

The consistory of the Southwest Protestant Reformed Church  
Grandville MI 49418  
October 14, 2003

Dear consistory,

It is with great reluctance that I write to you concerning the evening sermon of October 12, 2003. I found Rev. Cammenga's sermon to be seriously in error. In this sermon he insisted repeatedly that what Jesus had done was not enough—that Jesus had come into the world was not enough; that he suffered and died for our sins was not enough; that he rose from the dead was not enough; that he ascended to heaven was not enough.

These statements were placed in juxtaposition to the assertion that "we must come, we must take and eat" of the Lord's supper. This was said in connection with and as an explanation of the necessity of our coming to Christ. The text of his sermon was Matthew 11:28: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

I will quote the statements of Rev. Cammenga that I found unbiblical. Rev. Cammenga had just asserted that this command, or call of the gospel, implied the necessity of faith. Then he made the following statements that I believe are unbiblical and contrary to our confessions:

It is not enough for salvation that God has sent his Son, Jesus Christ, into the world. It is not enough that there is a Jesus. It is not enough that this Jesus was born of a virgin, that this Jesus lived a perfect life, that this Jesus taught and defended the word of God, that this Jesus suffered under the wrath of God in an atoning death, that this Jesus arose with his body from the grave on the third day, that this Jesus is ascended in power at the right hand of God in the heavens. Not enough for salvation.

God must not only have sent Jesus into the world, but I must come and you must come to Jesus. I must become one with him, so that I enjoy his fellowship and share in his salvation. For salvation it is necessary that I come to him. And if I do not come to him, there is no salvation and no enjoyment of the blessings of salvation.

Rev. Cammenga's assertions that what Jesus had done was not enough are in direct and obvious contradiction to our Heidelberg Catechism, which teaches us that Jesus is "a complete Savior" (Lord's Day 11, Q&A 30).

I find it difficult to believe that Rev. Cammenga believes what he himself preached. I find it impossible to comprehend that he actually meant that what Jesus had done was not enough. This statement is an open attack upon the gospel of sovereign grace. Yet for all my disbelief, he said it repeatedly and emphatically without any qualification or explanation. There it stood in all its boldness and directness: what Jesus had done was not enough.

Jesus did not do enough to accomplish what?

The salvation of his elect people? Our salvation? My salvation?

What more has to be done? Is it so that whatever we do or I do could actually add something to Jesus' work that was lacking?

As I stated above, Rev. Cammenga was explaining the necessity of our coming to Jesus. "Come unto me" was his text. He placed in juxtaposition with the lack of Jesus' activity our activity of obedience to the Lord's command.

Please do not imagine that I would take the position that our obedience is insignificant, unimportant, unnecessary, and impertinent; or that I would be inclined to assert that man is saved without the involvement of his own will, that faith and obedience are not real and genuine activities of the converted sinner. Our faith is real, necessary, and pertinent; but for all that, *it adds nothing* to the work of Christ who saves us by his death and resurrection. Certainly we are not stocks and blocks devoid of will and reason. Our faith is real and an all-consuming activity of the heart and mind. We are called to this activity of faith and repentance. All this is true, but *it adds nothing* to an alleged lack in the work of Christ Jesus. Jesus is a complete savior! Whatever we do in obedience to the Lord's command to come is but the fruit of the Lord's saving work in us.

Faith is a gift of God to us and his instrument to draw us unto himself. Our resultant necessary activity of faith is but the activity that he works in us. Confer Canons 3–4.14, which reads as follows:

*Faith is therefore to be considered as the gift of God, not on account of its being offered by God to man, to be accepted or rejected at his pleasure, but because it is in reality conferred, breathed, and infused into him; or even because God bestows the power or ability to believe, and then expects that man should by the exercise of his own free will consent to the terms of salvation and actually believe in Christ, but because He who works in man both to will and to do, and indeed all things in all, produces both the will to believe and the act of believing also.* (Emphasis is added to the positive confession of the Reformed fathers.)

Article 22 of the Belgic Confession, "Of Faith in Jesus Christ," reads as follows:

We believe that, to attain the true knowledge of this great mystery, the Holy Ghost kindleth in our hearts an upright faith, which embraces Jesus Christ with all His merits, appropriates Him, and seeks nothing more besides Him. For it must needs follow, either that all things which are requisite to our salvation are not in Jesus Christ, or, if all things are in Him, that then those who possess Jesus Christ through faith have complete salvation in Him. Therefore, for any to assert that Christ is not sufficient, but that something more is required besides Him, would be to gross a blasphemy; for hence it would follow that Christ was but half a Savior...

And faith is an instrument that keeps us in communion with Him in all His benefits, which, when they become ours, are more than sufficient to acquit us of our sins.

I humbly request that Rev. Cammenga be instructed publicly to apologize and to retract his unbiblical assertion that what Jesus had done is not enough. The sermon was public, and the retraction of the unbiblical statements should be public as well.

In the love of Christ Jesus,  
w/s Marvin Kamps

## Southwest Protestant Reformed Church

4875 Ivanrest Avenue  
Grandville MI 49418  
616-532-6876

Rev. Ron Cammenga, Pastor  
4895 Ivanrest Avenue  
Grandville MI 49418  
Phone: 616-532-4846

Mr. Darrel Huisken, Clerk  
3131 Wallace SW  
Grandville MI 49418  
Phone: 616-532-7352

November 3, 2003

Mr. Marvin Kamps  
3498 Cheyenne Dr  
Grandville MI 49418

Dear brother,

By way of this letter, I want to make a brief response to your concerns raised in regard to the sermon I recently preached on Matthew 11:28. You object to my statement,

It is not enough for salvation that God has sent his Son, Jesus Christ, into the world. It is not enough that there is a Jesus. It is not enough that this Jesus was born of a virgin; that this Jesus lived a perfect life; that this Jesus taught and defended the Word of God; that this Jesus suffered under the wrath of God in an atoning death; that this Jesus arose with his body from the grave on the third day; that this Jesus is ascended in power at the right hand of God in the heavens. Not enough for salvation.

God must not only have sent Jesus into the world, but I must come and you must come to Jesus. I must become one with him so that I enjoy his fellowship and share in his salvation. For salvation it is necessary that I come to him. And if I do not come to him, there is no salvation and no enjoyment of the blessings of salvation.

What I said does not teach or imply any *inherent* inadequacy in the death of Jesus Christ. I did not teach or imply that there is any failure in the cross to accomplish everything that God intended the cross to accomplish. This is the teaching of all Arminianism. It is to this error that the references from the creeds in your letter speak.

What I said and what I intended to teach is that God's salvation of us includes our coming to Jesus Christ and his work of causing us to come to Christ. The point that I was making is that the cross does not stand alone in the purpose and work of God. Our salvation includes not only our justification but also our sanctification. This is surely biblical and confessional. That is the only point I was making.

I hope that this explanation satisfies your concern regarding the remarks that I made.

Your brother,  
w/s Ron Cammenga

The consistory of the Southwest Protestant Reformed Church  
Grandville MI 49418  
November 10, 2003

Dear consistory,

Since October 14, 2003, I have met with Rev. Cammenga twice to discuss my concerns and objections to his sermon of October 12, 2003. These meetings were held in a very brotherly manner, and I was cordially received by our pastor. I was thankful for Rev. Cammenga's repeated assertions that he did not mean to teach or imply by his sermon statement anything that would be contrary to our creeds. For some time I have been considering his written response to my objections and searched for a way not to have to bring the matter to your attention.

However, I am not able to harmonize Rev. Cammenga's sermon and its statements to which I objected with what he later assured me was his intent. The intention does not square with what he said. That is my difficulty. We have to deal with what was preached in the Lord's name, not what is asserted to have been the intention.

The above letter states my objection very clearly. I find Rev. Cammenga's asserting in the sermon statement an insufficiency in the work and death of Christ. No one may make such a claim. To do so is diametrically contrary to the testimony of scripture and the Reformed creeds.

Rev. Cammenga's explanation of his sermon statement is not satisfactory. He asserts that he was pointing to the fact that Christ's work and death do not stand alone. There is something more: I must come and you must come to him. But this assertion that Jesus' work and death do not stand alone neglects to take into account that our activity of coming to the Christ is part of that one work of Christ that does stand alone. We add nothing to Christ's work of salvation.

The assertion of the sermon on Matthew 11:28, "if I do not come to him, there is no salvation," shows very clearly that the message of the sermon statement was not teaching that Christ causes us to come to him, but that the meaning was exactly as I understood it: our activity of faith adds something that is lacking. For if Christ is causing one to come to him, then there is no need to discuss the possibility of not coming; nor does it make any sense to do so. So also the use of the adversative "but" in the clause, "but I must come to him and you must come to him," shows that the meaning is that our activity of faith adds something that is lacking in the work of Christ. Our activity of faith is placed very clearly in contrast and in disjunction to the work of Christ that was not enough or insufficient. That is clearly the sermon statement. We may not do that.

I probably should point out that Rev. Cammenga's sermon of October 12, 2003, did not properly take into consideration who is was that Jesus commanded to come to him. If proper account of the text had been taken, the above statement to which I object could not have been made. According to this text, Christ's command was exclusively directed to "all ye that labour and are heavy laden." It should be pointed out that these persons, according to the text and all of scripture, were regenerated elect sinners. The Spirit of Christ was already operative in them, for they were burdened with their sin and guilt. Not one of these persons would ever fail to come to Christ. They all must, can, may, will, and do come. To entertain the possibility that one or even some would not come to Christ, that they would disobey the command to come, is not in keeping with the text.

Regretfully, I am still of the mind that Rev. Cammenga should be instructed by the consistory publically to retract these sermon statements as unbiblical. I am thankful that he did not mean to say what he in fact said. But it was said and should be retracted in order that we may proceed together with a good conscience and peace before God, whose word we proclaim.

In the love of Christ Jesus,  
w/s Marvin Kamps

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Grandville MI 49418  
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4895 Ivanrest Avenue  
Grandville MI 49418  
Phone: 616-532-4846

Mr. Darrel Huisken, Clerk  
3131 Wallace SW  
Grandville MI 49418  
Phone: 616-532-7352

December 3, 2003

Mr. Marvin Kamps  
3498 Cheyenne Dr  
Grandville MI 49418

Dear brother,

The consistory has received three items from you. The consistory has received from you a letter dated October 14, 2003, in which you object to certain statements made by Rev. Cammenga in a sermon preached on October 12, 2003. In particular you object to the statements in the sermon,

It is not enough for salvation that God has sent his Son, Jesus Christ, into the world. It is not enough that there is a Jesus. It is not enough that this Jesus was born of a virgin; that this Jesus lived a perfect life; that this Jesus taught and defended the Word of God; that this Jesus suffered under the wrath of God in an atoning death; that this Jesus arose with his body from the grave on the third day; that this Jesus is ascended in power at the right hand of God in the heavens. Not enough for salvation.

God must not only have sent Jesus into the world, but I must come and you must come to Jesus. I must become one with him so that I enjoy his fellowship and share in his salvation. For salvation it is necessary that I come to him. And if I do not come to him, there is no salvation and no enjoyment of the blessings of salvation.

You have also forwarded to the consistory a letter of response by Rev. Cammenga dated November 3, 2003. You met with Rev. Cammenga over your objection to his statements in the sermon of October 12, 2003, and provided him a copy of the above letter, giving him the opportunity to respond to your objection. His letter of November 3, 2003, contains his response to your objection and an explanation of his statements in the sermon.

Not satisfied with Rev. Cammenga's response, you formulated a second letter to the consistory, although you had not yet sent your first letter, in which you express dissatisfaction with Rev. Cammenga's explanation of his statements and maintain your objection to the statements.

Here follows our response to your objection to the statements made by Rev. Cammenga.

We are completely satisfied with Rev. Cammenga's explanation of the statements. It is clear from what Rev. Cammenga said that he did not teach and did not imply any *inherent* inadequacy in the death of Jesus Christ. He did not teach or imply that there is any failure in the cross to accomplish everything that God intended the cross to accomplish. As Rev. Cammenga pointed out in his letter to you, that is the teaching of all Arminianism and is the error that the references from the creeds in your letter speak to.

Rather, what Rev. Cammenga taught is that God's salvation of us includes our coming to Jesus Christ and his work by the Spirit of causing us to come to Christ. In that connection, he did not say that Christ's death is not enough. What he said was that it is not enough that Christ died. The point that Rev. Cammenga was making is that the cross does not stand alone in the purpose and work of God. Our salvation includes not only our justification (God's work *for* us) but also our sanctification (God's work *in* us). This is biblical and confessional.

In your letter dated November 10, 2003, you state,

So also the use of the adversative "but" in the clause, "but I must come to him and you must come to him," shows that the meaning is that our activity of faith adds something that is lacking in the work of Christ. Our activity of faith is placed very clearly in contrast and in disjunction to the work of Christ that was not enough or insufficient.

However, the use of adversative does not in any way imply that our activity of faith adds something that is lacking in the work of Christ. This is an unwarranted conclusion on your part. All that the adversatives do is teach the reality and importance of our coming to Christ.

In your second letter to the consistory, the letter dated November 10, 2003, you state,

I probably should point out that Rev. Cammenga's sermon of October 12, 2003, did not properly take into consideration who it was that Jesus commanded to come to him. If proper account of the text had been taken, the above statement to which I object could not have been made. According to this text, Christ's command was exclusively directed to "all ye that labour and are heavy laden." It should be pointed out that these persons, according to the text and all of scripture, were regenerated elect sinners. The Spirit of Christ was already operative in them, for they were burdened with their sin and guilt. Not one of these persons would ever fail to come to Christ. They all must, can, may, will, and do come. To entertain the possibility that one or even some would not come to Christ, that they would disobey the command to come, is not in keeping with the text.

We are surprised that you say what you do say here. For what you say Rev. Cammenga should have said, he did in fact say. You recall that the sermon Rev. Cammenga preached on October 12, 2003, was really only half a sermon. Because he was suffering from a sore throat and laryngitis, he was forced to cut the sermon short. He simply could not go on. Recall that the sermon theme and divisions were "Jesus's Call to the Weary." First, the call; second, the objects; and third, the promise. On October 12, 2003, the pastor was only able to finish the first point and was then forced abruptly to quit.

That following Sunday morning for our communion service, he preached the second and third points of the sermon. In that sermon he stated exactly what you say he should have. He made the point that all men are sinners, but not all men are the laboring and heavy laden. He

made the point that by this description Jesus teaches our spiritual inability to come to Jesus. We must come, but we cannot come. That we do come is due to the sovereign grace of God, the Father of Jesus. We come to Jesus, but we come because God has sovereignly, before the foundations of the world chosen us in Jesus. That's Jesus' teaching in the context (v. 25), he pointed out. Our coming is the irresistible work of God. He made the point that those who come to Jesus are only those who come to him through the preaching of the gospel and on account of the irresistible work of the Holy Spirit. They are the laboring and heavy laden because they are those in whom the Spirit works the consciousness of their sin. There must be the inner, spiritual work of the Holy Spirit applying the truth of the gospel that is preached. There must be the work of the Spirit creating faith in the word that is preached, so that a man is made to come to Jesus. All this was said. You were there, were you not, for the second sermon? You heard the pastor say these things, did you not? What you say he should have said, he did say.

You say, "To entertain the possibility that one or even some would not come to Christ, that they would disobey the command to come, is not in keeping with the text."

Rev. Cammenga most emphatically did not say this. It is unwarranted for you to conclude that this is the implication of what he said. He did not say this and did not in any way imply this. That we must come, that we are commanded to come (the text is an imperative), does not in any way imply our natural ability to come. And God works by his grace and Holy Spirit, so that they do come, every one of the laboring and heavy laden. That's what Rev. Cammenga preached.

Rev. Cammenga is not the only Protestant Reformed minister to express himself in the way in which he did. The consistory has in its possession a tape of a sermon preached by Prof. Engelsma in which he makes basically the same statement. The sermon is on a different text, John 6:44, but a text in which the same concept of coming to Jesus is found. In the course of his sermon, Prof. Engelsma states,

Implied is the importance, the necessity of coming to Jesus. It is not enough for salvation that God has sent Jesus into the world, that Jesus was born of a virgin, that he suffered under the wrath of God in his atoning death, that he arose again in the body on the third day, and that he has ascended in power into heaven to sit on the right hand of God. For salvation not only must God have sent Jesus into the world, but I must come to Jesus, so that I am one with him, so that I enjoy his friendship, so that I share in the salvation that is in Jesus Christ.

In conclusion, we do not agree with your objection to the statement that Rev. Cammenga made in the sermon of October 12, 2003. The statement is not per se unbiblical or unconfessional. The statement need not be publicly retracted and apologized for.

Yours in Christ,  
Consistory of Southwest Protestant Reformed Church  
w/s Darrel Huisken, clerk

Consistory of Southwest Protestant Reformed Church  
Grandville MI 49418  
December 13, 2003

Dear brethren,

At our meeting of December 11, 2003, the consistory asked me to try and resolve our differences as soon as possible. New officebearers would be installed into office at the first of the year. Three of the present elders would be out of office. New elders would be installed, of whom one is my nephew. I assured the consistory that I would do what I could in accommodation of that request. I recognize the problems that confront us. However, as one elder pointed out, there is little I can do to facilitate your request, for it is already mid-December. Whatever I send to you would need a committee's recommendation and subsequent consistory action, which would place us in January and the involvement of a new consistory. I regret this.

Here follows my response to your decision of December 3, 2003, which was read and explained to me at our meeting of December 11, 2003. There is really nothing new in this document if I compare it with what Rev. Cammenga had said to me as his explanation of the sermon statement when I met with him privately. The consistory followed his lead. I grant this is your right. But one thing is clearly new in your decision and that is that the consistory is now on record as giving approval to the sermon statement. It is the judgment of the consistory that

we are completely satisfied with Rev. Cammenga's explanation of the statements...In conclusion, we do not agree with your objection to the statement that Rev. Cammenga made in the sermon of 10/12/03. The statement is not per se unbiblical or unconfessional.

Please note very carefully what you have said. You are satisfied with the explanation of the sermon statement. I did not object to an *explanation* but to the *statement*. There is a vast difference. Further, your decision is that "the statement (not now the explanation) is not per se unbiblical or unconfessional." You offer no confessional proof. Your assertion is stated negatively. You *don't* say that the statement *is* in harmony with the creeds.

This sermon statement is nearly ubiquitously preached in the American church world, but never before did I hear it from our pulpits.

Rev. Cammenga, or any of our ministers, may declare in the preaching of the word, "Jesus has not done enough. Not enough for salvation." I merely allude to Rev. Cammenga's statement. Please understand that it is that statement that I find objectionable. There is absolutely no theological warrant to justify the sermon statement as it stands and in the context it was given. I understand completely that the consistory is taking the second half of the sermon given a week later to reinterpret the statement of the first half. I have no objection to the second sermon. And I appreciate your instruction to view the sermon statement that I object to in the light of the second sermon. You could go on and ask that I do that in the light of all of Rev. Cammenga's sermons. I did that already! And I concluded that Rev. Cammenga cannot possibly believe what he himself preached in the sermon statement that I find unbiblical.

Further, there is an attempt made to interpret the sermon statement as teaching that Christ had to do more than—more than die, more than be raised from the dead, more than

ascend into heaven. He must cause us to come to him, he must sanctify us. The consistory asserts that Rev. Cammenga's statement, which I find objectionable,

taught...that God's salvation of us includes our coming to Jesus Christ and his work by the Spirit of causing us to come to Christ. In that connection he did not say that Christ's death is not enough. What he said was that it is not enough that Christ died.

However, this is *explanation* and, for the lack of a better word, *reinterpretation*. The word *died* is not even used. Rev. Cammenga spoke of "suffered...in an atoning death." This suffering and death is not enough.

Besides, the consistory offers the following explanation of Rev. Cammenga's sermon statement:

The point that Rev. Cammenga was making is that the cross does not stand alone in the purpose and work of God. Our salvation includes not only our justification (God's work for us) but also our sanctification (God's work in us).

This is an attempt to put an acceptable explanation on the statement to which I object. The explanation is in itself thoroughly Reformed, but it has no basis in the sermon statement. It is imposed upon it and thus confuses the issues.

One who would attempt to explain or interpret the sermon statement cannot disregard the main and repeated thought of the paragraph: "what Jesus has done is not enough." If I am mistaken, there is absolutely nothing in the sermon preached on October 12 about causing us to believe or working faith in us. Nor does the statement itself in anyway contain these words. That I *should* now suddenly find it in this paragraph to which I object is beyond belief. That Rev. Cammenga was speaking not of Christ's causing us to believe but of the necessity of our activity of faith, our doing something, is plain from his reference to Paul's statement "take and eat." Rev. Cammenga himself in the sermon immediately applied his sermon statement that way. What we must do: take and eat. That is coming to Christ.

The consistory's explanation of the use of the adversative "but" is also mistaken. Not the adversative but the word *must* underscores the importance of our coming to Christ. No one denies this importance. The use of the adversative clearly sets a contrast and a disjunction: Christ's work on one side and our activity on the other. For what other reason would the term *but* be identified as an adversative?

In addition, I am shocked that you write that I gave instruction about what Rev. Cammenga should have said. You cannot substantiate that assertion. I did not say one word about what anyone should have said. What I said was, "The above statement could not have been made." I was pointing out the lack of exegesis or the ignoring of good exegesis that allowed our pastor to make the sermon statement that now needs "explanation" and "reinterpretation."

As far as the second half of the sermon is concerned—really a whole new sermon given a week later and when we *had* come to Jesus to partake of the Lord's supper—the opposite of the sermon statement given a week earlier was emphatically preached. Christ did do enough: all that was necessary for the salvation of his own. You ask if I was there. Of course! I have heard 98 per cent of Rev. Cammenga's sermons in the years that he has been our pastor. I have heard them thankfully. That is why I could freely write that I don't think Rev. Cammenga believes what he preached.

One other issue I feel compelled to address is our meeting. I was deeply offended that one of the consistory members was so thoughtless and indiscreet as to assert (be it by way of a question and the claim “that’s the way it looks to me”) that I was now out to “stick or spear Rev. Cammenga.” Do not the members of the church have the right and duty to protest what they think is unbiblical, regardless of the merit of their own case in the judgment of the consistory? And do they not have the right to be heard in a brotherly spirit without having their motives questioned and presented as if they are evil and unbrotherly?

If it were true that I harbored evil and you know that to be the case, the consistory may not even hear my protest. But it is not true, and you know it. No other member of the consistory corrected the brother. I had to defend myself. Rev. Cammenga knows that I love him as our pastor. I have assured him of that. And he has thanked me publicly for my support. He did that at the most recent family visitation in the presence of my wife and elder Schipper.

In conclusion, there is only one man who can resolve this matter before the next meeting of the consistory. That is Rev. Cammenga. I can’t, for in my judgment the statement literally goes contrary to scripture and the creeds.

Does the consistory and Rev. Cammenga want the sermon statement repeatedly proclaimed in our churches? Will we have to defend before the enemies of the Reformed faith the statement, “What Jesus has done is not enough, not enough for salvation”? This would be a concession so disastrous that no amount of explanation and reinterpretation would ever rectify it.

In light of the fact that the consistory appeals to the sermon of Rev. D. J. Engelsma for substantiation of its position, I have a twofold request: One, that I be given a copy of that sermon by Prof. D. Engelsma; and, two, that you immediately appoint a committee to confer with him about this matter or that you ask the seminary faculty for advice. This has been done many times before by our consistories. That advice is not binding but could help us immensely in our situation, in which we all wish to resolve this matter before the first of the year. It may be that the faculty can provide what the consistory does not provide: confessional proof, statements from the confessions that teach that what Christ has done is not enough. Not enough for salvation.

In the love of Christ Jesus,  
w/s Marvin Kamps

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4895 Ivanrest Avenue  
Grandville MI 49418  
Phone: 616-532-4846

Mr. Darrel Huisken, Clerk  
3131 Wallace SW  
Grandville MI 49418  
Phone: 616-532-7352

December 26, 2003

Mr. Marvin Kamps  
3498 Cheyenne Dr  
Grandville MI 49418

Dear brother,

Here follows our response to your letter dated December 13, 2003.

First, we inform you that the consistory followed your suggestion and requested the advice of the faculty of our seminary. In response to our request, the faculty informed us that they declined to give advice on the matter with which we are dealing. Their letter to the consistory, along with the reasons the faculty gave declining to give their advice is attached to this letter.

Second, we inform you that we stand by the statements made by our pastor in the sermon preached on October 12, 2003. As we stated previously, we believe these statements to be wholly in harmony with our Reformed confessions and with scripture. We repeat that the statements emphasize that our salvation consists of both our justification and our sanctification, a part of which is our conscious coming to Christ. The cross of Christ does not stand alone in God's purpose to save us. If it can be said that for salvation it is not enough that we be justified, we must also be sanctified, we believe that it can also be said that it is not enough for salvation that Christ has died. We must also come to him. This is necessary for salvation, for the enjoyment of salvation, for salvation in its fullest sense. No one gets to heaven apart from coming to Christ.

This coming to Christ is the fruit of grace—no question about it. This coming is due to Christ's work through the Spirit of causing us to come to (i.e., to believe on) Christ—no question about it. But apart from coming to Christ, there is no salvation, no conscious enjoyment of salvation, and no experience of salvation in its fullest sense. It is not enough for salvation that Christ has died.

We point you to Acts 17:3: "Opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead, and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ." Here the apostle teaches that it was not enough that Christ suffered and died. It was necessary that he also rise from the dead. This was necessary from the point of view of God's purpose and counsel. In addition, this was necessary from the point of view of fulfillment of scripture. But this was also necessary from the point of view of the salvation of the people of God. The apostle does not in any way teach the inadequacy of Christ's death to accomplish everything that that death was intended to accomplish. Nor does the apostle deny that Christ's

resurrection is grounded in his perfect atoning death. It is. But he does teach that besides dying on his cross, Christ must also rise from the dead. His death on the cross was not enough for our salvation.

Allow us to make use of a couple of examples. One example is the example of a nation going to war. For victory in the war, it is not enough that a country have a well-trained army. It must also have an adequate supply line. It must have the support of the citizens at home. It must have the support also of its allies. For victory a trained army is not enough. That does not reflect on the training of the army. Not at all. .But it is to say that for victory more is needed.

In a similar way it can be said that Christ's death is not enough for salvation. God's salvation of us and his purpose to save us includes more. And part of what it includes is our sanctification and our coming to Christ.

In that connection, it is one thing to say that a well-trained army is not enough. It is quite another thing to say that the army is not trained enough. The latter statement would indeed imply an inadequacy in the army's training. This is not the implication of saying that a well-trained army is not enough. This was the point the consistory was making in our letter of December 3, 2003, in which we pointed out that what Rev. Cammenga said is, "It is not enough." That might very well imply a deficiency in Christ's death itself. What Rev. Cammenga said is that it is not enough that Christ died.

A second example: It is not enough for good health that a person has nourishing food to eat. It is not enough that he has pure water to drink. It is not enough that he has clean air to breathe. Good health also involves the ability of the body to take in nourishing food and water and to be able to breathe clean air. In the above example, one is not saying that a person does not have good health because the food is not nourishing enough. But rather that nourishing food is not enough. Good health involves more.

In a similar way, it may be said that it is not enough for salvation that Christ has died. Our salvation includes more.

In conclusion, we maintain that what Rev. Cammenga said in the sermon of October 12, 2003, is biblically and confessionally Reformed.

Our prayer is that you will be convinced of the correctness of the consistory's position and that this matter may be resolved. We urge you to give our response careful and prayerful consideration.

In Christ's love,  
Consistory of Southwest Protestant Reformed Church  
w/s Darrel Huisken, clerk

## Protestant Reformed Theological Seminary

4949 Ivanrest Avenue  
Grandville MI 49418  
616-531-1490

Robert D. Decker, rector  
Professor of Practical Theology

December 23, 2003

Southwest Protestant Reformed Consistory  
Darrel Huisken, clerk  
3131 Wallace SW  
Grandville MI 49418

Dear brothers,

We respond as follows to your request for advice dated December 18, 2003. The faculty would very much like to be of help to you and the protestant in this matter, but we are convinced that it would be improper for us to offer advice to your consistory at this point.

Our grounds are as follows:

1. Both you as a consistory and the brother raising objections to Rev. Cammenga's statements have taken decisions and positions on the objections. If the faculty were to be of help, it would have to be while the consistory is in the process of reaching its decisions, not after. The faculty, after all, is not an ecclesiastical assembly.
2. We have neither the time nor sufficient information (We would need to hear the entire sermon, not just some excerpts) necessary to give advice.

We realize this comes as a disappointment to you. Please be assured of our prayers on your behalf. Our fervent hope is that that matter may be finished to the satisfaction of all concerned on the consistory level. If that proves not to be the case, the way of appeal to classis is, of course, open to the protestant.

May God's peace in Christ Jesus reign in your consistory and congregation.

Cordially in Christ,  
w/s Prof. Robert D. Decker, for the faculty

Consistory of Southwest Protestant Reformed Church  
Grandville MI 49418  
January 31, 2004

Dear brethren,

The following is my reluctant response to your letter dated December 26, 2003. It is reluctantly submitted because I sense that the consistory has failed to respond to my previous letters. We are not communicating. We are missing each other or talking past each other. Allow me to demonstrate that fact.

First, your last attempt to communicate was dated December 26, 2003. In it you show that our Lord had to do more than die, more than be raised from the dead, more than ascend. Besides appealing to Acts 17:3, you give two examples: one about an army going to war and the second about what is necessary for good health.

I asked myself in consternation, why all of this? I never denied that the work of Christ follows a certain path of successive events, *all* of which are integral to our salvation. Besides, in my letter dated December 13, 2003, I identified the attempted reinterpretation as "an acceptable explanation" on the statement to which I object. I stated that the explanation was "thoroughly Reformed." Yet in your last letter you continue asserting something about which I have no objection.

Why?

Did you not hear me?

Second, you made no attempt to show from the paragraph to which I object that it contains within it the thoughts and ideas that you assert that Rev. Cammenga was making. You do not show even from the second half of the sermon, preached a week later, how that the paragraph to which I object was fleshed out and clarified in the way you have chosen to understand it. If eight elders have no problem to decipher the alleged explanation from the paragraph or from the second half of the sermon, they should be able to demonstrate it and not just repeatedly assert it.

Third, you ignore the material and argument that I called to your attention. On November 10, 2003, I showed from the objectionable paragraph that

the sermon statement was not teaching that Christ causes us to come to him, but that the meaning was exactly as I understood it: our activity of faith adds something that is lacking. For if Christ is causing one to come to him, then there is no need to discuss the possibility of not coming; nor does it make any sense to do so.

Not just the paragraph but the whole sermon discussed at length the not coming to Jesus. However, that is exactly what Rev. Cammenga did in that paragraph. He asserted, "If I do not come to him [Christ], there is no salvation."

Fourth, regarding Rev. Cammenga's assertion that in the paragraph to which I objected he was pointing to the fact that Christ's work and death do not stand alone, I showed that it was one of the problems between us. For Christ's work does stand alone. There is nothing else and no one else that adds to the work of Christ. All that is necessary for the accomplishment of our salvation is exclusively in him. We in no way whatsoever accomplish any part of our salvation. All this was expressed in my document of November 10, 2003. Yet you keep on

asserting that Christ's work does *not* stand alone. We must do something too in order to accomplish salvation.

The consistory has the right before men—but not before God—of its assertion, if that is what you believe. But why not show how my claim that the work of Christ *does* stand alone is false? I have shown that Rev. Cammenga's two-legged support for the edifice of salvation—Christ's work, which is not enough in itself, *and* our act of coming to Jesus—is not biblical. I wrote on November 20, 2003, "But this assertion that Jesus' work and death do not stand alone neglects to take into account that our activity of coming to the Christ is part of that one work of Christ that does stand alone." I showed from the creeds that the very act of believing was of Christ.

Am I wrong in this understanding of our salvation?

Fifth, in your letter dated December 3, 2003, you write, "You say, 'to entertain the possibility that one or even some would not come to Christ, that they would disobey the command to come, is not in keeping with the text.' Rev. Cammenga most emphatically did not say this."

However, in the very paragraph to which I object, he did emphatically discuss the possibility of not coming to Christ when he said, "And if I do not come to him, there is no salvation."

The point that I made—that the sermon statement could not have been discussing Christ's causing me to come to him—went right on past you. You even failed to acknowledge that in the paragraph Rev. Cammenga was discussing the possibility of not coming to Jesus. We are not communicating.

The consistory offers two points to justify the sermon statement to which I object: what Christ has done is not enough. Not enough for salvation. But I must come, and you must come.

The first point is that the work and death of Christ do not stand alone in the purpose of God. We must come to him.

The second point is that in this paragraph Rev. Cammenga said and meant that Jesus had to do more than die, more than be raised, etc. He had to cause us to come to him. This second point is very true, but it cannot be found in the paragraph. It is imposed upon the paragraph. The statement is not that Christ had to do more, do something in addition, or that Christ not only had to die, not only had to be raised, etc. But the sermon statement is emphatically and repeatedly this: what Christ has done is not enough. Not enough for salvation.

Besides, there is an internal contradiction in your two statements, by which you attempt to explain what Rev. Cammenga said. If he had said—which in my judgment he did not say—that Christ had to do more, he had to cause us to come to him, you could maintain that the work of Christ does not stand alone in the purpose of God. Then our faith is, in fact, the fruit of Christ's work that is the one and only work by which our salvation is accomplished. The consistory cannot have it both ways in its attempt to justify the sermon statements.

Now I wish to elaborate on something so very important, which I had stated earlier only briefly. On November 10, 2003, I tried to show that the sermon statement that I object to could not have been made if proper account had been given to the text. The text clearly implies the doctrine of sovereign election. The sinners called to come to Christ are identified as already the recipients of God's saving grace in Christ. They are "weary and heavy laden." The sermon statement failed to take that crucial fact into account.

Besides, *the context*, which is always so very important for sermon making, underscores the doctrine and reality of God's decree of election. The context is *not* the unbelief of the Jews,

although this is duly recorded and is only background. Please note what *the* context is in Matthew 10 and 11. Jesus had sent out the twelve disciples, according to Matthew 10, two by two to preach to the lost *sheep* of the nation of Israel (v. 6). That is the true Israel or the chosen of God. The disciples were not to go outside of Israel's borders. The Lord's sheep had to be gathered from the nation of Israel. The disciples were to go out, notwithstanding all the unbelief and opposition of men. They would be hated above all men, etc. Nonetheless, they were to go out and preach the kingdom of heaven to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Election was the motive for their preaching and the guarantee of their success.

Besides, in chapter 11 Matthew records Jesus' prayer of submission to the Father's will, in which prayer he attributes the salvation of the "babes" to *his Father's good pleasure*. "I thank thee O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: *for it seemed good in thy sight*" (vv. 25–26). The decree and reality of election are on the foreground. Emphatically so! Besides, Jesus adds still more: "All things are delivered unto me of my Father." And no man knows the Father (by way of coming to Jesus in faith) unless Jesus, in the execution of the counsel of God (all things were given to him, remember!), *reveals* the Father to whomsoever he will (v. 27).

How much more emphasis could be placed on the blessed reality of election, the sovereign decree of predestination, and thus upon the fact that the success of the preaching was guaranteed to the disciples and the church?

And then the text asserts that this election and its realization were already being accomplished in the hearts of the "weary and heavy laden."

No one would disagree with the assertion of Dr. K. Dijk (and Kuyper, Bavinck, and Hoeksema) when he writes,

The soul of the believer can only be anchored in this secure depth of God's electing love, and this dogma of predestination is then also the *cor ecclesiae*, the heart of the church, out of which are the issues of life for the church. (*Om 't Eeuwig Welbehagen*, 8; my translation of the Dutch)

Yet the sermon statement to which I object was part and parcel of a sermon that failed to proceed from this reality of election, even though the general context, the immediate context, and the text demanded it. The starting point of Reformed preaching is God's elective love in Christ to his own. If this had been the starting point, as the context and text demanded, the paragraph to which I object could not have been made. One who begins with election cannot conclude in conditional theology. The converse is true as well: one who begins with conditional theology cannot conclude with the biblical doctrine of election. They exclude one another.

Allow me to show this from recent church history. The offer-of-the-gospel theology of the Christian Reformed Church stands opposed to the reality of sovereign election. The conditional promise of the errant covenant theology of the American and Canadian Reformed churches (Schilder churches) stands opposed to the doctrine of election. The prerequisite theology of the 1953 ministers does violence to the doctrine of election. All of these errors make the realization of election dependent on the will of the sinner. All teach that in addition to the work of Christ, we must do something too in order to be saved. They all resist, if not outright deny, the efficacious character of the command of the gospel. If one fails—(through neglect, confusion, or oversight) or refuses (through a misguided notion that sovereign election nullifies or minimizes human freedom, choice, or responsibility)—to proceed from the

sovereign decree of election in his sermonizing, then he will, as all the others, end up with our salvation accomplished to one degree or another by the will of the sinner. We have to add something to the work of Christ. What Christ has done is not enough!

The command to come to Christ, which most definitely is our solemn duty and responsibility, is not to be divorced from sovereign election. In the sermon of October 12, 2003, the command to come to Christ was presented apart from election. The biblical nature of the command was, therefore, not given its full significance. That significance is that the command not only expresses our duty, but is as well the Lord's means to work grace in the hearts of his own. He draws his own by means of the command. God's decree of election is the fountainhead of our salvation, for we are chosen in him, that is, in Christ, and we can never be separated from Christ.

When election is preached, then grace is preached and the power of the cross is proclaimed.

Is it possible to preach the word without doing so from the perspective of God's eternal will in Christ to save his chosen people?

I don't think so! He imparts his life to his own through the gospel call.

Dr. K. Dijk writes,

Grace and election, the gospel and God's absolute sovereignty, according to Calvin, do not oppose one another and do not cancel out each other; but grace in its full and true sense is *elective in nature*, and the gospel is not only the making known [publishing abroad] of God's will to save but also *the power to realize that will*. (*Om 't Eeuwig Welbehagen*, 133; my translation of the Dutch)

All of this was overlooked when the sermon statement was made. What Christ has done is not enough. Not enough for salvation. You and I must do something too; we must come to Jesus.

With all due respect, one can make a reference at the end of a sermon to explain the salvation of some individuals, but if he has divorced the decree of election from the command to come to Jesus, then the reference to election at the end of the sermon may state a fact; yet the dynamics, the power, the energy of God's elective love that proceeds from Christ to his own has been left out of one's message.

Every one of the apostatizing Reformed churches referenced above tries to justify its conditional theology by claiming that election is involved in our salvation. However, the decree and reality of election are more and more silenced in these churches. Christ Jesus is not the head of the covenant for some of them. They have severed election from the covenant of grace, and the command of the gospel is now preached as the necessary condition to salvation. Is it any wonder that the reality of election is very quickly *lost* as the *conscious* possession of their people, so that they no longer, as did our fathers, revel and rejoice in the truth that is the *heart* of the church?

What has to be underscored is that the election of some in Christ determines the nature of the command to come to Jesus. The command then expresses the right and the privilege of the weary and heavy laden. It identifies the command as the efficacious means, or word of Christ, to work grace in the hearts of his own and by it to draw them unto himself. Then their salvation is sure and certain. There is no possibility then to talk of their not coming. If one wittingly or unwittingly, unintentionally or deliberately, divorces the command to come to Jesus from God's elective love in Christ Jesus, he places the one to be drawn in the same

position as all of the reprobate: outside of Christ. The reality and doctrine of election place those to be saved, to be drawn, to be blessed with the gift of faith, "in him" from all eternity (Eph.1). We are chosen in Christ *unto* faith and *unto* salvation! If those to be drawn are placed outside of Christ, then Jesus is not their covenant head, and the power of his grace does not reach them. What Christ has done is not enough! Not enough for salvation.

It is certainly true that the reprobate will never come to Jesus, at least not sincerely, for no grace accompanies the command to come. Jesus is not their head, and the Spirit of Christ does not bestow upon them the blessing of faith. They are abandoned to their own resources of mind and will.

Have we forgotten that the Lord God realizes his decree of predestination and the whole of his counsel without violating the rational, moral nature of men? He makes us (the elect) willing and ready henceforth to live unto him. He takes up his abode in our hearts, imparts his life to us, and calls us, commands us to come to him and to live out of him.

In conclusion, at the December consistory meeting I responded to an observation of one of the elders to the seriousness of my objection to Rev. Cammenga's sermon statement. I explained that I had only asked for a retraction and an apology for the statement made in the sermon. Though I considered the sermon statement unbiblical and thus unwarranted, I was not asking for a confession of sin nor making a charge of sin. I took the position that any minister has the right to make a mistake. That is the way I view this matter. I do think that this is a brotherly attitude and a proper position.

Rev. Cammenga has repeatedly warned in the past against conditional theology. In the sermon in question, he warned against the theology of the well-meant offer of the gospel. And as I reminded him when I spoke with him personally, he called attention in a sermon several months ago to the very article of the Canons that I now quote to remind him of its truth. I am not out to brand our beloved pastor as a heretic. But a *serious* error has been made in the preaching of the gospel of *grace* in Christ's name and by his church. What of the future if an objection is not raised? Thus my request.

Sincerely,  
w/s Marvin Kamps

## Southwest Protestant Reformed Church

4875 Ivanrest Avenue  
Grandville MI 49418  
616-532-6876

Rev. Ron Cammenga, Pastor  
4895 Ivanrest Avenue  
Grandville MI 49418  
Phone: 616-532-4846

Mr. Darrel Huisken, Clerk  
3131 Wallace SW  
Grandville MI 49418  
Phone: 616-532-7352

March 25, 2004

Mr. Marvin Kamps  
3498 Cheyenne Dr  
Grandville MI 49418

Dear brother,

Here follows our response to your letter dated January 31, 2004.

This consistory has struggled with how to respond to your letter. At least part of our difficulty arises from the fact that we agree with what you write about salvation being God's work, as does Rev. Cammenga. It is a fact, we believe, that much of what you write appeared in his sermon. Every evidence indicates to us that neither he, you, nor this consistory believe in conditional theology. Our differences, it appears to us, are in the words Rev. Cammenga used and the conclusions you have drawn from them. We all agree that salvation is God's work.

You say we are talking past each other. That may be. We seem to be at an impasse.

However, we would like to make one final attempt to answer your questions and concerns. We would like to convince you that Rev. Cammenga's words were not wrong per se. The statements do not teach or imply any inherent inadequacy in the death of Christ. We believe the implications and conclusions you have drawn from Rev. Cammenga's statement are unwarranted.

In the first place, we want you to understand that you are misquoting Rev. Cammenga. You correctly lay out the paragraph you question in your first letter, however, later in that very letter and in most correspondence since you misquote him. The statement you attribute to him that he did not make is, "What Jesus has done is not enough." You attribute this statement to him in your October 13 (*sic*), December 13, and your January 31, 2004, letters. You put quotations marks around those words. You allege they are Rev. Cammenga's words. Most emphatically, they are not. He never used those words. We pointed this out to you in our December 3 letter.

That was the purpose of the two examples in our December 26 letter to you. Those were not his words. His words were "Not enough for salvation...that this Jesus suffered under the wrath of God an atoning death." In other words, Christ's death was one step in a series of successive events, all of which play a part in our salvation. The consistory feels there is a vital and fundamental difference between the quote and the misquote.

We begin the second part of our defense by reminding you of the same thing you reminded us of in your latest letter, that is, the importance of the context. What was the

context of Rev. Cammenga's statement? What was preached about God's great work of salvation?

Remember now, the sermon of October 23, 2003 (*sic*) was cut short because Rev. Cammenga's voice gave out. It was concluded October 30, 2003 (*sic*), in the morning. The words this consistory will use to defend Rev. Cammenga's statement and hopefully to answer your questions and concerns are Rev. Cammenga's own words used in the October 30, 2003 (*sic*), sermon: the completion of the sermon you disagree with. Word for word now, this is what he preached:

Our coming is the irresistible work of the Spirit of Jesus Christ. The sinner who was unable to come to Christ now comes, must come, does come, cannot but come to Christ.

But he also emphasizes in the passage the impossibility of our coming to him as we are in ourselves and in our own strength. That inability is the spiritual inability of our depravity. The reason why no man can come to Jesus is that all men without exception are by nature dead in their trespasses and in their sins. We cannot come to Jesus. We cannot believe on him. We cannot trust in him for salvation or for forgiveness and for eternal life.

That some do come to him, that there are those who heed his summons, "Come unto me," is an amazing thing. That some do believe on Jesus ought to astound us. If we are unable ourselves to come to Jesus, the explanation of our coming to Jesus must lie not in ourselves but in the sovereign God and Father of Jesus Christ.

That is exactly what Jesus has taught in the context of the text. That's exactly his teaching in verse 25, in that prayer of his to God his heavenly Father, when he says, "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them to babes." Just as it is the case that the hiding of the things of the gospel and the revelation of the things of the gospel are due to the sovereign God and Father of Jesus Christ; just as it is the case that one he blinds and hardens in sin, so that the things of the gospel are hidden from him, and in the other case he opens the eyes and makes clear the truths of the gospel, so it is that God the Father of Jesus Christ sovereignly draws one to Jesus Christ while sovereignly leaving another in his sin and unbelief.

We come to Jesus, but we come to Jesus Christ because God has sovereignly, before the foundations of the world, chosen us in Jesus Christ. We come, but we come because God has determined that we shall come. The coming is the irresistible work of the Spirit of Jesus Christ. The sinner who was unable to come to Christ now comes. Must come! Does come!

That, dear brother Marvin, is the consistory's answer to you. That is the "fleshing out and clarification" you requested. That is what the eight elders heard. They did not hear in Rev. Cammenga's statement that our activity of faith adds something that is lacking. This is what you allege the words had to mean, but that is not what we heard. This is why the elders did not hear that we must do something too, in order to accomplish salvation, as you allege his words must imply. The elders heard words quite contrary to that. The elders heard, contrary to what you allege, sovereign grace and sovereign election. Read again his exact words! It is clearly there. In fact, it was properly emphasized.

Dear brother, again we ask you to reconsider your objections. In our judgment Rev. Cammenga's statements are not per se unbiblical. Salvation is clearly taught as God's work alone. The doctrine of sovereign election is clearly taught. What Rev. Cammenga said is the very same thing that Ursinus writes in his commentary on the Heidelberg Catechism. In treating Lord's Day 17, he writes,

It was not sufficient for him merely to die. It became him also, by his power, to confer upon the church, and upon all of us, the benefits which he had purchased for us by his death. These benefits are righteousness, the Holy Spirit and eternal life and glory. (*Commentary on the Heidelberg Catechism*, 236)

Notice the same statement to which you object: "It was not sufficient for him merely to die."

We believe that we have adequately defended the statements made by the pastor. There is nothing more we can say as consistory in order to convince you that your position is wrong. We find we are repeating the same arguments.

We would like very much to bring closure to this matter for your sake, for our sakes, and especially for our pastor's sake.

If you cannot agree with the consistory, we ask you to acquiesce to the consistory.

In Christ's love,  
Consistory of Southwest Protestant Reformed Church  
w/s Darrel Huisken, clerk

The consistory of the Southwest Protestant Reformed Church  
Grandville MI 49418  
May 3, 2004

Dear brethren,

I have prayerfully considered your letter dated March 25, 2004. In it you attempt to show how the second half of the sermon clarifies the paragraph of the first half of the sermon, the one to which I objected. You advance a warning that my repeated summation of that paragraph is not accurate and rather badly misconstrues the thought of the paragraph—something, of course, that I may not do nor wish to do. Finally, you assure me that no one of the consistory wishes to teach a conditional theology. And you ask that if I cannot agree with the consistory that I acquiesce.

First of all, I want to respond to your statement that no one in the consistory believes in conditional theology. I believe that of all of you. I stated at least once in past documents that it was my opinion that Rev. Cammenga did not believe what he said in the sermon paragraph to which I object. He certainly has expressed repeatedly that he does not believe in the theology that I claim the paragraph in question teaches.

But here is the problem: the paragraph in question may indeed teach and proclaim as the gospel errant theology that he and the consistory are unable or are reluctant to recognize as such for various reasons. Or the problem could be that I refuse to see what is so very clear to the brethren, which would be to my shame.

Second, you have asked me to acquiesce, but I may not at this time. I believe that I must try again to justify my heartfelt concerns before the ruling elders of the church.

Third, I will refrain from the use of the sentence with which I tried to summarize what I found objectionable in the paragraph. I recognize that Rev. Cammenga did not use those exact words, however, I do not see that the summary sentence misconstrues the thought of the paragraph. But I do not wish to debate that fact, for the issue, we would all agree, is the paragraph, not my summation. Nor did the consistory do anything more than to assert that the summation sentence misconstrues the paragraph to which I object. You gave no proof or evidence that would legitimize your contention.

Fourth, I am so very thankful for the lengthy quote from the second half of the sermon. What is expressed there any one with the least bit of familiarity with the Protestant Reformed Churches would recognize as the theology that is our witness throughout all the years of our existence.

However, there is a very serious problem with your use of that material to show the legitimacy of the paragraph to which I object. The consistory claims that it is answering my request for clarification and amplification from the rest of the sermon that would properly explain the objectionable (in my opinion) paragraph. But what you present cannot serve as amplification and clarification. It cannot for it is very obviously a contradiction of what was said in the objectionable paragraph. The material from the second half of the sermon stands diametrically opposed to what was said with all urgency in the paragraph to which I object. Note the material from the second half of the sermon attributes our coming to Christ exclusively to the sovereign activity of God in Christ Jesus and by his Spirit. It teaches that we come because God has chosen us in Jesus Christ, so that the wellspring of our salvation is the decree of the decreeing God, who accomplishes his will through Christ Jesus. All of our salvation is of him. Jesus' work is sufficient for our salvation after all. That is not clarification and

amplification, but contradiction of the earlier proclamation that every Arminian of whatever stripe rejoices in.

It is not enough for salvation that God has sent his Son, Jesus Christ, into the world. It is not enough that there is a Jesus. It is not enough that this Jesus was born of a virgin, that this Jesus lived a perfect life, that this Jesus taught and defended the word of God, that this Jesus suffered under the wrath of God in an atoning death, that this Jesus arose with his body from the grave on the third day, that this Jesus is ascended in power at the right hand of God in the heavens. Not enough for salvation.

God must not only have sent Jesus into the world, but I must come and you must come to Jesus. I must become one with him, so that I enjoy his fellowship and share in his salvation. For salvation it is necessary that I come to him. And if I do not come to him, there is no salvation and no enjoyment of the blessings of salvation.

Please note the difference between clarification and opposition. If I say to a man who asks for directions from Grand Rapids to Chicago, "Take 196 west out of Grand Rapids past Holland toward South Haven and you will get there." Then my statement can stand, but it is not very complete. It needs amplification and clarification. A third party who may have heard my instructions may clarify by amplifying my instructions and add, "196 joins 94 west, which if you follow it off 80-90 it will bring you north into the city of Chicago. What the third party said does not oppose and rule out my instructions, but it clarifies them. Opposition rules out and proposes something else.

To my mind those words [of the paragraph to which I object] are so obviously Arminian, not because they stress our calling and responsibility to come to Jesus, to confess his name. The Bible is full of texts that in one way or another call men to repentance and faith. And it does not make any difference whether they are elect or reprobate: all must obey the command of the gospel. Of all the saints at Southwest, I need to hear that call more than any other sinner. That call is not the issue, nor is the issue the emphasis upon human responsibility. The issue is that part of the paragraph that depicts the work and life of Christ as insufficient to the salvation of the church chosen in him.

I know the intent of such preaching. I am not claiming that it was Rev. Cammenga's intent; I believe he said what he did unwittingly. Such preaching is an unfounded and unbiblical way to stress the importance and urgency of sinners' obeying the command of the gospel, that is, to stress human responsibility. But it is not biblical or Reformed, and it is dishonoring to our sovereign God. I know that the ecclesiastical church world charges us with the denial of human responsibility and with antinomianism, but the above paragraph is an inappropriate way to get the hound of slander off our backs or to silence the critics. The above paragraph forfeits the battle by declaring the insufficiency of Christ's life and work for the salvation of his chosen church.

Our Protestant Reformed fathers had to endure this slander, and again in 1953 this same wicked slander was repeatedly made. But all Reformed people who love the truth of sovereign grace in Christ Jesus that issues forth from the will of our ever-blessed God had to endure it: "Doth not this doctrine make men careless and profane?" Even the apostle Paul had his accusers: "Thou wilt then say unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will?"

We must pay no heed to that slander!

Why do I bring this up? The answer: because that charge could not and would not be made over against the paragraph to which I object! It clearly leaves the message in the air: you have to do the rest! The theology of that paragraph is exactly what the Arminian preaches to the praise of men and the dishonor of the God and Father of Christ Jesus. You can hear that message on every street corner. They are annoyed and irritated by the gospel of grace, that is, the gospel of election. Yet there is no doctrine more blessed and comforting than the truth that God *first* blessed his people when he chose them in Christ and made him their shepherd and king from all eternity in his decree of election. Our coming to Christ and all the activity of faith is not “of us.” Jesus said, “Without me ye can do...nothing!” When *he* calls, *he* gives the grace of obedience to his own! “For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things; to whom be glory forever.”

The material from the second half of the sermon does not clarify but opposes and contradicts the objectionable paragraph. The sermon is self-contradictory. It proposes diametrically contradictory propositions.

I ask again, rather I plead with you, that you strike from the consistory’s books your declaration that the paragraph to which I object is fully in harmony with our Reformed confessions.

Please go to the pulpit as pastor and consistory and apologize and retract this paragraph.

Your brother in Christ Jesus,  
w/s Marvin Kamps

## Southwest Protestant Reformed Church

4875 Ivanrest Avenue  
Grandville MI 49418  
616-532-6876

Rev. Ron Cammenga, Pastor  
4895 Ivanrest Avenue  
Grandville MI 49418  
Phone: 616-532-4846

Mr. Darrel Huisken, Clerk  
3131 Wallace SW  
Grandville MI 49418  
Phone: 616-532-7352

July 8, 2004

Mr. Marvin Kamps  
3498 Cheyenne Dr  
Grandville MI 49418

Dear brother,

This letter is our response to your letter dated May 3, 2004.

In that letter you stated, "The issue is that part of the paragraph that depicts the work and life of Christ as insufficient to the salvation of the church chosen in him."

The paragraph to which you refer is the one that has been the subject of our debate for some months now. "It is not enough for salvation that God has sent his Son, Jesus Christ, into the world" are the words which begin that paragraph. It is your position that part of that paragraph declares an insufficiency in the work of Christ for our salvation. It is our position that these words as they stand in and of themselves do not declare an insufficiency in the work of Christ. "It is not enough for salvation" merely means that this was just one step in a series of events which accomplishes God's plan of salvation for his elect people.

Also, we remind you that the statement of Rev. Cammenga must not be taken out of context. They must be considered in the light of the entire sermon that he preached last October.

The statements that you heard in that sermon are not novel. Similar statements have been previously made by Reformed theologians. In our letter to you dated March 17, 2004, we pointed out to you what Ursinus wrote in his commentary on the Heidelberg Catechism. We once again quote what he wrote in treating Lord's Day 17.

It was not sufficient for him merely to die. It became him also, by his power, to confer upon the church, and upon all of us, the benefits which he had purchased for us by his death. These benefits are righteousness, the Holy Spirit and eternal life and glory. (*Commentary on the Heidelberg Catechism*, 236)

The consistory noticed in your last letter to us that you did not respond to the above quotation.

Also Rev. Herman Hoeksema in treating Lord's Day 6 of the Heidelberg Catechism wrote as follows:

We need, therefore, one that is our redemption. And this is our Lord Jesus Christ, who was delivered for our transgressions, and raised for our justification. To

believe in Him is to be liberated from the dominion of sin according to God's own justice. But redemption is not enough. (*The Triple Knowledge: An Exposition of the Heidelberg Catechism*, vol. 1, 275)

And lastly, as we pointed out in our letter to you dated December 3, 2003, Professor Engelsma in a sermon on the text John 6:44 states,

Implied is the importance, the necessity of coming to Jesus. It is not enough for salvation that God has sent Jesus into the world, that Jesus was born of a virgin, that he suffered under the wrath of God in his atoning death, that he arose again in the body on the third day, and that he has ascended in power into heaven to sit on the right hand of God. For salvation not only must God have sent Jesus into the world, but I must come to Jesus, so that I am one with him, so that I enjoy his friendship, so that I share in the salvation that is in Jesus Christ.

The statements you heard in that sermon and to which you object reflect the general or pervasive teaching of our creeds that our salvation includes both our justification and sanctification.

Further, we wish to point out that one can look at the cross from two points of view. On the one hand, the cross is complete; nothing can be added to the cross or the work of Christ on the cross. The cross is inherently sufficient. It accomplished everything that God intended the cross to accomplish. On the other hand, the cross does not stand alone in the purpose and work of God. There must also be the resurrection of Christ, his ascension, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, the second return of Christ, and the resurrection of the dead. From this point of view, Rev. Cammenga's sermon statement of October 12, 2003, may be properly made.

As an illustration of the above point, the scriptures can be properly viewed from two distinct viewpoints. On the one hand, the scriptures can be viewed as sufficient. On the other hand, they can be viewed as insufficient. They are sufficient as the complete revelation of God in Christ. This is over against the Roman Catholic position that the Apocrypha are to be included as part of the holy scriptures and the charismatic movement of today, which adds mystical experience to the scriptures. On the other hand, the scriptures are not enough, for it is also necessary that these scriptures be preached and that the Holy Spirit applies these scriptures to one's heart in the work of salvation.

In your letter of October 14, 2003, you quoted from the creeds. The creeds are speaking to the error espoused by some of an inherent insufficiency in the work of Christ. This is plain from the statements in the creeds which you quoted. It is this error that the creeds repudiate and we also. However, it is our position as a consistory that this is not the point here.

Perhaps it would be advisable for you, if done with discretion and confidentiality, to confer with Professor Engelsma regarding his use of the above statements as part of our ongoing effort to resolve this matter over which we differ. We encourage you to do so.

In conclusion, we do want to commend you and express our appreciation to you for the care you have exercised in bringing your concerns to the consistory and for not discussing this matter openly with other church members. In this way we can be confident of the Lord's blessing upon our laboring with each other to bring this matter to a resolution.

Yours in Christ,  
Consistory of Southwest Protestant Reformed Church  
w/s Darrel Huisken, clerk

The consistory of the Southwest Protestant Reformed Church  
Grandville MI 49418  
July 16, 2004

Dear brethren,

I received on Sunday, July 11, 2004, your response to my letter dated May 3, 2004. I feel very impatient and frustrated by this response. Frustrated because your letter reasserts something about which we have no disagreement. It took the consistory nine weeks to reiterate something with which I have repeatedly expressed agreement. The consistory, therefore, fails to recognize agreement when agreement has been repeatedly stated.

Why is that?

Besides, I feel very impatient because this issue of disagreement about the objectionable paragraph has been going for nearly a year. I want with all my heart to keep this matter confined to the local congregation, that is, I want to keep it in the family of our congregation. But this can only be accomplished by the consistory's taking hold of the situation and dealing concretely with the paragraph in question.

It will not do to quote solidly Reformed statements from the rest of the sermon. It will not do to reinterpret the paragraph in an acceptable manner. It will not do merely to say that it agrees with scripture and the confessions, without quoting the confessions.

The paragraph is made up of words, words in clauses that express relationships, and it expresses something about *two* different groups of people. It speaks of *two* different activities by these persons. Those words have meaning! That paragraph has a meaning all by itself. It cannot be rescued by something said later in the sermon, even though what was said later is thoroughly biblical. If I may use a crass example, if a preacher loses his head in a sermon and expresses himself by the use of a swear word, then that has to be retracted and apologized for having been said. The consistory cannot point to all the good things the pastor may have said in the sermon as balancing out the swear word: "let us take the sermon as a whole."

The paragraph in question is false doctrine.

If it is not, then quote scripture and the confession to the point at issue.

You have done neither. The one quote from scripture that you gave is beside the point and only asserts that Christ must do more than die. He also has to be raised from the dead. What on earth does that have to do with our disagreement? Who disagrees with it?

Let me demonstrate from my past documents that I have expressed agreement with the proposition as presented in the position that Christ had to do more than die, more than be raised, more than ascend into heaven, more than sit at God's right hand. This is not the content of the paragraph, but something imposed upon the paragraph. The objectionable paragraph states, "All that God had done in sending Christ, all that Christ did was not enough for salvation. But you and I must do something." To that I object with all my heart.

On January 31, 2004, I wrote,

Your last attempt to communicate was dated December 26, 2003. In it you show that our Lord had to do more than die, more than be raised from the dead, more than ascend. Besides appealing to Acts 17:3, you give two examples: one about an army going to war and the second about what is necessary for good health. I asked myself in consternation, why all of this? I never denied that the work of Christ follows a certain path of successive events, *all* of which are integral to our

salvation. Besides, in my letter dated December 13, 2003, I identified the attempted reinterpretation as “an acceptable explanation” on the statement to which I object. I stated that the explanation was “thoroughly Reformed.” Yet in your last letter you continue asserting something about which I have no objection.

Why? Did you not hear me?

Now I express agreement once again!

The quote from Ursinus and from H. Hoeksema were appreciated immensely, for they presented an opportunity to once more express my agreement and to demonstrate that they are not defending the theology of the paragraph under discussion. I don't disagree with what is written there. Both quotes are defending and explaining the truth that Jesus is a complete savior. Both quotes demonstrate the position that I am defending. I have photocopied the pages from which these quotes are taken so that they can be read in their context.

Please note that Ursinus and Hoeksema are not speaking about *two* different subjects (or doers) and *two* different activities. Rev. Cammenga is doing just that in the paragraph in questions. What Christ has done, and what man must do: *two* different subjects and *two* different activities. Ursinus and Hoeksema are only and exclusively speaking of *one* subject or doer, that is, of *the saving activity of Christ Jesus*.

Hoeksema is explaining that Christ not only had to die, that is, be our redemption for us. That would not be enough, for we are vile in ourselves. He must also be our wisdom and sanctification. He is our holiness. Please note that Hoeksema is speaking of *one* doer or subject, *one* saving activity with different aspects. No problem!

But Rev. Cammenga's sermon paragraph has *two* subjects, *two* activities, with the first doer not having been able to do enough for our salvation. Besides, Rev. Cammenga's sermon paragraph also sets the *two* activities and the *two* sets of doers in *disjunction* and in *contrast* to one another. The adversative, “but I must come and you must come,” does that, as I pointed out earlier. You may not ignore that fact. If words, relationships, and grammar have no meaning and significance for understanding what was said, then all is hopeless.

The same applies in regard to Ursinus' quote. The consistory quotes just a little portion, as you did with Hoeksema, for you found the words “not sufficient,” and in regard to H.H. the words “not enough,” as if the mere use of those words were the issue. Brethren, please look more carefully and deeply into the issue.

Yet let us note that again in respect now to Ursinus that he is speaking throughout the fourth section, begun at the bottom of page 235 to the top of page 237, about *one* subject or doer, not *two*. He is explaining why it was necessary for the one who had redeemed us also to be raised up to be our living mediator. I say once again, “No problem.” Note how almost every sentence in this section begins with Christ as the subject of the activity. “It became the Mediator.” “The human nature made of the seed of David.” “It was necessary that the Mediator,” and so forth.

In Rev. Cammenga's paragraph we read of *two* doers or subjects—Christ and man—with the former not having been able to do enough for the salvation of men. “But you must come.” We have to do something, otherwise there is no salvation accomplished. That is *not* the language you find in Ursinus.

The Rev. Hoeksema and Z. Ursinus are instructing us in the truth that salvation is the work of God as the sovereign God who accomplishes all our salvation.

Rev. Cammenga's sermon paragraph teaches synergism. Christ did an awful lot, but not enough for salvation; you and I have to do something too, in order to effect salvation. *Two* subjects cooperating to accomplish one goal.

I take no delight in saying it, but it has to be said.

Please note that Rev. Cammenga's sermon paragraph clearly says that the birth, the death, the resurrection of Jesus, his ascension, and his sitting at the right hand of God are not enough, not enough for salvation. Everything that Christ did was insufficient. Without man's act of faith there is no salvation.

Both Ursinus and H.H. and Acts 17 are discussing aspects of Christ's work as it unfolded. Then they pause to point out that when Christ died and is thus our redemption that is not enough. He had to do more: he had to be raised; he had to be our living mediator, that is, a complete savior.

I said I was frustrated. I express agreement. You keep on repeating your explanation that is imposed upon the paragraph, as if I disagreed with the theology of the explanation. Rev. Cammenga and the consistory have said that the work of Christ does *not* stand alone in the purpose of God. I contend that it does: Jesus is a complete savior. Never may it be said, in order to underscore human responsibility and the necessity of faith, "What Christ has done is not enough; man has to do something too in order to accomplish salvation."

I said I was frustrated. After I presented the quotes from Ursinus and Hoeksema, the consistory confidently proclaims that Rev. Cammenga's paragraph and its theology is the "pervasive" testimony of history and the Reformed creeds. But all you found were the words "not sufficient" and "not enough" without regard to context, without regard to the fact that they were speaking *exclusively of another matter*, and were discussing only the activity of *one* subject, *one* doer, and the relationship of the aspects of Christ's work.

Please don't be satisfied just to give the *appearance* of having treated my objections and then of having clarified the paragraph. The paragraph of the sermon has *two* subjects, *two* doers, *two* different activities; and these things stand in a *certain relationship* to one another according to the paragraph, for the latter must fill out and complete the former, whose work (all of it) was insufficient for salvation.

Why do the elders and the minister continually ignore these facts and continually talk about something where there is no disagreement?

Let me call your attention to the creeds as to this matter of sufficiency. As to the value of Christ's death, the following:

The death of the Son of God is the only and most perfect sacrifice and satisfaction for sin, and is of infinite worth and value, abundantly *sufficient* to expiate the sins of the whole world. (Canons of Dordt 2.3)

And whereas many who are called by the gospel do not repent, nor believe in Christ, but perish in unbelief, this is not owing to any *defect* or *insufficiency* in the sacrifice offered by Christ upon the cross, but is wholly to be imputed to themselves. (Canons of Dordt 2.6)

From the viewpoint of God's living will and decree, the following:

For this is the sovereign counsel and most gracious will and purpose of God the Father, that the *quickenings* and *saving efficacy* of the most precious death of His Son should extend to all the elect, for bestowing upon them alone the gift of

justifying faith, thereby to bring them *infallibly* to salvation. (Canons of Dordt 2.8)

How can the elect be brought infallibly to salvation, if what Christ has done is insufficient?

Please read H.C.H.'s explanation of this article in *The Voice of Our Fathers*, 371–75. I quote the following:

The faith whereby we are justified was by the Arminian made the condition of salvation, and therefore the human limitation of Christ's atonement. But this can never be. Also the justifying faith belongs to the quickening and saving efficacy of Christ's death. It belongs to our salvation. It can never be therefore a condition of salvation. And thus, all the blessings of salvation were acquired for us once and for all time when Christ laid down his life for his sheep. All our salvation is in the blood of the cross, in it alone, and in it surely and effectually!

But in the third place, the article insists on the entire picture of salvation. Lest it should be imagined that the work of Christ ceases at the cross, and that after the blessings of salvation have been objectively acquired for us by Christ, the work of man begins, the fathers add that it was God's "most free counsel, and gracious will and intention" that Christ should "confer upon them (the elect) faith, should purge them from all sin, both original and actual, whether committed before or after believing (which implies that just as our faith, repentance, and works cannot be a condition of our salvation, so even the sins we commit after we believe cannot deprive us of our salvation) should faithfully preserve them even to the end, and should finally bring them free from every spot and blemish to the enjoyment of glory in his own presence forever. (374–75)

From Canons 2.9 this emphatic declaration:

This purpose, proceeding from everlasting love towards the elect, has from the beginning of the world to this day been *powerfully accomplished*, and *will* henceforward still continue to be *accomplished*, notwithstanding all the ineffectual opposition of the gates of hell.

How can it (the purpose of God in Christ) be said to be *accomplished*, if what Christ did was not enough?

From Canons 2, rejection of errors 2: "The synod *rejects* the errors of those"

Who teach: That it was not the purpose of the death of Christ that He should confirm the new covenant of grace through His blood...

Rejection: For this is repugnant to Scripture, which teaches that Christ has become the Surety and Mediator of a better, that is, the new covenant, and that a testament is of *force* where the death has occurred.

Something insufficient in itself is, no doubt, in force? How can that be true?

Once again H.C.H. from *The Voice of Our Fathers*:

Before the will can be executed, the testator must die. Christ, the Surety of the New Testament, dies; and immediately all the provisions of that testament are of

force, are executed, and go into effect. All the blessings of the covenant through that death of Christ have been obtained for all the elect, according to the Word of God's oath; and they must certainly and inevitably be bestowed upon the heirs, those named in that testament, namely the elect.

Such is the new and better testament. (393)

Finally, from Canons 3–4.9:

It is not the *fault* of the gospel, not of Christ offered therein, nor of God, who calls men by the gospel, and confers upon them various gifts, that those who are called by the ministry of the Word refuse to come and be converted. The *fault* lies in themselves.

But if the work of Christ is insufficient in itself, then the *fault* may be in part in the gospel.

Can the sermon statement be squared with what we read in these creeds?

I don't think so!

Brethren, may you persistently talk beside the point or issue, let time and patience be exhausted, becloud the disagreement, and send the protestant away as if his objections were mere insignificances, trifles?

Earlier you said that you agreed with what I had stated. But you hang on tooth and nail to that sermon statement.

Why?

May human responsibility be underscored, highlighted, and pressed upon the hearer by declaring the work of Christ *insufficient* for salvation? The scriptures underscore, highlight, and press and urge upon the hearer his responsibility to come to Christ by *pointing to the consequence of not coming*: one remains under the wrath of God (John 3:36), that is, he perishes in hell (Matt. 7:13). The sermon paragraph in question does the former not the latter. The latter is legitimate, that is, biblical, not the former.

It seems to me that all you men (Rev. Cammenga included) do see the point I am making. All of you don't want the paragraph to say what it says, nor do I. But we have to deal with it because it constitutes an attack on the Reformed faith, one that has oft been made and is still made. If it were made through carelessness, through following the lead of Rev. D. J. Engelsma, or simply thoughtlessly said, be as gentle to our pastor as possible, but please don't defend it or obfuscate the issues.

I contacted Prof. David J. Engelsma, as the consistory urged me to do, by telephone and inquired if were willing to instruct me as to the proper understanding of this paragraph, which is "virtually" the same as his old, old sermon statements, but he would have no part of it. I told him that you had urged me to contact him and that I was more than willing to be instructed by him, or anyone else for that matter, as to the biblical and Reformed character of this paragraph, but he would not budge.

I have a question: is it perhaps time to seek the advice of Classis East? I am not eager to go to classis because I believe this should and could be settled here in our local church by means of an apology. If classis gets involved, so do other consistories and church members. It will become more than likely a public matter. It could be divisive for the churches. I do not want that to happen, but nor do I anyway agree with any sermon that teaches,

It is not enough for salvation that God has sent his Son, Jesus Christ, into the world. It is not enough that there is a Jesus. It is not enough that this Jesus was born of a virgin, that this Jesus lived a perfect life, that this Jesus taught and defended the word of God, that this Jesus suffered under the wrath of God in an atoning death, that this Jesus arose with his body from the grave on the third day, that this Jesus is ascended in power at the right hand of God in the heavens. Not enough for salvation.

God must not only have sent Jesus into the world, but I must come and you must come to Jesus. I must become one with him, so that I enjoy his fellowship and share in his salvation. For salvation it is necessary that I come to him. And if I do not come to him, there is no salvation and no enjoyment of the blessings of salvation.

Sincerely,  
w/s Marvin Kamps

P.S.: Philip Melanchthon, the dear friend of Martin Luther, turned Luther's biblical doctrine of sovereign grace upside down. Melanchthon taught synergism and by it silenced *forever* any biblical preaching of election and sovereign grace in the Lutheran churches. The issue is that *serious*. Why Luther did not hammer Melanchthon's "cooperation theology" into the ground is another matter. He loved Melanchthon so much, so that that love prevented him.

## Southwest Protestant Reformed Church

4875 Ivanrest Avenue  
Grandville MI 49418  
616-532-6876

Rev. Ron Cammenga, Pastor  
4895 Ivanrest Avenue  
Grandville MI 49418  
Phone: 616-532-4846

Mr. Darrel Huisken, Clerk  
3131 Wallace SW  
Grandville MI 49418  
Phone: 616-532-7352

July 29, 2004

Mr. Marvin Kamps  
3498 Cheyenne Dr  
Grandville MI 49418

Dear brother,

This letter is being written in reply to the letter we received from you dated July 16, 2004.

Obviously we are at an impasse regarding the issue over which we have been corresponding and debating since last October. You must either acquiesce to the position taken by the consistory or exercise your right of appeal to classis, as you indicate in your letter.

We kindly ask you to apprise us of your intentions. If you do decide to bring the matter to classis, we ask that you please send us a copy of the material that you will be forwarding to that body.

Yours in Christ,  
Consistory of Southwest Protestant Reformed Church  
w/s Darrel Huisken, clerk

Classis East of the Protestant Reformed Churches  
Clerk of classis  
August 4, 2004

Dear brethren,

The undersigned appeals the decision of the Southwest consistory in regard to the sermon preached by Rev. R. Cammenga on October 12, 2003 and on October 19, 2003. This is one sermon of two parts.

Rev. Cammenga made the following statements to which I objected on the basis of scripture and the creeds, but the consistory declared these statements to be biblical and confessional:

It is not enough for salvation that God has sent his Son, Jesus Christ, into the world. It is not enough that there is a Jesus. It is not enough that this Jesus was born of a virgin, that this Jesus lived a perfect life, that this Jesus taught and defended the word of God, that this Jesus suffered under the wrath of God in an atoning death, that this Jesus arose with his body from the grave on the third day, that this Jesus is ascended in power at the right hand of God in the heavens. Not enough for salvation.

God must not only have sent Jesus into the world, but I must come and you must come to Jesus. I must become one with him, so that I enjoy his fellowship and share in his salvation. For salvation it is necessary that I come to him. And if I do not come to him, there is no salvation and no enjoyment of the blessings of salvation.

I request Classis East to adjudicate this disagreement among the brethren.

May the Spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ lead and guide you in all your deliberations and decisions to the glory of his name and the blessing of his church.

In the love of Christ Jesus our Lord,  
w/s Marvin Kamps

Consistory of Southwest Protestant Reformed Church  
Mr. D. Huisken, clerk  
August 5, 2004

Dear Mr. Huisken,

Herewith I inform the consistory of my decision to appeal to Classis East your decisions regarding the sermon of Rev. Cammenga on October 12, 2003 and October 19, 2003.

I have sent all the correspondence between us as well as the transcription of the sermon to the clerk of Classis East, this under a cover letter requesting classis' help in this matter.

Please send to the stated clerk of Classis East all decisions and their grounds pertaining to this disagreement.

Please be advised that the material must be delivered to the stated clerk by August 9, 2004. If you cannot make that deadline, you should phone Mr. Jon Huisken and ask for a reasonable extension.

If we fail to make this deadline and are shut out from the hearing at classis in September 2004, the resolution of this matter would be unnecessarily postponed and the disagreement allowed to trouble us.

Sincerely,  
w/s Marvin Kamps

## Southwest Protestant Reformed Church

4875 Ivanrest Avenue  
Grandville MI 49418  
616-532-6876

Rev. Ron Cammenga, Pastor  
4895 Ivanrest Avenue  
Grandville MI 49418  
Phone: 616-532-4846

Mr. Darrel Huisken, Clerk  
3131 Wallace SW  
Grandville MI 49418  
Phone: 616-532-7352

August 9, 2004

Classis East of the Protestant Reformed Churches  
Meeting at the First Protestant Reformed Church of  
Holland MI  
Convening September 8, 2004

Dear brothers,

Greetings in the name of Christ our Lord!

Mr. Marvin Kamps has informed our consistory that he is appealing to Classis East his objections to a sermon preached by our pastor, Rev. Ron Cammenga.

For some ten months we have labored with Mr. Kamps to bring this matter to a resolution at the local level. We have been unable to do so and find ourselves at an impasse.

We ask Classis East to treat the appeal of Mr. Kamps, believing that the requirements of articles 30 and 31 of the Church Order have been satisfied. We request the classis to uphold the consistory's position defending the statement(s) made by Rev. Cammenga in the sermon in question.

The consistory's position can be found in the letters adopted by the consistory and sent to Mr. Kamps, which are included in his appeal. The minutes pertaining to this matter will also be made available to the classis, if they are needed.

Additionally, we request that the members of our consistory be granted the privilege of the floor when the appeal of Mr. Kamps is treated.

Praying God's blessing on the deliberations of the classis.

Cordially in Christ,  
Consistory of Southwest Protestant Reformed Church  
w/s David Rau, assistant clerk

## Classis East of the Protestant Reformed Churches

September 8, 2004

First Protestant Reformed Church  
Holland MI

### I. Information

- A. On October 14, 2003, Mr. Marvin Kamps protested to Southwest consistory certain statements made by Rev. R. Cammenga in a sermon he preached during the evening service of October 12, 2003. These were:

It is not enough for salvation that God has sent his Son, Jesus Christ, into the world. It is not enough that there is a Jesus. It is not enough that this Jesus was born of a virgin, that this Jesus lived a perfect life, that this Jesus taught and defended the word of God, that this Jesus suffered under the wrath of God in an atoning death, that this Jesus arose with his body from the grave on the third day, that this Jesus is ascended in power at the right hand of God in the heavens. Not enough for salvation.

God must not only have sent Jesus into the world, but I must come and you must come to Jesus. I must become one with him, so that I enjoy his fellowship and share in his salvation. For salvation it is necessary that I come to him. And if I do not come to him, there is no salvation and no enjoyment of the blessings of salvation.

- B. Brother Kamps contends that these statements are unbiblical and unconfessional.

1. "Rev. Cammenga's assertions that what Jesus had done was not enough are in direct and obvious contradiction of our Heidelberg Catechism that teaches us that Jesus is a 'complete Savior'" (Letter of Kamps, October 14, 2003, Agenda, 10).
2. "I find Rev. Cammenga asserting in the sermon statement an insufficiency in the work and death of Christ" (Letter of Kamps, November 10, 2002 (*sic*), Agenda 12).

- C. Rev. Cammenga and Southwest consistory responded to this protest of brother Kamps by stating,

1. "Rev. Cammenga: "What I said does not teach or imply any *inherent* inadequacy in the death of Jesus Christ. I did not teach or imply that there is any failure in the cross to accomplish everything that God intended the cross to accomplish. This is the teaching of all Arminianism... What I said and what I intended to teach is that God's salvation of us includes our coming to Jesus Christ and his work of causing us to come to Christ. The point that I was making is that the cross does not stand alone in the purpose and work of God. Our salvation includes not only our justification but also our sanctification. This is surely biblical and confessional. That is the only point I was making."
2. Southwest consistory: "What Rev. Cammenga taught is that God's salvation of us includes our coming to Jesus Christ and his work by the Spirit of causing us to come to Christ. In that connection, he did not say that Christ's death is not enough. What he said was that it is not enough that Christ died. The point that Rev. Cammenga was making is that the cross does not stand alone in the purpose and work of God. Our salvation includes not only our justification (God's work *for* us) but also our

sanctification (God's work *in us*). This biblical and confessional" (Letter of Southwest consistory, December 3, 2003, Agenda 2).

- D. Brother Kamps contends, however, that the responses of Rev. Cammenga and Southwest consistory are an explanation or reinterpretation of Rev. Cammenga's statements, but have no basis in the statements themselves. These explanations are imposed on Rev. Cammenga's statements and confuse the issue (Kamps' letter of December 13, 2003, Agenda 14).
- E. In a letter written on March 25, 2004, Southwest consistory answers these objections of brother Kamps by placing the statements of Rev. Cammenga in the context of the rest of his sermon. The consistory points out that Rev. Cammenga states that man has no part in saving himself but that God's elect people come because they are sovereignly and irresistibly drawn by the Holy Spirit.

## II. Recommendations:

- A. We recommend that Classis East declare the matter of the M. Kamps appeal legally before it.  
Grounds: The requirements of articles 30 and 31 have been met.
- B. We recommend that classis grant the members of the Southwest consistory the privilege of the floor while the appeal of M. Kamps is treated.  
Grounds:
  - 1. This is precedent.
  - 2. This is a matter that exists not simply between brother Kamps and his pastor but has become an issue between him and his consistory (Agenda, 8, letter dated August 5, 2004: "Herewith I inform the consistory of my decision to appeal to Classis East your decisions regarding the sermon of Rev. Cammenga on October 12, 2003, and October 19, 2003.")
- C. That Classis East read numbers 1–6 on the timeline of documents between M. Kamps and the Southwest consistory.
- D. That Classis East reject the appeal of brother Kamps that the statements of Rev. Cammenga in his evening sermon of October 12, 2003, are unbiblical and contrary to the confessions, and uphold Southwest consistory's position defending the statements made by Rev. Cammenga in the sermon in question.  
Grounds:
  - 1. The statements in question in Rev. Cammenga's sermon as they stand in themselves are not unbiblical or unreformed.
    - a. The statements would be unbiblical and unreformed if by the term "salvation" one referred only to salvation in the objective sense, that is, salvation accomplished for us by Christ. But this is not the case if by "salvation" one also has in mind the fruit of Christ's work for us, namely, the personal appropriation of salvation. For "salvation" in this later sense and its enjoyment, one must come to Christ. For that reason these statements *together, even apart from their context*, are not necessarily unbiblical and unconfessional.
    - b. If Rev. Cammenga said what brother Kamps asserts that he said, that is, "What Jesus had done is not enough" (Kamps' letter of October 14, 2003, Agenda, 10–11), then a case could be made that what Rev. Cammenga

taught is unbiblical and unreformed and implies that our activity of faith adds something that is lacking. But what Rev. Cammenga makes is a series of statements, which begin with “it is not enough that God sent his Son” and ends with “that Jesus ascended in power to heaven,” implying that salvation includes more than Christ’s redemptive work for us.

2. Further, the statements in question in Rev. Cammenga’s sermon are, given their context, indeed both biblical and Reformed.
  - a. Contrary to what brother Kamps asserts, that these statements of Rev. Cammenga teach “that our activity of faith adds something that is lacking [in the work of Christ Jesus]” (Agenda, 16), Rev. Cammenga emphasizes in his sermon that there is no spiritual ability of fallen men in themselves to come to Christ. “By means of this description the Lord Jesus not only emphasizes the necessity of our coming to him, which necessity is that we are the laboring and heavy laden, but he also emphasizes in the passage the impossibility of our coming to him as we are in ourselves and in our own strength. That inability is the spiritual inability of our depravity...We cannot come to Jesus. We cannot believe on him. We cannot trust in him for salvation, for forgiveness, and for eternal life” (Rev. Cammenga’s sermon).
  - b. Rev. Cammenga also asserts in his sermon that our coming to Jesus Christ is due to the sovereign, irresistible grace of God in Christ. “We come to Jesus Christ, but we come to Jesus Christ because God has sovereignly, before the foundations of the world, chosen us in Jesus Christ. We come, but we come because God has determined that we shall come. Our coming is the irresistible work of the Spirit of Jesus Christ. The sinner who was unable to come to Christ now comes, must come, does come, cannot but come to Christ” (Rev. Cammenga’s sermon).

Rev. Kenneth Koole  
Rev. Wilbur Bruinsma  
Gary Van Dyke  
Rev. David Overway  
Leroy DeVries  
Harlow Kuiper

## Jesus' Call to the Weary (part 1)

Text: Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.—Matthew 11:28:

In the context of our text, Jesus proclaims the truth of the sovereignty of God, the absolute sovereignty of God, verses 25 and 26 especially.

25. At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.

26. Even so Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight.

God is sovereign. Jesus expresses that by his address to God as the “Lord of heaven and earth.” That expresses the sovereignty of God That God is the “Lord of heaven and earth” means that he is absolutely sovereign, sovereign over all things. It is especially the truth of God’s sovereignty in salvation that Jesus emphasizes. He declares that it is God who saves some men and who does not save other men. This he does, Jesus teaches, by revealing the truth to some, those whom he identifies as the “babes,” and by hiding the truth from others, those whom he describes as “the wise and prudent.” Jesus teaches that God does this according to his own determination and purpose, and Jesus maintains that this determination of God is controlled only by God’s own good pleasure, “for so it seemed good in thy sight.”

These words of Jesus are words that make plain that salvation is not a matter of chance. These words of Jesus make plain that the two results to the preaching of the gospel in time and in history are results determined, not by men and the decisions of men, but by the will and decision of God. Men do not cooperate in accomplishing their own salvation, but God, “Lord of heaven and earth”, is sovereign in the salvation of sinners.

But this truth of the absolute sovereignty of God, God’s will to reveal the truth of the gospel to some and to hide the truth of the gospel from others, must not be viewed as a hindrance to the preaching of the gospel and must not be viewed especially as a hindrance to the serious call to faith in Jesus Christ issued in the preaching of the gospel. That the words of our text for tonight make plain.

Jesus has just taught in the clearest possible language the sovereignty of God in salvation. And in the same sermon, practically in the same breath, he issues the call, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden.” That ought to silence all those who object to the doctrine of sovereign predestination with the objection that such a doctrine makes it impossible to call all who hear the gospel to repentance and faith in Jesus Christ. No so. Both are true: God is absolutely sovereign. And the sovereign God in the preaching of the gospel calls men to faith in Jesus Christ. This is now what Jesus does in the words of the text. He issues the call, or the command, of the gospel: “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden.” To that call of the gospel he adds the promise of the gospel: “and I will give you rest.”

Fundamentally, this is always the nature of the gospel call. That call of the gospel may take various forms. It may be implied in the sermon, or it may be explicit in the sermon, as it was explicit in Jesus’ sermon in Matthew 11. That call of the gospel may come as the call to obedience to God’s word, or it may come as the call to repentance over sin, or it may come as the call to believe on Jesus Christ. But basically it’s the same call, the call of the gospel. And at bottom that call of the gospel is always the call to come to Jesus.

Not only is this the call of the gospel, but this same call of the gospel comes to us in the sacrament of the Lord's supper. We will sit down together at the table of our Lord in his presence as his guests. In a special, in a glorious, way we will come to Jesus. And coming to Jesus, we will experience rest for our souls.

Consider the text with me tonight under the theme, "Jesus' Call to the Weary."

1. The call itself
2. The objects of that call (that is, those to whom the call comes)
3. The promise that is attached to Jesus' call to the weary

In the text Jesus issues a call, a summons, a command. "Come unto me," he says. Coming to Jesus is the real spiritual movement of a man toward Jesus in that man's heart, in his mind, and in his will, so that he becomes one with Jesus, is joined to Jesus, enjoys fellowship with Jesus, and shares Jesus and all that is in Jesus. That's coming to Jesus. Clearly the Lord is speaking in the text not of a physical coming to him. These words were spoken by Jesus to an audience of Jews who were gathered about Jesus, who had physically come to him. Physically they were near him, and there was no need that Jesus should call them to come unto him.

Rather, Jesus is exhorting those in his audience to come to him spiritually. Spiritually they must come to Jesus. Clearly this is the case. Jesus is preaching the gospel here, and the realities of the gospel are not physical but are spiritual realities. That Jesus is concerned in the text with a spiritual coming to him, is also plain from the promise that he attaches to the call to come. That promise is "and I will give you rest."

But Jesus goes on to point out in the next verse that that rest of which he speaks is a spiritual rest. For there he refers to that rest as a rest unto your souls. Clearly the reference in the text is to a spiritual coming to Jesus. The reality of this spiritual coming to Jesus is faith in Jesus. It is to believe on Jesus. It is to embrace Jesus by a true and living faith. You may read the text that way. That is the heart of Jesus' call to those in audience in the text. "Believe on me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Faith in Christ, that's what he is talking about. That's what coming to Jesus is.

But what is this faith in Jesus?

In the first place, faith is knowledge of Jesus. The Lord emphasizes in the passage the necessity of a true knowledge of him in order to come to him. That makes sense. That's always true. I can't go somewhere unless I know where that place is and know how to get to that place. Knowledge is critical to coming. The necessity of knowing him, the Lord Jesus brings out in verse 27, the verse immediately before the text, when he says, "All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him." Knowing the Son, knowing Jesus, this is coming to Jesus. And that's also brought out in the verse immediately following the text too. "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me," says Jesus.

The knowledge of Jesus that the Lord speaks of in the text is not only an intellectual knowledge. It is not only that we know that there was somebody by the name of Jesus, know about him, know certain facts concerning him. For after all the Jews to whom Jesus spoke these words knew very well who Jesus was. They had a thorough-going intellectual knowledge of him, were very well acquainted with his person and his background. But although they possessed that intellectual knowledge of Jesus, they did not know Jesus and knowing him come to him.

The spiritual knowledge of Jesus, that is, coming to him consists of a knowledge of him as the Christ of God, the one who has been anointed by God in order to carry out God's great work of salvation. He is God's Son come in the flesh in order to do God's will.

That emphasizes the importance of coming to Jesus. He is no private person. He is no mere individual, no man only among men, so that it makes very little difference in the end whether or not you come to him. He is the Christ, the Christ of God. He has been sent out by God as the one who will carry out God's purposes. He is God's Son. God's authority stands behind him. Faith knows Jesus as the Christ of God. That to begin with is coming to Jesus.

But faith is also the knowledge of Jesus as the eternal Son of God and therefore God himself. This is the point that Jesus has been making in the context, the point of his teaching in verse 27: "All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him." Clearly there Jesus teaches a unique relationship between himself and God the Father. In a unique sense of the word, Jesus says and can say, "God is my Father." And in an entirely unique sense of the word, he can identify himself with God the Father. Jesus is God's own Son. As such he must be known. He can only be known and knowing him a man can only come to him who acknowledges him as the eternal Son of God.

It is precisely this that the Jews of Jesus' day refused to acknowledge. And it was precisely because they would not know him as the Son of God that they would not and did not come to him. "He is the son of Joseph and Mary," they say. "We know all about him. We know his ancestry, and we know his place of origin." What they were saying was, "He is not the eternal Son of God." They rejected him as God's own Son and rejecting him as the Son of God, they did not come to him.

And though there are those today who profess to come to Jesus, they do not come to him as God's Christ, do not come to acknowledging him as God's own eternal Son. They do not come to him in truth at all.

Our coming to him next Sunday morning in the sacrament of the Lord's supper must be such a coming on our part that it lives in our consciences that we come to the Son of God. This is our remembering of him in the sacrament. This is the honor that we owe to him as the Son of God. As such he came into the world, as such he died on Calvary's cross, and only if he is the eternal Son of God is there any value to that death of his on the cross, any benefit to our coming to him. So coming to Jesus is knowing him—knowing him as the Christ and knowing him as the eternal Son of God.

But coming to Jesus is also trusting in Jesus for salvation and for eternal life. That too Jesus makes plain in the passage. He makes that plain in his answer to John's disciples right at the beginning of Matthew 11. Because that really was John's question to Jesus. John's question was really, "Art thou he that should come in order to accomplish salvation, or do we look for another to accomplish salvation?"

And in the answer that Jesus gave to John's disciples and through his disciples to John himself, he made John to know that he is indeed the savior of God. "Blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me," says Jesus. Coming to Jesus is trusting in Jesus therefore for salvation and for eternal life.

That coming to Jesus is trusting in him for our salvation, Jesus also makes plain by the rebuke of the unbelieving Jews in the context of our text. According to verse 20, he rebuked them because they repented not. He announced over them the judgment of God, especially on certain outstanding cities of Galilee: Bethsaida, Chorazin, and Capernaum. He pronounced that

judgment of God over them, and he rebuked them exactly because they did not believe on him. They did not trust in Jesus for salvation and for eternal life. Even though he had done many mighty works in their midst, even though he had proclaimed himself as the Christ of God, God's eternal Son, and as the savior, they rejected him. In unbelief they did not come to Jesus.

Not to come to Jesus is not to trust in him for righteousness and eternal life. Not to come to Jesus is to reject him; it is to turn away from Jesus; it is to disdain the righteousness of God worked out in Jesus.

This trusting in Jesus for salvation which is involved in our coming to Jesus is a trusting for our salvation in Jesus alone. Jesus emphasizes that in his words in the text, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Coming to Jesus is looking to Jesus alone for all of salvation. It is relying upon him exclusively; it is trusting in him only for your standing before God; it is trusting in no one and in nothing else besides Jesus. Not Jesus and not come unto me and also come unto this one or that one, but come unto me and me alone.

There are many who do not come to Jesus, who do not trust in him for righteousness and for salvation. There are many who immediately turn away from him in unbelief when he is preached to them in the gospel. There are many who hear the call of the gospel, "Come unto me" and who hearing that call immediately refuse because, so they suppose, they have no need to come to Jesus. The multitudes in the cities that Jesus upbraids and rebukes in this passage did so.

And this is the response still today of very many to the summons of the Lord in the preaching of the gospel: "Come unto me." There are also those who in reality do not come to Jesus, even though it may appear that they do and even though they profess to come to Jesus. It's possible for a man to profess to come to Jesus while in actuality he does not come to Jesus at all. Many there are who came to Jesus during his ministry but came for wrong reasons. May there were who came to him only eventually to turn away from him, to deny him, and to reject him. And so it is still today, Still today there are those who come to Jesus for wrong, for carnal, and for earthly, reasons. These in reality do not come to Jesus at all.

Either a man comes to Jesus for the forgiveness of sins and for eternal life, or he does not come to Jesus at all. He rejects Jesus. It is either or.

This now is the call or command of Jesus.

In the text Jesus does not only discuss coming to him, he does not only teach what is involved in coming to him, but he issues the call, the command that men come. "Come unto me," he says, "all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." This is the call of the gospel. That's what Jesus is busy doing here. He is busy preaching the gospel. The very first verse of the chapter tells us that "he departed thence to teach and to preach in their cities."

Jesus' work of preaching the gospel, it is clear, was not only a work of teaching men the truth. It was not only the instruction of them in the fundamentals of the word of God. It was that, but it was more than that. It was also that work of calling men to faith in himself and to repentance over their sins.

This still today is the call that comes in the preaching of the gospel by the church. That must accompany the preaching of the gospel by the church. Whether that's the preaching of the gospel in the established congregation or the preaching of the gospel on the mission field, whether that's the preaching of the gospel in the gathered congregation as a whole or the preaching and teaching that goes on in the catechism room or the in the pastor's study. Always accompanying the preaching of the gospel is the call to believe, the call to come to Jesus Christ.

And it is in and through the church and the preaching of the word of God by the church today that men still come to Jesus Christ.

Jesus shows here that the preaching of the gospel is not in the form of an offer. By his issuing the call to men to come to him, he makes very clear that the preaching is not to take the form of an offer to be accepted or rejected by those to whom that offer is made.

We have many objections to the teaching of the free offer or well-meaning offer of the gospel and to the theology that stands behind that teaching. But one of our objections is simply this: that the gospel is simply not in the form of an offer. This is not how Jesus brings the gospel in the text. On the face of it, Jesus is making no offer of salvation, but he is issuing a call, a summons, a command. That's made plain by the imperatives that are in the original as well as in our translation. Jesus is binding upon their consciences their duty before God. He's laying out their solemn responsibility. They must come to him.

Implied in this command of Jesus is the necessity of coming. Since the Lord Jesus is talking here about faith, that's what coming to Jesus is. We have seen that what Jesus implies in the text is the necessity of faith. It is not enough for salvation that God has sent his Son, Jesus Christ, into the world. It is not enough that there is a Jesus. It is not enough that this Jesus was born of a virgin, that this Jesus lived a perfect life, that this Jesus taught and defended the word of God, that this Jesus suffered under the wrath of God in an atoning death, that this Jesus arose with his body from the grave on the third day, that this Jesus is ascended in power at the right hand of God in the heavens. Not enough for salvation.

God must not only have sent Jesus into the world, but I must come and you must come to Jesus. I must become one with him, so that I enjoy his fellowship and share in his salvation. For salvation it is necessary that I come to him. And if I do not come to him, there is no salvation and no enjoyment of the blessings of salvation.

This necessary coming to Christ is forcefully brought out in the sacrament of the Lord's supper. Next Sunday morning there is going to be a table, a communion table, and there's going to be bread and wine on that table—bread and wine commemorating the shed blood and the broken body of our Lord Jesus Christ. Celebration of the sacrament is not going to be this: that we will all behold the bread and the wine on the table and stare at those elements fixedly spread out on the communion table. But in the sacrament, for the proper use and administration of the sacrament, it will be necessary that we take and eat the bread. It will be necessary that we take and drink the wine. We must come.

It is necessary that we come to Jesus personally. That's also emphasized by Jesus in the passage. "Come," he says, "unto me." It is not enough that we come to church, but we must come to Jesus personally in our coming to church. It is not enough to know and to be in agreement with the doctrines of the church of Jesus Christ, but we must in our knowledge of and in our agreement with those doctrines, come to Jesus personally. Only by coming to him personally can I enjoy righteousness and eternal life. Only by coming to him personally can I enjoy the rest and salvation that are to be found in him.

And I'm going to save the rest for next Sunday morning and conclude here with my first point tonight, mostly for the sake of my voice.

We will come to him next Sunday morning, come to him by faith, come to him in order to partake of him, and so to be united to him, we will come in response to his own command to us that we come. And in coming, we will find rest for our souls.

Amen.

## Jesus' Call to the Weary (part 2)

Text: Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.—Matthew 11:28:

For our preparatory service last Sunday evening, we considered the first part of this word of Christ, Jesus' call, "Come unto me." We noticed that coming to Jesus is the real spiritual movement of a person toward Jesus in that person's heart, and mind, and will, so that he becomes one with Jesus, is joined to Jesus, experiences living fellowship with Jesus, and shares Jesus and all of the blessings that are to be found in Jesus.

The reality of this coming to Jesus we saw is faith in Jesus. Coming to Jesus is in reality believing on Jesus. We may read Jesus' word that way. "Believe on me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

That faith in Jesus includes, we saw, knowledge of him, true and saving knowledge. It is the knowledge of him as the Christ of God, the one sent by God into the world to do God's great work of salvation. But it is also the knowledge of him as the eternal Son of God and therefore as God himself.

This was precisely what the Jews of Jesus' day would not know about Jesus and would not confess concerning Jesus. This is what so many today will not know of Jesus and will not confess about Jesus.

This we know; this we confess.

Our coming to Jesus this morning in the sacrament of the Lord's supper is a coming to him according to which we thankfully acknowledge that Jesus is God's eternal Son. Coming to Jesus is knowing Jesus, but it is also trusting in Jesus for salvation and eternal life. This we also saw. This is why we come to Jesus. This is the purpose of our coming to him, and this is the blessedness of those who do come.

Not to come to Jesus is not to trust in him for righteousness and salvation and eternal life.

This now is the command of Christ: "Come unto me." This is the call of the gospel. The preaching of the gospel is not an offer of salvation. Take it or leave it! It's up to you! But it is a divine imperative: "Come unto me." Implied in that command is the necessity of our coming. Implied in that command is the duty that we have to come.

For salvation God must not only have sent Jesus into the world, but for salvation we must come to Jesus. You must come, and I must come. We must come to Jesus personally. It is not enough to come to church, but in coming to church you must come to Jesus. It is not enough to know, to be in agreement with, and to confess, the doctrines of the church, but we must in our knowledge of, our agreement with, our confession of, the doctrines of the church come to Jesus. Only by coming to Jesus personally can a man enjoy righteousness and eternal life.

This morning we want to consider those to whom Jesus issues his call, "Come unto me." Who are they? Who are they from a spiritual point of view? Who they are Jesus himself describes in the text. "Come unto me," he says, "all ye that labour and are heavy laden." He describes them as the laboring and the heavy laden.

So consider with me this morning, "Jesus' Call to the Weary."

1. The objects of his call
2. The promise that he gives to those who come to him

Those whom Jesus calls to come to him he describes as the laboring and the heavy laden. They have a certain characteristic about them. They are to be distinguished in a certain way. They identify themselves clearly, and that which distinguishes them and by which they are identified is this: they are the laboring and the heavy laden.

By “labour” in the text, the Lord Jesus is not referring to ordinary labor, the everyday work of our hands. He isn’t talking about the labor that we enjoy, that we relish, and that we find rewarding.

Instead he is referring to a labor that is grievous, a labor that in the end is a useless and a vain labor. He has in mind a labor that never is finished. He has in view a task that is never finally accomplished.

In Luke 5:5 the same word as is used by Jesus in the text for laboring is used. In Luke 5, the first part, you have the account of Jesus’ call to be his disciples to Peter, James, and John. You will remember that Jesus calls them to be his disciples from their being fishermen on the Sea of Galilee. Jesus summons them, first of all, by calling them to launch out into the deep and let down their nets for a draft of fish (v. 4).

Then in verse 5 Simon Peter responds to that command of Jesus, “Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net.” And, of course, they did, and they caught that multitude of fish. But it is that word in verse 5, “toiled,” that is the very word that is used by Jesus in our text this morning and that is translated as “labour.” “Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing.” A useless labor, a labor at which they expended themselves—all their energy, all the ability that they had—and accomplished absolutely nothing. “We have taken nothing.” That’s the labor that Jesus has in mind in the text.

Besides laboring, Jesus speaks in the text of those who are “heavy laden.” There Jesus is referring to somebody who is called to bear a burden, a backpack. Children, think of a backpack, a backpack that doesn’t just have your school books in it that you’re used to carrying, but let’s say a backpack that is filled with bricks or a backpack that is filled with lead. Impossible for you to pick up. If somebody puts that backpack onto your shoulders for you, because of the weight of the burden you are immediately crumpled underneath it and crushed into the ground. A burden that you cannot possibly bear. That’s the being laden with the heavy load that the Lord speaks of in the passage.

In these words of Jesus, we have a spiritual description of the sinner, the sinner in his lost and in his sinful condition. Jesus describes in the words of the text the entire reality of sin as it is experienced by the sinner. He describes in the text the awful power of sin and the useless struggle against sin on the part of the sinner in his own strength and by his own energy. He has in view also the guilt of sin. That’s the burden, the being heavy laden, to which the Lord Jesus refers, a burden that the sinner himself cannot possibly bear, a burden beneath which he is crushed in the dust.

By means of this description, the Lord Jesus not only emphasizes the necessity of our coming to him, which necessity is that we are the laboring and the heavy laden, but he also emphasizes in the passage the impossibility of our coming to him as we are in ourselves and in our own strength. That inability is the spiritual inability of our depravity. The reason why no man can come to Jesus is that all men without exception are by nature dead in their trespasses and in their sins. We cannot come to Jesus. We cannot believe on him. We cannot trust in him for salvation, for forgiveness, and for eternal life.

That some do come to him, that there are those who heed his summons, "Come unto me," is an amazing thing. That some do believe on Jesus ought to astound us. If we are unable ourselves to come to Jesus, the explanation of our coming to Jesus must lie not in ourselves but in the sovereign God and Father of Jesus Christ.

That is exactly what Jesus has just taught in the context of the text. That's exactly his teaching in verse 25, in that prayer of his to God his heavenly Father, when he says, "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." Just as it is the case that the hiding of the things of the gospel and the revelation of things of the gospel are due to the sovereign God and Father of Jesus Christ; just as it is the case that one he blinds and hardens in sin, so that the things of the gospel are hidden from him, and in the other case he opens the eyes and makes clear the truths of the gospel, so it is that God the Father of Jesus Christ sovereignly draws one to Jesus Christ while sovereignly leaving another in his sin and unbelief.

We come to Jesus Christ, but we come to Jesus Christ because God has sovereignly, before the foundations of the world, chosen us in Jesus Christ. We come, but we come because God has determined that we shall come.

Our coming is the irresistible work of the Spirit of Jesus Christ. The sinner who was unable to come to Christ now comes, must come, does come, cannot but come to Christ. Yet God does not cause him to come to Christ in such a way that he is dragged kicking and screaming all the way, brought against his will to Jesus Christ. No, God makes the sinner willing, so that we come, come freely, come willingly. Now we know Christ as the Son of God. Now we confess him as lord and savior. Now we trust in him for the forgiveness of our sins and for eternal life. Now we believe on him, look to him, love him, confess him, and follow after him, and now nothing in all of the world is able to keep us from him and to keep us from following after him.

How God causes us to come to Jesus is made plain in the passage. God causes us to come to Christ through the word and through the preaching of the word, through the hearing of Christ's call, "Come unto me."

Now that's what Christ is doing in this passage. He is preaching the word. That's why it's so important that the church preach the word of God, why she understands that to be really her one and her only calling in the world. The absolute necessity for that, the utter importance of that, is that it is through the gospel and the preaching of the gospel that men and women, young people and children too, come to Jesus.

Why it is so important in the mission work of the church that the gospel be preached because men come to Jesus and follow after Jesus, not through gimmicks, not by means of entertainment, but by the means of the preaching of the gospel, the hearing of the voice of Jesus, the Word of God.

That's the means by which God causes us to come to Jesus. But only that outward preaching, that hearing the word of a man, is never going to cause anybody to come to Jesus. And that's plain here too. Jesus preached. The prince of preachers preached the best sermon ever preached, and still many did not come.

The preaching of the gospel must be applied irresistibly to a man in order for that man to come to Jesus. There must be an inner, a spiritual, work of the Holy Spirit taking that word that he hears and applying it to the heart. There must be the work of the Holy Spirit creating faith in the word that is preached, so that a man is made to come to Jesus.

But those who come to Jesus through the preaching of the gospel and on account of the work of the Holy Spirit come to him as the laboring and the heavy laden. Through the preaching of the gospel and by the work of the Holy Spirit, God awakens in the elect sinner the consciousness of his sins. That's what Jesus is talking about in this text. All men are sinners. All men are under the power of sin, the dominating power of sin, the bondage of sin. All men are under the guilt of sin, guilty in Adam and guilty themselves for their own sins before God. But not all men are the laboring and the heavy laden. They are not. Rather than to be burdened by their sins, rather than to struggle against their sins, they delight in sin. They find pleasure in sin. Their sin and the guilt of their sin is not an unbearable burden to them, but they enjoy sin and seek sin.

Jesus emphasizes in the text that those who come to him, the only ones who come to him, are the laboring and the heavy laden. They are those in whom the consciousness of sin has been awakened. They labor, and they experience the heavy load of the guilt of their sins. They know themselves to be sinners. They know their sins, their sinful natures. They know their spiritual inability. They come to Jesus confessing their sins. They come to Jesus seeking deliverance from their sins.

That's how we must come to the Lord's table this morning. This is true of you, beloved, is it not? Jesus' description in the text of those who come to him is a description of you is it not, as if your own name was written down in Matthew 11:28? It is true of you is it not, you saw that this week in your examination of yourself, that your sins are a burden to you, the guilt of your sins, an unbearable burden? It's true of you is it not that you fight against your sins, you experience that struggle against sin, the laboring with your sins that Jesus is speaking of in the text? Those who come to Jesus are always those who know their sins. They come to Jesus because they know they are sinners.

Those who do come to Jesus find rest in Jesus. That's Christ promise to those who come. "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." The promise is the promise of rest. Such a rest is this that it relieves the laboring. Such a rest is this that it lifts the load of those who are heavy laden. It is rest of soul, spiritual rest. It is rest from sin, the struggle against sin, the burden of the guilt of sin. Such a rest is this that it is the enjoyment of the forgiveness of sins. This is a rest that is in Christ alone, a rest that can be found nowhere else, never apart from Christ. That's the implication of this word of Jesus, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I [I alone] will give you rest."

What wickedness that men do not come, but how utterly foolish at the same time. For apart from coming to Jesus Christ a man cannot enjoy any true rest.

It is a rest which he most certainly gives to those who do come to him. The text really is in the form of a promise from Christ. Coming to Christ we may be assured that he will receive us and that receiving us, he will bless us with rest. "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

This rest is enjoyed by those who come. It is enjoyed already now in this life. In the way of coming to Christ through faith in Christ sinners find their rest in Christ. This rest is enjoyed continually. All our lifelong under the preaching of the gospel in the way of participation in the sacrament, we do continually all our lifelong enjoy the promised rest of Christ.

And finally and perfectly, of course, this rest will be ours in heaven one day. Then the struggle with sin will be over, completely over. And then at long last that heavy burden with which now we are laden, the guilt of our sins, will be lifted from off our shoulders.

Not to come to Christ is to forfeit the rest. Those who do not come to Christ in obedience to the gospel call to come are of themselves unable to come. And with regard to them, it is true that God has sovereignly willed that they not come, but for their not coming they are nevertheless responsible. Willfully, deliberately, wickedly, they refuse to come. And whatever excuse a man may give for not coming, God judges him for his refusal to come to Christ. That's the word of Jesus in the context to those cities of Israel who heard the call, "Come unto me," but refused to come in unbelief, who rejected Jesus Christ as God's Son and as God's savior. And God judged those cities severely.

Do you now and do I come to Jesus? Do you come to him when he is preached in the gospel? Do you come to him when he is presented in the sacrament? Do you know him as God's Christ? And do you know him as the eternal Son of God? Do you know him as the savior of sinners? Do you trust in him for the forgiveness of sins, the forgiveness of your sins? Do you look to him for perfect righteousness that will stand before a just God? Do you look to him for eternal joy and glory?

Then be assured that coming to Jesus you will find rest—rest now and rest eternally, rest for your soul.

Amen.