relevant topics to discuss in workshops and sessions. They (the speakers) were awesome motivators,” said one adult leader. “Excellent! Great encouragement, had recommendations of books to read. Speaker was very passionate about topic,” said one student regarding a workshop. “Great workshop speakers. Very thought provoking,” said another sponsor.

Participants also attended morning devotional sessions authored by the main speakers which reinforced the convention’s theme. “We truly enjoyed all the speakers, and workshops we were able to go to. Our lads had a lot of fun and also learned and grew more spiritually,” commented an adult leader.

The sponsors and speakers also enjoyed a special “Sponsors Dinner” at which they heard more about some of RYS programs, such as STEP (Summer Teen Evangelism Project) and LOGOS (post-high young adults conference). An inspiring and entertaining talent show closed out the week’s events.

Rev. Grotenhuis' wife, Joy, and Steve Larson, both of whom are members of the Springfield congregation, led the event's musical praise via the organ and piano, respectively.

One young conventioneer summed up what convention meant to him in a way that greatly encouraged the committee. "Thank you very much for a fun week. You taught me some good lessons, and now I know that people care about me and my future. That means a lot to me. People here don't judge you for what you've done in the past, just what happens now. I left with some new friends."

Reformed Youth Services owes a great debt of gratitude to its servant-minded planning committee, who spent numerous hours coordinating and putting on an event of this magnitude. We also thank God for traveling mercies and sparing us from any serious injuries. To God be all the glory!

Next year's convention will be held, Lord willing, at Covenant College at



Mrs. Joy Groetenhuis

Lookout Mountain, GA July 31-August 4. Registration brochures will be mailed out to churches in December.

Audiotapes of all of the main sessions and workshops (15 total) are available for purchase for \$35.00. For more



From a Sponsor

Convention week went off with a bang. The week of July 25, 2005 started with a very early morning- 3:30 a.m. for me, to be precise. I was a sponsor with the Bethany United Reformed Church. We started from Grand Rapids, MI and drove to the Chicago area to pick up an additional four churches; in total it took us twelve hours to reach our final destination the Campus of Evangel University in Springfield, Missouri.

The first thing once we arrived for the three hundred seventy students, eighty-five sponsors, and thirty staff members was to check into our rooms, followed by dinner and then the first main session. In this session, one our outstanding speakers for the week, Reverend Phil

information about RYS or the convention, please contact RYS Director Ed DeGraaf at (616) 667-0694 or rys@iserv.net.

Ed DeGraaf
Director of Reformed
Youth Services

Grotenhuis, introduced us to our theme "Show Me Your Faith." He told us that despite the fact that there may be a generation gap, there is something in common between the gap and that is the Bible. So we can and *should* talk about that with each other.

Tuesday started, as did each morning, with Son-rise groups. That was followed by our second main session where Mr. Rip Pratt, the second main speaker was introduced. Mr. Pratt spoke about having a warrior family--that the warrior family should get the world's attention! In addition he described how the snares of the world are choking us to death. In closing, he spoke about the church's need to stop squabbling over "scrap" and getting back to being the light to the

world!

On Wednesday our third session was led by Reverend Grotenhuis who spoke about the blessing of being a part of the Reformed faith; what the youth of the world are looking for; and how we, who belong to the Reformed faith, can fulfill that longing. He finished by telling us how precious our Reformed faith is and how we need to cherish it.

Mr. Pratt led the fourth session held on Thursday. He spoke of Christ striking straight blows with crooked sticks. We sinners are the crooked stick. In addition, he also spoke about how we are called to suffer for Christ. Our other major event of the day was our day away. We headed out to Silver Dollar City, a theme park located in Branson, Missouri. There we could choose to see one of the many shows offered and go on rides.

Friday was our fifth and final day. Reverend Grotenhuis discussed how we are in a spiritual warfare and, though we are young, we are not exempt from fighting in this war. Reverend Grotenhuis posed the question “do we really understand what this war is all about and how important this war is?”

In addition to attending the main sessions and workshops we also had free time. If one so desired one could play in either a soccer, volleyball, or basketball tournament. We could also join in card games, pool games, or in good conversation where we could meet new people.

Before we knew it, it was time to close as a group and head home. The convention was a wonderful week for me and many others. I

would encourage any adult to attend a young peoples’ convention as a sponsor. In addition, I encourage everyone to support RYS, their annual conventions, and the covenant youth. I encourage you to talk to the youth of your church to learn additional information on RYS as

well as the convention. It is a great way to gap the generations, as Rev. Grotenhuis reminded us at this year’s convention.

Dan Deppe, Sponsor
Bethany United Reformed Church
Wyoming, Michigan



*Contributor
Katie Kooiker
with an
unidentified
conventioneer*

From One of the Young People

Our RYS Convention experience began at 3:00 a.m. on Monday, July 25. Half awake and yawning, we drove to Bethany URC in Byron Center to meet with other churches from Michigan that were also going to Convention. We shared our bus with Covenant URC (Kalamazoo), Eastmanville URC and Lynwood URC (Chicago- area). Our 14 hour bus trip consisted of sleeping, playing cards, listening to CDs over and over and over again, eating and doing a mini-extreme makeover on one of the young men sleeping on the bus (you would be surprised to know just how much lipstick improves your overall appearance). After a breakfast stop in Illinois and a few rest stops along the way, we arrived in Missouri at around 5:00 p.m.

During the week of Convention, we had a full schedule. Every morning, we would meet with our Son-Rise groups, which consisted of all girls or all guys, and have devotions. At the end of the day, we would meet with our Son-Set group, which was made up of our youth group. Each day everyone would attend a session. These plenary sessions featured two main speakers: Mr. Rip Pratt and Rev. Phil Grotenhuis. These, as well as the workshops, revolved around a central theme; “Show Me Your Faith.”

Before or after the sessions, we would go to various workshops that we had chosen. These workshops gave us a lot of food for thought as well as focusing our attention on what we as Christian teenagers should be doing--showing our faith to others.

We had the opportunity to participate in various sports while in Missouri. The list included soccer, 3 on 3 basketball, and volleyball. We were given varying intervals of free time, much of which was spent playing cards, board games, and free time in the gym. The opportunity to be a part of the Convention choir and Talent Show was offered as well.

On our day away, conventioners went to Silver Dollar City, a theme park forty-five minutes from Evangel University. After eight hours of riding roller coasters and seeing all that Silver Dollar City had to offer, we returned back to the University to watch the Talent Show.

Friday was our last day at Convention. It was hard to leave after having such a great week learning and fellowshiping with other Reformed churches across the United States and Canada. At 1:30 in the afternoon, we said our goodbyes and loaded the buses.

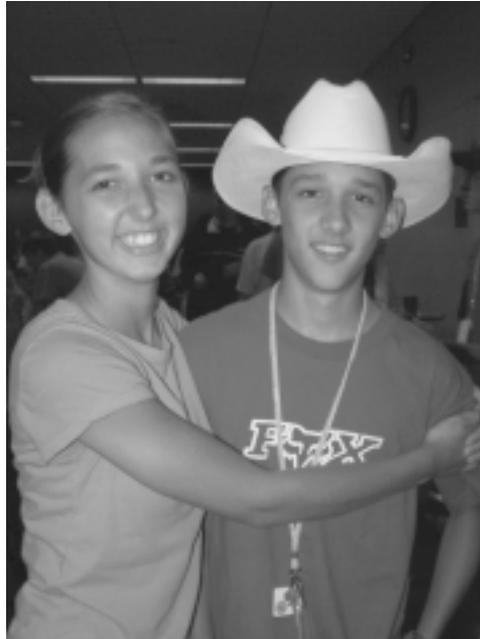
Our return trip home lasted about twelve hours. There was hardly any sleeping being done for the first few hours, due to the amount of caffeine we had consumed during the past week. We played cards, watched movies and talked to youth groups from the other churches sharing our bus. But as the miles wore on and the caffeine wore off, the majority of people on our bus fell asleep. At around 2:30 a.m., Saturday morning, we arrived somewhat groggy, but safe, at Bethany URC.

The RYS Convention was an awesome experience that challenged us to go out and show our

faith, not to compartmentalize it and only take it out of the box on Sunday. It was an opportunity to grow spiritually as we attended workshops and sessions, and also as we were able to meet people

from all around North America.

Katie Kooiker
Faith United Reformed Church
Holland, Michigan



*Having a great time.
Wish you were here!*

From a High School Senior

The fifth annual RYS Convention was held in Springfield Missouri. The adventure began on July 25 as the conventioners arrived at Evangel University. The 'Show Me' state of Missouri provided the perfect setting to take on the theme of "Show Me Your Faith". The theme was based on 1 Timothy 4:12 which reads, "Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith, and in purity."

At the main sessions conventioners had the privilege of hearing Rev. Phil Grotenhuis and Mr. Rip Pratt speak. Rev. Grotenhuis is a graduate from Mid-America Seminary and is currently serving at

Springfield Reformed Fellowship of Springfield Missouri. Mr. Rip Pratt is a youth and family pastor and counselor at Bethel Community Reformed Church in Dallas Texas.

Rev. Grotenhuis spoke on the criticism of youth today and how we have lent ourselves to it by pointing out four problems of youths today. Those problems are inexperience, lack of discernment, impulsiveness, and the inability to look at long term consequences. In order to conquer this he told us that we need to pursue after self discipline and self control. He talked about the six qualities youths are looking for in a church. Those are as follows: authenticity, tradition rooted in history, songs and hymns ~ substance in worship, young learning from old

and vice versa, accountability ~ smaller churches, and mission-minded churches. He showed us that we have a rich heritage and warned us that we should not take it for granted. In his final session he warned us that no matter how young we are we are fighting in a war. He told us that as citizens of Christ we are constantly fighting a war.

Mr. Rip Pratt expounded on who we are showing our faith to and why. He showed us that our family is to be a living testimony to the world. Our families are to be living in such a way that the world should be looking and going 'huh?'. Mr. Pratt showed us that we need to focus our eyes on God instead of ourselves. He told us that God can use even the most corrupt being. We all have the tendency to be wimps, but we are called to be warriors for Christ. In the second session, Mr. Pratt told us that we are called to suffer and die for Christ. We are called to discipline ourselves and to put others in front of ourselves. He defined love as saying "no" to ourselves and "yes" to others. We are called to have sacrificial love and to be warriors for Christ, **not** wimps.

Aside from the five main sessions, conventioners had the privilege of attending five out of the following ten workshops: 1) "Rise up, Oh Men of God" (for men only) by Rev. CJ DenDulk; 2) "What's in Your Heart" by Rev. Zachary Anderson, 3) "Growing in Grace" by Rev. Jacques Roets, 4) "What's Your Calling?" by Rev. Mike Brown, 5) "What Kind of Character (are you looking for anyway)" (women only) by Mrs. Ginger Pasma, 6) "Saved for What?" by

Mr. Dave Vandermeer, 7) "Training the Temple" by Mr. Jeremy Veldman, 8) "Excited About Church" by Pastor Jeff Doll, 9) "You're Always On the Air" by Rev. Harry Zekveld, and 10) "Living in the Shadow of the Silver Screen" by Rev. Kevin Efflandt. I enjoyed the five workshops that I attended and heard many good reports about the other five workshops. At each workshop we were given many challenges. By the end of the week many had a new zeal to go out and be warriors for Christ.

Throughout the week (in between sessions) there were many fun events held. There were guys and girls 3 on 3 basketball tournaments, coed volleyball, and soccer tournaments. Teams were usually thrown together by people who know each other and were athletically inclined to play. For those who did not want to participate in sport, there were indoor games. These usually took place in the Joust (the designated hang out area of the week).

Thanks to Mr. Ed DeGraaf there was a new form of entertainment on Thursday night. It was called Tickle your Taste Buds. Those who got involved were subject to eating a jelly bean, and then had to figuring out what flavor it was. No, these were not your average jelly beans; some of the flavors were ear wax, soap, dirt and earthworms. Knowing this makes me glad that I did not participate.

For our day away we went to Silver Dollar City, a family oriented theme park. They boasted two major roller coasters, Wildfire and Powder Keg; Wildfire has a fifteen story drop and Powder Keg is one of the best in

the US. If you are one that did not enjoy roller coasters, there were many other attractions, water rides and more to keep you entertained.

Thursday, after getting back from Silver Dollar City, we had a Talent Show. In which we were blessed by singing, and humored by Jeremy Veldman with his guitar, harmonica, and red-hooded sweatshirt. At the end on the talent show we were all awed by one conventioner's amazing gift of art. As a surprise to Mr. DeGraaf she drew his caricature, which looked just like him. This picture was "auctioned" off to raise money for convention. The caricature went for about \$1,275. The ironic thing, though, is that a roll of toilet paper was auctioned off as well. The toilet paper went for about \$1,350.

For most, Friday came too soon. It was a day of final training before we were sent out to be Warriors for Christ. I have been to four conventions, all of which were times when my faith was strengthened. This year's convention was a good way to end my convention experience by reminding me to go out and show my faith to all. Thanks to all those who worked so hard to put this convention together, I really appreciated all the work you put into it.

Karen Essenburg
Bethel United Reformed Church
Jenison, Michigan

Jacobus Koelman

This is a brief history of another representative of the Nadere Reformatie. Jacobus Koelman was born in Utrecht, the Netherlands in 1632. He became a student at the University of Utrecht, which was founded only four years after his birth. He studied under Andreas Essenius and Gijsbertus Voetius. The latter of these two professors had a great influence on Koelman and was a warm champion of the Nadere Reformatie.

At the time Koelman was studying at Utrecht, every student was required to undergo a philosophic schooling. Koelman achieved a doctorate in this field. After finishing his studies, Koelman became the Embassy pastor in Copenhagen, Denmark and later moved to Brussels, Belgium in 1658.

In 1662, Koelman became the pastor in Sluis, a province of Zeeland. His labor there was richly blessed, especially during 1671-1672 when a true awakening took place in Sluis and its surrounding area.

Not everyone was pleased with the preaching of Koelman, and his zeal was met with great opposition. In particular, he was opposed for four basic reasons. First of all, he preached against the influence of the worldly authorities in the life of the church. Second, he followed hard rules in connection with morality, without respect of person. The mayor of Sluis, for example, was well

known for his drunkenness. Koelman did not hesitate to rebuke him for his wicked lifestyle. This so offended the mayor that he sought revenge upon Koelman, and was not satisfied until Koelman was expelled from the city in 1675. Third, Koelman called the use of formularies in worship services “idle water” or “dull service.” His desire was to maintain the contents of the forms, with which he agreed, but to express them in his own words. This may well have been the result of the Puritan influence in his life. The fourth reason Koelman’s ministry was opposed was because of his view on the feasts of the church. Koelman refused to preach about the events connected with the events but chose a free text instead. He called the so-called second holiday “odious.” Our readers must remember that in the Netherlands, they still celebrate two days of Easter, two days of Pentecost, and two days of Christmas.

Many slanderous letters were written against Koelman’s pastorate in Sluis. Koelman once wrote that “Satan himself could have been the author of many of those letters.” Koelman, however remained faithful in his pastoral work. Nothing could be said against the way he conducted his personal life. When the Plague hit Sluis, regardless of danger of contamination, Koelman visited those who were dying.

In 1675, the State’s General, rep-

resenting the government of the country, expelled Koelman from Zeeland. For a short time he lived in Rotterdam, where his dear wife, Anna Hus, passed away. While in Rotterdam, Koelman met with opposition from some local ministers because he led in-home gatherings and worshipped with the Scottish refugees. When the local ministers lodged a complaint against Koelman, the authorities declared him as “*persona non grata*.”

Notwithstanding his status as an undesirable person, Koelman continued to travel through the whole country, and wherever there was an opportunity offered to preach, he did so. For a time he was in Amsterdam where he enjoyed the protection of the tolerant mayor, Coenraad van Beuningen. Unable to stay there for any length of time, Koelman returned to Utrecht, where he spent the last years of his life. There he was in the midst of friends, including Voetius, his former professor. Koelman passed away in 1695 and was buried in Utrecht.

Throughout his life, Koelman sought not only the edification of the church, but his desire was also to correct the errors he saw within the church. Although he was accused of Labadism, Koelman wrote against the teachings of its founder, Jean de Labadie (1610-1674). He also opposed Balthaser Bakker, a minister in Amsterdam who was greatly influenced by Descartes. Koelman was well qualified to defend his positions on Biblical grounds. Included in the eighty

some books that Koelman wrote are three catechisms: “The Foundation of the Christian Faith”, “The History of Holy Scripture”, and “The Practice of Godliness.” He also translated many of the Puritan writers.

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Book Reviews

Rev. Jerome Julien

Hanko, Ronald. *Doctrine According to Godliness: A Primer of Reformed Doctrine*. Grandville, MI: Reformed Free Publishing Association, 2004. xiii, 338 pp., including index. \$28.95, hardback.

This is a book for every home! It is a book of answers for the questions that often come up in family discussions, or in our meditation on God’s amazing Truth. In over two hundred sections, most only a bit longer than a page, Rev. Hanko deals with such subjects as: “The Importance of Doctrine,” “The Plenary Inspiration of Scripture,” “The Verbal Inspiration of Scripture,” “The Sovereignty of God,” “Human Responsibility,” various attributes of God, “The Trinity,” various aspects of the covenant, “Creation in Six Days,” “Evolution,” “Theistic Evolution,” “The Day-Age Theory of Creation,” and many more. The beauty of this book is that in a few words the specific subject will be explained in the light of Scripture. It is explained in ways that are not dry and difficult to follow. Besides, it is almost devotional in nature. What more could we ask for?

In writing about faith and trust, Rev. Hanko writes, “Trust, as an element of saving faith, not only allows a person to see that the Word is true, but also that it is true for himself. Trust, therefore, can be described in terms of yielding oneself to Christ or in terms of resting in him (Mat-

thew 11:28). It involves the complete abandoning of self and the surrender of the soul to him by the power and grace of the spirit.”

Of course, we have learned all of this, and more, in catechism and we have heard this and been blessed to hear God’s Word faithfully preached. However, of all this we need to be reminded so that God’s Truth will burn within us.

This is a wonderful gift book, should you need one. But get one for yourself, too!

Van Rijswijk, Cor.
Abraham’s Sacrifice.
Gideon Blows the Trumpet.
David and Goliath.
Neerlandia, AB, Pella, IA:
Inheritance Publications,
2001-2003. 43 pages each.
\$8.95 CN, \$7.90 US,
hardcover.

As Reformed books continue to be published, our young children should not be left out. They are important, too. Three small volumes in “The Word of the King Series” are now available. Each one is attractively and well bound. Each is nicely illustrated by Rino Visser. All three are familiar Old Testament stories written for us and our young children. Our four and five year olds will enjoy having them read to them, and our six and seven year olds will find them good reading

material. The stories are not, as so many are today, filled with moralism. They point us to Christ who is at the center of redemptive history.

In addition, a compact disc has been developed with Theresa Janssen reading each story. There are appropriate musical selections interspersed through each of the stories, bringing us to see the Psalms and hymns in relation to the stories. These CDs are also available from Inheritance Publications.

These books by Van Rijswijk deserve broad usage. Our children can learn to read while learning God's great way of salvation. The books used along with the CD will help with learning reading. What a tremendous help for Reformed parents who home school! These are also great for grandparents to use with their precious grand children.

If these publications are not available in the nearby bookstore, contact Inheritance Publications, Box 154, Neerlandia, AB T0G 1R0; or Box 366, Pella IA 20219. If you are interested in getting the volumes in Dutch, you can contact Inheritance, as well.

Hanko, Herman. *We and Our Children: the Reformed Doctrine of Infant Baptism*. Second Edition. Grandville, Michigan: Reformed Free Publishing Association, 2004 xviii, 165 pp. \$15.95 paperback

What a timely book! In some circles there is much discussion on baptism and God's covenant. Here is an-

other contribution to this discussion—and worthwhile material, at that!

Originally written as a series of articles in answer to the Reformed Baptist view of the covenant, especially as it is set forth in David Kingdon's *Children of Abraham*. This has become a well-worked out expression of the Reformed view of the covenant and baptism. Admittedly, there are a number of explanations on that subject among Reformed believers, and this book focuses on the view of covenant, which is considered the organic view. In his introduction, Professor Hanko explains the term "organic," connecting it with the more familiar term "federal." He writes, "Both terms mean approximately the same thing, and the two ideas are related to each other."

After dealing with Dispensationalism's errors in relation to the covenant, Hanko goes on to consider "One Church," "One Covenant," and "One Sign." Next, he writes about the "Covenant with Believers and Their Seed."

Professor Hanko does not draw back from discussing the question, "Are All Baptized Children Saved?" He carefully explains the difficulties with the various terms used in answering this question. He writes about "pre-supposed regeneration," the inward and outward sense of the covenant, and the "blank check" idea. He also deals with the presence of the elect and reprobate in the covenant. Of course, not all who are baptized are saved.

Hanko concludes his helpful book with these words, "Indeed, it is my

conviction that a clear and unambiguous stand for the Reformed faith over against Arminianism, which has its stranglehold on the church of our day, requires faith in covenant theology."

Definitely worth a read! More definitely worth a study!

Alcock, Deborah *Crushed Yet Conquering: a story of Constance and Bohemia*. Neerlandia, AB, Pella, IA: Inheritance Publications, 2002. 430 pages each. \$19.95 CN, \$14.90 US, paperback.

Many Christian believe that the Reformation was actually one date in history, October 31, 1517, and basically the work of Martin Luther. Other reformers such as Calvin and Knox just came a bit later. Actually, October 31 was a pivotal date on which everything began to move so that the Reformation became a living reality that would shape the church and affect the world. However, long before Luther, there had been reformers in the wings. They were laying the ground work not only on the continent, but also in the British Isles. This book of historical fiction takes us back to the early fourteen hundreds. One hundred years before Luther, a man named Jan Hus was seeing the truth of Scripture, at least in part—and teaching it.

Although he was a popular preacher and priest at Bethlehem

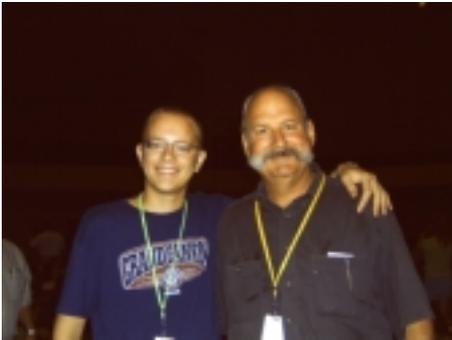
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More RYS Pictures ...

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Speaker Rip Pratt with an unidentified RYS conventioneer.



Volleyball Tournament

Chapel in Prague, and also the leader of the Bohemian reform movement, it is understandable and lamentable that the Romans Catholic Church branded him as a heretic. Ultimately, he was burned at the stake.

This book takes us through those tumultuous days and gives us an understanding of some of the struggles of this reformer before the Reformation. Obviously, not all the fine points of the Reformed Truth were taught by Hus (the Reformation was just beginning), but he was valiant for the truth, nevertheless.

The reader of this book will get a broader view of God's hand in bringing about the Reformation, which is so precious to us today.



The long bus ride to Springfield Missouri.



Workshop leader, Mr. Dave Vander Meer with an unidentified conventioneer.