

The Standard Bearer

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I am *El-Shaddai*; walk before Me

Rev. Ron VanOverloop

Training elders in history

Prof. Barrett Gritters

**Theistic evolution:
A confession**

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**Reason in the
Christian life**

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**The Canons of Dordt
and missions (2)**

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Meditation

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

I am *El-Shaddai*; walk before Me

“And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before Me, and be thou perfect. And I will make my covenant between Me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly.”

Genesis 17:1, 2

God called Abram out of Ur of the Chaldees and later out of Haran to go to the land that He would show to him, which land God would give to him and to his seed (12:1-7). God had promised Abram, “I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth” (13:16). Later God renewed this promise, telling him, “Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall they seed be” (15:5).

While we do not know how long Abram and Sarai were married prior to their arrival in Canaan, we do know that they had no children. And ten years after Abram was promised a great seed, there still were no children. It was then that “Sarai said unto Abram, Behold now, the LORD hath restrained me from bearing” (16:2). In a sinful effort to help the Lord, Abram gave in to Sarai’s suggestion that he take Hagar, her handmaid, which resulted in the birth of Ishmael. Ishmael is 13 years old (17:25) when God appears to Abram at the time of this text.

With the words of this text, God is preparing Abram. He is preparing him for an explanation of what it means that God will establish His covenant with him (2a). The knowledge that God is the Almighty God also prepares him to believe that God will keep His promise to multiply his seed exceedingly (2b). The knowledge that God is the Almighty God prepares Abram to hold for truth the unbelievable, namely, that he and Sarai would have a child, even though he was almost 100 years old (17:16, 19). And this knowledge prepares him to keep God’s covenant, rendering obedience to God’s demand that he, Ishmael, and all the males in his household be circumcised (17:9ff).

God calls Abram and us to know Him. This is where life begins—covenant life, eternal life—and this is where it ends. To know God in Jesus Christ. To know God for who He is. To know Him who establishes with us such a wonderful relationship!

He is “the almighty God,” *El Shaddai* in the original Hebrew. *El* is the most common name of Jehovah. It is translated “God.” The word “God” identifies Him as the Being who *is* (not “has”) every perfection; and He is every perfection infinitely (immeasurably) and eternally. As God He is all in all, incomprehensibly majestic in greatness and in glory. He is good and He is good in everything. He is independent, without a need for anything other than Himself. He is God!

Shaddai means “almighty,” with an emphasis, not on strength or might, but on sufficiency. He is the all-sufficient God. There is no want or lack in Him. He is the only One who blesses, who is sufficient to meet every need, both for Himself and for His people. His all-sufficiency means that He provides all things necessary for His people and that He triumphs over every apparent obstacle to meet these needs.

He who identified Himself as Abram’s shield (exceeding great reward, 15:1) now identifies Himself as the All-sufficient One. He is able to keep every promise He gave to Abram. Twenty-four years after first receiving God’s promise to make of him a great nation (12:2a), Abram is told this again. The reason this promise is sure is that the One giving this promise is *El Shaddai*, the All-sufficient One! “Abram, know the sufficiency and power of your God! Know that His promises are forever sure. Know that He is able to fulfill all His promises.”

In chapter 15:18 we read that God “made a covenant with Abram,” and did so in a powerful and graphic picture-form when He alone passed between the two rows of slain animals (15:17). Now *El Shaddai* repeats the promises—that He “will make his covenant between me and thee” and that He “will multiply thee exceedingly.” The assurance that these divine promises would be fulfilled is found in who this covenant God is. He is *El Shaddai*, the All-sufficient One! That is the heart of all that Abram needs to know. Know God!

This makes abundantly clear that the blessed relationship of the covenant is what God establishes and maintains. He alone establishes it and He alone maintains it. He is able to maintain it and every promise He gives within it. He is *El Shaddai*!

This covenant-keeping God immediately sets before Abram the demand: “Walk before Me.” The All-sufficient God declares to Abram that this blessed covenant gives to him the responsibility to walk before Him. The beautiful Baptism Form speaks of this: “Therefore are we by God through baptism, admonished of, and obliged unto new obedience.” “I am *El Shaddai*; walk before Me.”

Abram walks. He is a living, rational-moral creature; he is not a stock and a block. As such he is able to “walk.” Humans walk; they always walk. The specific admonition the All-sufficient God sets before Abram in our text is that he walk “before Me.” Not every living, rational-moral human is able to walk before God. Those outside of God’s covenant also walk, but they are able only to walk before themselves. That is all. But those with whom God establishes the covenant are given in His saving work of regeneration, justification, and sanctification the ability to walk before God by doing His will and obeying Him. God graciously, without any merit of theirs, grants and imputes the perfect satisfaction, righteousness, and holiness of Jesus to them. He renews them in the image of His Son and enables them to walk in all good works.

God calls Abram and us to “walk before Me.” Abram needs to be told to do so because, still having his old man of sin, he is inclined to walk before himself and not before God. Abram had shown that he did not always walk before God. So it is with every Christian on this earth. While we are still in this life, we can also walk before ourselves. In Christ, we are a new man, but we still have the old man. The old man wants to walk only before self. The presence of our new man means that we are able to walk before God. Hence, we constantly need the commandment, “Walk before Me!” It is an on-going battle between our old man and our new man.

According to the previous chapter, Abram did not walk before God but before himself. He was convinced that God’s promise to give him a great seed required him to take Hagar. Hence the appropriateness—even necessity—that God powerfully declare to Abram that He is the All-sufficient One and that Abram was to walk before Him!

To walk before God means that we walk before His face. It is to live in the consciousness of God being with us. It is to know that we are in His tender care, and that He will not let us go or ever depart from us. It is to know that *El Shaddai*, the All-sufficient One, is able to give a great seed, even if presently Abram is without any child.

Further, to walk before God is to be in awe of Him as we are irresistibly drawn back by His grace. When

by faith we know that God sees us as if we had accomplished all that righteousness which Christ accomplished for us, then we walk in the new obedience. We cleave to Him, trust Him, love Him with our all, forsake the world, crucify our old nature, and walk in a new and holy life. To walk before God is to live with our focus on Him, rendering grateful returns of ardent love to Him who manifested so great a love to us.

God adds, “Be thou perfect.” The Hebrew word translated “perfect” does not mean to be sinless, but to be sincere or whole-hearted. This admonition is necessary because those with whom God establishes and maintains His covenant are still sinners—they are sinning saints. So God calls Abram and us to walk before Him with sincerity. Every child of God knows that he can easily perform an activity of worship merely out of custom or habit. We can sing the songs of Zion and not realize the truths we sang. We can give offerings without a thought of gratitude. For this reason, God calls us to walk before Him with a genuine, undivided heart. We are called to be constantly aware that God is worthy to receive only dedicated devotion.

It is the conscious knowledge of *El Shaddai* that stimulates us to conscious obedience. The ungodly, when faced with Almighty God, consciously refuse to obey; they cannot obey for they cannot know the things of the Spirit of God (I Cor. 2:14). Those with whom God establishes and maintains His covenant are able to obey, though their old man constantly wants to disobey. Therefore, we must consciously know the All-sufficient God, as the One able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think. When we live in this knowledge of Him as we walk the difficult pilgrim path through the valley of the shadow of death, then we are assured that He is able to keep us until the day of Jesus Christ.

The only knowledge that frees the believer’s soul from the life-long fear of death (Heb. 2:15) is the knowledge that I stand before the Almighty God, forgiven and righteous in Jesus Christ. My obedience to His command to walk before Him is not to win His approval (I already have it), but to render grateful returns of ardent love.

When Abram and Sarai were conscious of *El Shaddai*, then they were able to believe that they would have a son, even in their old age. They depended on Him who is the All-sufficient One!

Know *El Shaddai*. It is because we know Him (who and what He is) that we walk before Him in awed fellowship. It is because we know Him that we walk before Him in this evil world, constantly doing battle with our old man. Then our thoughts, words, and actions are done sincerely as before His face.



Editorial

Prof. Barrett Gritters, professor of Practical Theology in the Protestant Reformed Seminary

Training elders in history

Training of elders is necessary. The well-being of the PRCA and other true churches depends on a qualified, well trained eldership. The training is not, for the most part, formal and specialized training. It comes chiefly through the extended and sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit, who often uses a good Christian upbringing in a stable home, and who always works in answer to fervent prayer and by the regular means of grace. That was the subject of the first editorial on this topic in the January 15 issue.

The February 1 editorial showed that faithful elders will want to *grow* in their abilities in especially three areas. Primary in importance is the *knowledge of Scripture* and the confessions, because their first responsibility is to take heed that purity of doctrine is maintained in the church. Second, elders want to grow in their understanding of *Church Order*, because they must govern the church in a wise and orderly manner—as a father manages his own home. Third, elders will seek to grow in their ability to *give counsel*, because at their ordination they were charged with assisting the minister and church members “with good counsel and advice.”¹

Our consistories would be wise to discuss this matter openly and encourage one another to grow in these graces and gifts.

Some elders may have sensed that an important aspect of elders’ qualifications has not been mentioned—that is, intimate *knowledge of the people*. While knowledge of Scripture, church government, and counseling are essential, they will not make a man a good elder if he does not also *know* the flock. The good shepherd knows his sheep.

A good elder will be like a good doctor. Before he treats his patient, a doctor will get an “H&P”—a *history and physical*. He will assess my present condition via a thorough *physical* examination and learn my *history* by asking me to fill out an extensive questionnaire. The

history will be valuable for his treatment of me. Is there heart disease in my family, or glaucoma? Did any of my relatives have cancer? More important than my family’s history is my own—my childhood diseases, past surgeries or injuries. Is there a history of substance abuse or depression? Even my social history may be helpful—am I married, single, or divorced. And every doctor must know my *present* condition—allergies, medications, tobacco use, etc.—before he is ready to treat me most beneficially. Not knowing these things may expose him to making serious errors of judgment in my treatment.

This is an apt illustration because Scripture compares our spiritual ailments with physical afflictions and shows that the gospel’s application is like a medicinal balm. God heals our spiritual diseases. His physicians of our souls are the church’s elders and pastors.

So elders ought to know how to get the spiritual “H&P” information. Of course, it is not as formal as a doctor’s workup, or as straightforward, but there are more similarities than differences.

Denominational history

The broadest knowledge an elder needs in order to serve a church well is denominational history (in the analogy of medicine, comparable to one’s *extended* family history). Indeed, knowing church history of *all* ages will do an elder good for his oversight of doctrine. But let’s limit ourselves to denominational history. Because the unity of the churches is precious to us all, the decisions of synod, classis, and even each congregation serve as precedent for all the churches. Besides, the Church Order itself (Art. 46) mandates that ecclesiastical decisions always be made in light of previous decisions.

Several examples come to mind that make clear how helpful is the knowledge of our history. Knowledge of PRCA history will enable a man to judge how to deal with subjects as diverse as: a request for baptism of a child in the process of being adopted; whether a minister ought to preach from the Belgic Confession instead of the Heidelberg Catechism; the nomination to office of a man who does not use the good Christian schools; and whether and how guests from other denominations

¹ For a start in this area, elders can find the “Elders Conference on Counseling” speeches at <http://www.prca.org/resources/for-of-ficebearers>.

may come to the Lord's table. The churches have faced such questions and dozens more. Knowledge of denominational decisions will help an elder contribute to the deliberation on such issues in consistory when they face them.

Acquiring this knowledge is not difficult, but it does take effort. Elders and those who aspire to that office will want to read the church magazines—this one (the *SB*), the *Beacon Lights*, the seminary's *Theological Journal*, and the teachers' magazine *Perspectives in Covenant Education*. But especially they should read the *Acts of Synod* each year to be aware of all the important synodical decisions. The entire book, at a few hundred pages, may be intimidating; but the minutes themselves are usually not much more than 50 pages. Helpful are the previews of synod's agenda and reviews of her decisions in the *Standard Bearer* (in the May and July issues). Elders can even use the valuable "Index to the Acts: 1940-2018" that our brother Doezema created and updates each year, a copy of which can be found in every minister's study (copies are limited). Also, the stated clerk of each *classis* is able to do research for the consistory that wonders whether there may be classical precedent for a particular question they face. Consistories know how valuable that elder is who has much of this knowledge stored in his memory. All elders will want to have as much of this as possible.

Once again, this underlines the point that often the best elders (and ministers) are those who not only have serious interest in, but also long experience in the churches. And those who read. "Lay hands suddenly on no man."

Congregational history

Just as important is knowledge of one's own congregation (comparable, in the medical analogy, to one's *immediate* family history). We always tell the seminary students that when they first come to a congregation, they need to do a lot of listening to learn about the congregation. Each church has its own personality and history. Redlands is different from Randolph. Wingham is not Lacombe. And the ones who know the congregation best are the elders who have spent many years in it.

A minister who does not know the congregation's history may hit potholes he wished he had known existed. It is the elder's business to know these potholes.

And elders may be encouraged to inform their ministers—especially the new ones—about all of them.

How to gain this knowledge is, first, by living among the people of God in every dimension of church life. Family visitation is another of the indispensable means to learn about the people of God and their needs. When family visitation is conducted properly—that is, when the elders remember, as they say, that God gave us *one* mouth and *two* ears for a reason—elders will learn what will enable them to be better shepherds.

Studying your consistory's "local regulations" is another way to become familiar with "family history." In most churches there is a whole sheaf of papers containing these local regulations, based on the more significant old consistorial decisions, probably footnoted with dates for reference. These may include things such as where the elders are to sit during the service (and how often that decision has been changed or reconfirmed), how the Lord's Supper is administered (different in many churches), how often the consistory meets, how often baptism is administered, whether smoking is allowed on the church property, whether elders have one year or two years "off" before being renominated, and a dozen other matters that (although they may not all be considered essential) are "the way it's done here."

Personal history

The elders need to know the personalities and natures of all the *individual* sheep too, as well as they possibly can, in order to tailor and personalize their care. Returning to the medical analogy, I myself do not need much anesthesia to sedate me sufficiently for a surgical procedure. Others may need more, and doctors should know that. So, in the church. Each one is different, and the wise elder will take into account these differences when he takes the oversight. The elders will speak differently to the man who has a long and rocky history with them than to the young woman who has never been visited by a committee. The member whose abusive father damaged her will be cared for differently than one who has done such damage. A rebuke of a rebellious young man who grew up in a dysfunctional home will not be identical to the one whose upbringing was solid and godly. Before an elder plans to make a 'new baby visit,' it would be very important to be aware whether the mother in the past endured the painful loss

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of a child. Each one of us has a history. Each one a present condition. Elders will want to know both.

I remember well coming into my second pastorate, an older congregation, where the elders were intimately familiar with all the families. This was different from my first charge, a newly-organized church where everyone had to get to know each other. In the older church, the elders all knew the families' strengths and were aware of many of their weaknesses—valuable knowledge for dealing with us sinful sheep. On one particular occasion, had I given more weight to an elder's suggestion about how to handle a situation, I would have avoided an unnecessary offence—a painful lesson I now do not hesitate to tell the students at seminary. The elder knew history. Knowledgeable elders can help the new minister. "Beware!" in one case. "Be gentle!" in another.

Conclusion

I understand the men who may hesitate when they receive a letter of nomination to the office of elder. If God's Spirit compels them to accept the nomination and they are elected, they find the task before them

daunting. My description of the four areas in which an elder should grow probably does not instill in them more confidence in themselves.

But the new elder's position is a lot like the young minister's—he begins with little more than the most basic abilities. But through conscientious study, applying himself to the task, he grows. He realizes that some may be tempted to "despise his youth," so he hearkens to Paul's exhortation to Timothy to persevere, be a good example, not neglect the gift he has, devote himself to the work, and give himself wholly to it so that his *progress* (KJV has "profit") might be apparent to everyone (I Tim. 4:12-16). The elders—whether newly installed or long experienced—all can grow in their abilities. Persevere. Devote yourselves to it. You *will* grow.

And let your confidence not be in yourselves, but more and more in Jesus Christ who called you to the glorious work of serving His church. Then also *your* progress will appear to the saints. More importantly, the Lord will use you for the wellbeing of His precious, blood-bought children.



All around us

Rev. Clayton Spronk, pastor of Faith Protestant Reformed Church in Jenison, Michigan

Theistic evolution: A confession

Pastor Todd Wilson and his church are trying to do the impossible—in two respects. First, though it is impossible to harmonize the creation account in Genesis with the basic beliefs of Darwinian evolutionism, this has not stopped Wilson from trying. Wilson recognizes evolutionism's most glaring problem is that it is anti-God (anti-theism). But he hangs on to the idea that one can believe in God (theism) and hold to other parts of evolutionism. For example, he believes it is possible to reconcile Genesis with the idea that men evolved from monkeys. Second, though it is impossible to unite those who purely confess the truth of Scripture regarding creation with those who have corrupted the truth by

accepting evolutionism, this has not stopped Wilson from making a valiant, though foolhardy, effort. Wilson and his congregation have adopted ten theses on creation and evolution.¹ Together these ten theses form a kind of confession of faith that is supposed to unite "evangelical Christians."

Wilson desires unity. This is evident from the title of his article as it appeared on *christianitytoday.com*: "Ten Theses on Creation and Evolution That (Most) Evangelicals Can Support." He also writes, "Our ul-

¹ <https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2019/january-web-only/ten-theses-creation-evolution-evangelicals.html>

imate goal was to maintain the ‘unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace’ (Eph. 4:3) and to prioritize the gospel as of ‘first importance’ (I Cor. 15:3). It was important for us to arrive at a position on creation and evolution that was in keeping with that faithful Christian saying, ‘in essentials, unity; in nonessentials, liberty; in all things, charity.’” Wilson wants unity between “young-earth creationists,” “old-earth creationists,” “advocates of intelligent design,” and “evolutionary creationists or theistic evolutionists.” He admits that it will not be possible to attain “perfect unanimity” but he believes that he and his church have created a document that reflects “what most (evangelical) Christians, at most times, have believed and should believe about creation.” Here is what Wilson wants Christians to confess together:

1. The doctrine of creation is central to the Christian faith.
2. The Bible, both Old and New Testaments, is the Word of God, inspired, authoritative, and without error. Therefore whatever Scripture teaches is to be believed as God’s instruction, without denying that the human authors of Scripture communicated using the cultural conventions of their time.
3. Genesis 1-2 is historical in nature, rich in literary artistry, and theological in purpose. These chapters should be read with the intent of discerning what God says through what the human author has said.
4. God created and sustains everything. This means that he is as much involved in natural processes as he is in supernatural events. Creation itself provides unmistakable evidence of God’s handiwork.
5. Adam and Eve were real persons in a real past, and the fall was a real event with real and devastating consequences for the entire human race.
6. Human beings are created in the image of God and are thus unique among God’s creatures. They possess special dignity within creation.
7. There is no final conflict between the Bible rightly understood and the facts of science rightly understood. God’s “two books,” Scripture and nature, ultimately agree. Therefore Christians should approach the claims of contemporary science with both interest and discernment, confident that all truth is God’s truth.
8. The Christian faith is compatible with different scientific theories of origins, from young-earth creationism to evolutionary creationism, but it is incompatible with any view that rejects God as the Creator and Sustainer of all things. Christians can (and do) differ on their assessment of the merits of various scientific theories of origins.
9. Christians should be well grounded in the Bible’s

teaching on creation but always hold their views with humility, respecting the convictions of others and not aggressively advocating for positions on which evangelicals disagree.

10. Everything in creation finds its source, goal, and meaning in Jesus Christ, in whom the whole of creation will one day achieve eschatological redemption and renewal. All things will be united in him, things in heaven and things on earth.

It is readily apparent that this is not a distinctive, sharp statement of doctrine. For this reason alone it cannot serve as a unifying document. Our Reformed confessions unify because they plainly identify the truth. The sharp statement of the truth identifies those who are one, namely, those who confess the same truth. This document turns things around. Instead of identifying the truth and then identifying those who are united on the basis of the truth, it identifies the groups it wants to bring together and then attempts to state the “truth” broadly enough to make sure everyone fits in the tent. This is doomed to failure. Suppose that an attempt was made to unite Reformed believers with Baptists by a confession of faith. Think of how loosely worded and fuzzy any statement would be (after we dumped LD 27 Q&A 74 of the Heidelberg Catechism) that made allowances for those who affirm and those who deny infant baptism. Suppose such a statement was actually produced. Would it result in *real* unity? Neither the Reformed believer nor the Baptist would be happy. It is impossible for a church to have unity in both affirming and denying infant baptism. So it is impossible for a church to have unity in both affirming and denying that Adam and Eve had ancestors.

If Wilson and his congregation have not produced a unifying document, what is it? It is thinly veiled theistic-evolution propaganda. The goal of the document is not to unite people who hold to different beliefs about the origin and government of the creation. Its goal is to convince the evangelical church world that there is no danger in tolerating evolutionism. Wilson practically admits this in one of the opening paragraphs of the article. He describes the congregation where he is the pastor as “on the conservative side on many theological issues, this one included. In its not-too-distant past, the church embraced six-day, young-earth creationism as its (unofficial) teaching position.” Wilson somewhat whimsically recounts how a rumor spread about him in the congregation a few years ago that “Pastor Todd thinks we came from apes!” There was some “congregational heartburn” over the pastor holding to a “version of evolutionary creation.” The cure for this “heartburn” was not a heartfelt confession of sin on the

pastor's part. No, the congregation needed to "engage in serious conversations about origin issues" and find out what they could "affirm together as a unifying doctrinal core" even as they embraced their diversity concerning the doctrine of creation. In other words, the congregation had to learn to tolerate her pastor's views.

The document itself proves that it is a theistic-evolution propaganda piece (or "confession" if you prefer the less pejorative descriptor). The document is deceptive in its attempt to pass itself off as something that a so-called "young-earth creationist" could easily affirm. Many of the theses simply regurgitate the claims of theistic evolutionists, which claims have long been refuted by those who affirm the biblical truth about creation. Wilson probably knows this, which probably explains why the theses are so carefully worded. Wilson wants the theses to be palatable to "young-earth creationists." But the sharp-eyed reader will detect that Wilson has only more cleverly disguised his error.

Thesis 2 cleverly promotes the idea that the human instruments God used to write the Bible were scientifically ignorant. They used the "cultural conventions of their time" to communicate divine truths. Wilson is suggesting that Moses, maybe because of naïveté or ignorance (because he lived before so many scientific discoveries), was mistaken in writing about the earth as if it is only thousands of years old. Theistic-evolutionists have long argued that it is possible to affirm the inspiration and infallibility of sacred Scripture and allow that some scientific errors may be included in Scripture due to the limitations of the human writers. Those who affirm the truth that God created all things in the space of six ordinary days have always rejected this as a denial of the truth that *all* Scripture is God-breathed (II Tim. 3:16).

Thesis 5 is simply dishonest. Wilson deceptively portrays himself as believing what Genesis 2 and 3 teach about Adam and Eve. Wilson wants to hang onto the evolutionary theory of the origin of human beings, but then prevent the logical conclusion that Genesis 2's account of the creation of Adam and Eve and Genesis 3's account of the Fall must be denied. He recognizes how troubling it is to question or deny the historicity of our first parents and their fall into sin. He attempts to extend an olive branch to Christians who have been warning for decades that theistic-evolution will lead to a denial of the unique creation of Adam and Eve and then of the fall into sin. So, he says, let us affirm together that Adam and Eve were real persons in a real past. But this is not enough for those who are committed to confessing *everything* the Bible teaches about Adam and Eve. Wilson may have hoped we would not notice that he

left out stating that Adam and Eve have no ancestors. But we noticed, and we insist on this truth too. Anyone who does not believe Adam was created by God from the dust of the ground may claim to believe that Adam was a real person who existed in a real past, but if they believe that this Adam descended from monkeys, then he is not the Adam of Genesis 2 and 3. In his explanation of this thesis Wilson admits his dishonesty. The thesis is supposed to set forth a unifying statement that is essential for the Christian faith and for Christian unity. But Wilson demonstrates he does not really believe this, writing, "I suspect in 20 years' time, support for Adam and Eve as real person in a real past will be a minority view even within evangelicalism. Should this come to pass, I remain confident that the Christian faith will survive, even though this will require some reconfiguration of our deepest convictions."

Theses 7 and 8 continue the theistic-evolutionist mantra that Scripture (special revelation) and creation (general revelation) are both truthful revelations of God in order to promote the idea that if science tells us a rock is 4 billion years old, then it is God Himself who tells us the universe is billions of years old by means of general revelation. The astute Reformed believer will recognize the false premise implied in these two theses, which is characteristic of theistic-evolutionism. That false premise is that special and general revelation are equally clear in their witness to the truth. John Calvin taught us that special revelation (Scripture) is like a pair of glasses that allows us to see things more clearly in creation. Creation does not dictate to us what we believe about Scripture. Scripture dictates to us what we believe about creation. Wilson and the theistic evolutionists in theory claim they view Scripture and science to be equally truthful. In practice, they give primacy to science. If science says that the world must be billions of years old, then we have to reject Genesis 1's account of a younger earth. Wilson's confession represents the theistic-evolution perspective on the relationship between Scripture and science, not the perspective the historic Reformed creeds.

Thesis 9 is a worn-out call for humility in how one holds his convictions. This is yet another deception that is all the more dangerous because it contains a ring of truth. We are always called to be humble in the way that we confess the truth. Think of infant baptism again. We may not lift up ourselves in pride as if we are better than Baptists because we confess the truth of Scripture and they do not regarding this issue. Our boast is not in what we confess. Our boast is in Christ. The fact that He has shown us grace and made the truth known to us is a matter for humility not pride. But the chief mark of

humility in a believer is that he humbles himself before the truth of Jesus Christ revealed in Scripture. It is not a sign of humility but rather pride to affirm or tolerate doctrines invented by man.

Does Wilson really want humility and toleration? I will not question his heart's intent. However, history has shown that theistic-evolution begs for humility and toleration only until it can turn the tables. Soon no one whispers about someone believing humans came from apes, as if that is a strange view. No, they snicker about that silly man in church who believes that Genesis records actual history. No one says to that man, "Let's have discussions about origins and try to find unity in our diversity." No, this bumpkin must yield the right to interpret Scripture to the proud, educated, scientifically advanced scholar. Humility? No, the theistic-evolutionists look down their noses at the simpletons who wrote (Moses) and who read (we) Genesis believing that God actually created the world in six days.

In thesis 10 Wilson attempts a third impossibility. He has tried, though it is impossible, to harmonize Scripture with Darwinian evolution. He has tried, though it is impossible, to unite those who confess the truth of creation as set forth in Genesis 1-3, with those who reject it. Now he attempts to present his "evolutionary creation" views as if they bring glory to God. By denying the historicity of Genesis 1-3, his views rob God of the glory of one of the greatest miracles recorded in all of Scripture.

God has done the impossible (what is not possible for man). He created all things out of nothing, merely by His word, in the space of six ordinary days. He made the first man and woman who foolishly rebelled. He sent His Son to be the seed of that woman for redemption of His own and to establish the hope of a new creation. This is the truth of Scripture, truth that unites believers and that brings glory to God.



Believing and confessing

Prof. Ronald Cammenga, professor of Dogmatics and Old Testament in the Protestant Reformed Seminary

Of the creation of all things: Of angels, the devil, and man (Second Helvetic Confession, Chapter 7b)

Previous article in this series: December 1, 2018, p. 112.

Of man

Now concerning man, Scripture says that in the beginning he was made good according to the image and likeness of God; that God placed him in Paradise and made all things subject to him (Gen., ch. 2). This is what David magnificently sets forth in Psalm 8. Moreover, God gave him a wife and blessed them. We also affirm that man consists of two different substances in one person: an immortal soul which, when separated from the body, neither sleeps nor dies, and a mortal body which will nevertheless be raised up from the dead at the last judgment, in order that then the whole man, either in life or in death, abide forever.

In chapter 7 of the Second Helvetic Confession (SHC), Heinrich Bullinger treats the truth of creation. After

treating creation generally, and the creation of angels and demons specifically, Bullinger takes up the creation of human beings. That is the focus of the second part of the seventh chapter.

At the outset, the SHC insists that the truth of man's creation is derived from Scripture and from Scripture alone: "Now concerning man, Scripture says...." As all the truth of creation is derived from Scripture, so also is the truth concerning the creation of man. The Reformed Christian rests in the revelation of God in the Bible, and not anything alongside of it or in place of it. The Word of God is authoritative, that is, decisive in our understanding of the creation of man. Not Scripture *and* the alleged findings of science, but Scripture *alone* informs our faith. This approach is reiterated in the closing sentence of chapter 7: "In short, we condemn all opinions of all men, however many, that depart from what has been delivered unto us by the Holy Scriptures

in the apostolic Church of Christ concerning creation, angels, and demons, and man.”

Note also at the outset that this paragraph asserts that man was created (“made”) “in the beginning.” There was a “beginning,” “*the* beginning” the article maintains. According to the teaching of evolution, there was no beginning. The fact that the SHC posits a beginning, at which time man was made by God, condemns by implication every form of the teaching of evolution. Evolution and the Reformed faith are incompatible. They are incompatible because evolution and Scripture are incompatible. Man did not evolve from a human-like, but for all that, a non-human ancestor, in which case man did not have a beginning, a beginning as *man*, in any case.

The reference in the confession to God’s creation of man gives opportunity for the reminder that God created a *mature* universe. This is one—not the only one, but one—response to the alleged enormous age of the universe, an age into the billions of years according to contemporary evolutionary science. Part of our response to this preposterous assertion is that the Bible makes plain that God created a mature universe. As a mature universe, the world had age built into it. God did not create a baby; He made a man. God did not plant seeds; He created full-grown trees and plants. God created stars with their light reaching the far corners of the universe; He did not make the stars whose light had to travel for light-years in order to reach the earth. As with the other creatures, so also with human beings, God created a mature man and woman.

Man’s unique creation

All the important elements of man’s creation are noted in this seventh paragraph of the SHC, combining as it does the accounts in Genesis 1 and 2.

First of all, the confession teaches that God created man in His own image and likeness. “Image” and “likeness” are the words used to describe man’s creation in Genesis 1. The two words are basically synonymous. Man was created in God’s image, in such an image that he was in the likeness of God. By virtue of his creation, man resembled God. And that, too, is denied by the teaching of evolution. According to the teaching of evolution, whether atheistic or theistic, man is in the likeness of the animal. The teaching of Scripture is the opposite: man is the likeness of God. Created in the image and likeness of God, man was a rational, moral, that is, a thinking, willing creature. That he was created in the image of God also means that man was created in true knowledge of God, righteousness, and holiness. He was perfect and upright as he came forth from the hand of God.

Secondly, man was created by God as the head of the earthly creation: “that God placed him in Paradise and made all things subject to him.” Not only was man created at the pinnacle of all the earthly creatures that God made, as is indicated by the special way in which God created him. God formed him out of the dust of the ground and breathed into him the breath of life. What the SHC emphasizes is that God placed man at the head of the whole earthly creation. Everything was made subject unto man, and “was made for the profit and use of man,” as the opening paragraph of this seventh chapter taught. Man’s headship figures significantly into the effects of his subsequent fall into sin, for he would not fall merely as a private individual but as the head of the earthly creation.

Thirdly, this paragraph calls special attention to the creation of Eve. Though not mentioning her by name, or rehearsing the unique way in which God created her from Adam’s rib while he was sleeping, the confession states that “God gave him [Adam] a wife and blessed them.” God “gave” Adam a wife. She was a gift, a gracious gift of God to the man. This is how every godly husband ought to view his wife. The woman was made as man’s complement and help-meet. She was his “wife.” God Himself officiated at the first marriage ceremony, uniting Adam and Eve as husband and wife. In doing so, God put His blessing on marriage and indicated His will that marriage is the most intimate, life-long relationship between one man and one woman. Our society despises the will of God and perverts God’s will for marriage to its own destruction.

The fact that the man was created first and that the woman was given to the man to be his wife implies the Reformed and biblical view of the headship of the man over the woman in marriage. This view of the relationship of husband and wife in marriage is denied in our day. It is one of many commendable features of the Reformed Marriage Form that it maintains the calling of the husband to be the head of his wife, and the calling of the woman to be in subjection to her husband.

Fourthly, the SHC calls attention to the uniqueness of man’s creation as body and soul. By virtue of his creation, man has both a physical dimension and a spiritual dimension to his existence. He “consists of two different substances in one person.” The first of these “substances” is “an immortal soul.” Technically, man is not distinct from the animals by virtue of the fact that he has a soul. The animal, too, as the highest of the creatures of God beneath man, has a soul. But the soul of the animal is in its blood. When the animal’s blood is shed, that is also the destruction of its soul, as is the teaching of Ecclesiastes 3:21. According to this

verse, when man dies, his spirit or soul “goeth upward,” whereas when the animal dies, “the spirit of the beast goeth downward to the earth.” It is because death is not the end of man’s soul that the SHC speaks of the soul of man as “immortal.” Since it is immortal, “when separated from the body, [it] neither sleeps nor dies.” After the death of the body, the soul continues to exist, either consciously experiencing the bliss of heaven or the judgment of hell.

Although at death the body separates from the soul, goes down into the grave, and experiences the destructive power of the grave as it ravages the body, that is not the end of the body. For although the body is “a mortal body [it] will nevertheless be raised up from the dead at the last judgment, in order that then the whole man, either in life or in death, abide[s] forever.” At that moment of the final resurrection, all the dead will be raised. It will be a general resurrection. After the dead are raised, they will be reunited with their own souls, in order that every man may receive in body and in soul his eternal reward. The separation of the soul from the body that occurs at the moment of death will only be for a time, that is, until the beginning of the everlasting state following the last judgment.

Manicheans and Marcionites

Therefore, we condemn the Manicheans and Marcionites who impiously imagined two substances and natures, one good, the other evil; also two beginnings and two gods contrary to each other, a good and an evil one.

The Sects

We condemn all who ridicule or by subtle arguments cast doubt upon the immortality of souls, or who say that the soul sleeps or is a part of God. In short, we condemn all opinions of all men, however many, that depart from what has been delivered unto us by the Holy Scriptures in the apostolic Church of Christ concerning creation, angels, and demons, and man.

These two paragraphs are a polemic against the heretics who deny the biblical truth of creation. The Manicheans and Marcionites are mentioned first because of their rejection of the truth that as the Creator, God alone is the only ultimate and eternal reality. Besides God, everything else is creature and has been made by God. Although differing in other respects, these two sectarian groups were dualists. They held that there are two equally ultimate and eternal realities, one good

and the other evil. They both exist out of themselves and are completely independent of each other. Evil was not the perversion of that which is good and, therefore, subsequent to the good. But evil has existed forever alongside of the good.

The teaching of dualism is a fundamental rejection of the biblical truth of creation. Dualism denies the truth that the good God made all things, and all that He made was “very good,” as Genesis 1:31 states. Evil has not existed alongside the good since the beginning of time, but evil is the corruption of the good after the good was brought into existence. Evil does not have existence of itself. Neither did God create the evil or actively bring about the evil, though the evil was ordained by God. The explanation for the presence of evil and death in God’s good creation will come in chapter 8 of the SHC, which treats “Of Man’s Fall, Sin and the Cause of Sin.”

Rejection of soul sleep

One false teaching that the SHC specifically rejects in this chapter is that of soul sleep. When man dies, the soul is separated from the body, but “when separated from the body [it] neither sleeps nor dies.” A little later in the chapter, the confession expressly “condemn[s] all who ridicule or by subtle arguments cast doubt upon the immortality of souls, or who say that the soul sleeps or is a part of God.”

At the time of the Reformation soul sleep was a live issue. John Calvin’s first published theological book was not his *Institutes of the Christian Religion* or one of his commentaries, but a treatise against the heresy of soul sleep entitled *Psychopannychia*. It was especially certain groups of Anabaptists who promoted soul sleep. They taught that at the moment of death, the soul becomes unconscious. It “sleeps,” as it were, in that it experiences neither conscious glory nor judgment. At death, the soul goes into a kind of spiritual hibernation. At the moment of the resurrection, not only is the body raised up, but the souls of the dead are awakened. Usually, those who teach soul sleep go on to teach that after the final resurrection the wicked will not experience an eternity of suffering in hell, but will be annihilated. Generally, the two errors of soul sleep and annihilationism go hand in hand. Both of these errors are characteristic teachings of certain modern-day cults and sects as well, such as the Jehovah’s Witnesses.

The teaching of soul sleep contradicts the express teaching of Scripture that, immediately after death, those who die experience in their souls the beginning of conscious glory in heaven or conscious suffering and shame in hell. This is the plain teaching of Scripture. In

Psalm 73:23, 24 the psalmist confesses: “Nevertheless I am continually with thee [notice that, *continually with thee*]: thou hast holden me by my right hand. Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward [*immediately afterward*] receive me to glory.” Jesus’ word to the penitent malefactor was: “Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise” (Luke 23:43).

Not only does the error of soul sleep contradict the express teaching of Scripture, it also fails to do justice to what the soul of man is as created by God. The soul in man is that which stands in a conscious relationship to God. It cannot “sleep;” that is impossible and contrary to the very nature of the soul as God has created

it. One might as well speak of a horse barking or a dog laying eggs. They cannot do these things; it is not in their nature. So is it impossible for the soul to sleep.

The SHC’s summary of the biblical truth concerning the creation of all things, and specifically the creation of man, underscores the glorious work that creation is. What a marvelous work of God! How glorious a creature man was as he came forth from the hand of his Creator! And that only serves to highlight the depths into which he fell as a result of his sin very soon after he was created. That is the subject to which the SHC turns in its next chapter.

To that we will turn next time.



Dordt 400: Memorial stones

Prof. Douglas Kuiper, newly appointed professor of Church History and New Testament in the Protestant Reformed Seminary

The Synod of Dordt (7) Training students for the ministry

...These stones shall be a memorial unto the children of Israel forever.—Joshua 4:7c

The Synod of Dordt’s 180 sessions can be divided into four phases (December 15, 2018 issue). During the first phase, from November 13 to December 5, 1618, Synod treated four matters: 1) Bible translation (sessions 6-13); 2) Heidelberg Catechism preaching (sessions 14-17, 20); 3) baptism of slaves and adopted children in the Dutch East Indies (sessions 18-19); and 4) training students for the ministry (sessions 18-20). More detailed comments about these matters can be found at https://dordt400.org/category/400_years_ago/. The May 1, 2019 issue of the *Standard Bearer* (a special issue commemorating the Synod) will include articles that examine the first two of these matters in more depth.

The Dutch Reformed churches have historically understood the need for a trained ministry. They permit gifted men to enter the ministry without formal training (see Article 8 of the Church Order of Dordt). However, this is the exception; the rule is that men be trained, and that the churches do the training (Articles 8, 19).

An Overture from the Synod of Zeeland

The provincial Synod of Zeeland overtured the Synod

of Dordt to adopt a uniform policy for the Dutch churches regarding *how* these students should be trained. At the eighteenth session (Friday, December 1, 1618), the delegates from Zeeland informed the Synod of their proposal.¹

First, they desired that wealthy parents finance the education of their sons who studied for the ministry, but that the national government finance the education of other promising men.

Second, the men who would be trained must be children of godly believers. The men must give evidence of godliness, modesty, and ability. They would

¹ I glean the following information from four sources: 1) J. H. Donner and S. A. Van Den Hoorn, eds, *Acta of Handelingen der Nationale Synod te Dordrecht* (Kampen: J. H. Bos), 44-46 [This is the Dutch translation of the Acts of the Synod; 2) Theodore G. Van Raalte, “Summary,” in Donald Sinnema, Christian Moser and Herman J. Selderhuis, eds., *Acta et Documenta Synodi Nationalis Dordrechtanae (1618-1619)*, vol. II/2: *Early Sessions of the Synod of Dordt* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2018), 168-169; 3) Gerard Brandt, *The History of the Reformation and Other Ecclesiastical Transactions In and About the Low-Countries* (London: T. Wood, 1722), 3:34-37; and 4) John Hales, *Golden Remains of the Ever Memorable, Mr. John Hales* (London: Theo. Newcomb, 1673), 17-18, 21-22.



*Pulpit in the "Great Church" in Dordrecht
(Photo credit: Nick Kleyn, Jr.)*

be educated in a Dutch university for five or six years (which education included their theological training), then study for a time at a foreign university. Regarding the duration of the training for the ministry, the delegates from Zeeland were consciously trying to avoid two extremes: on the one hand, having zealous men enter pastoral ministry with relatively little training; and on the other, having the churches support students so long that the churches benefit from their service for a relatively short time, or having the students become lifelong students.

To study a lengthy period at a foreign university and visit foreign churches "would not be unprofitable," said the overture. The profit would be that of broadening the student's horizon; he ought remain there until he has learned what he can and observed how the foreign churches operate.

Third, the students must gain experience and become known to the churches by reading Scripture during the worship service and by exhorting. The students were to be judged both as to the content of their sermons and as to their delivery. They would also accompany pastors in visiting the sick and comforting the oppressed, thus learning how to do the pastoral work of the ministry. In addition, the students would attend classis, consistory, and diaconal meetings in order to understand the work of church government and care for the poor.

When examining prospective ministers, the practice to that point had been to ask only regarding their doctrinal convictions. The fourth point of the overture from Zeeland was that Synod mandate that the examinations include questions regarding practical matters, such as their own godliness and their abili-

ty to teach. For that matter, their university training must include instruction in practical theology.

Synod's Treatment of this Overture

The various delegations spent Saturday afternoon preparing their individual judgments regarding this proposal. When these judgments were read Monday morning (session 19), many referred positively to the advice of the delegates from Zeeland. The delegates from Great Britain particularly emphasized the need for students to accompany pastors to observe them doing their labors.²

Not every delegate favored every aspect of these decisions. Gomarus opposed the idea of students delivering a sermon. Others opposed the idea of students observing consistory, diaconal, and classical meetings. However, as a whole Synod saw the need to promote the concept of preparing students for the ministry by giving them hands-on experience.

On Tuesday, December 4, at its twentieth session, Synod decided not to make a rule for all the churches, but to encourage the various classes (plural of *classis*) to consider how best to prepare students for the ministry. One matter the Synod did not leave to the discretion of the classes: it insisted, contrary to the proposal from Zeeland, that students may not baptize; only ordained ministers were to administer the sacraments.

We appreciate and implement the essential aspects of this overture from Zeeland. We too insist on a trained ministry. Let us continue to pray for our seminary as it gives that instruction, and pray that God will continually provide students who are knowledgeable and faithful in doctrine as well as in life.

We do distinguish between those already in the office of minister and those training for the office. The seminary faculty licenses our students to speak a word of edification in the churches, and the consistories do evaluate them for the benefit of the faculty. However, these students are not yet ministers. Realizing that they are still learning, we can bear patiently with them if we recognize weaknesses.

And, how valuable we have found our internship program for seminary students to be. During it, the students gain valuable insights and experience. Let us continue to pray that by this program our students will be well prepared for the work to which God will call them.

² Anthony Milton, ed., *The British Delegation and the Synod of Dordt (1618-1619)*, Suffolk: The Boydell Press, 2005), 144-145.



All Thy works shall praise Thee

Dr. Nathan Lanning, cellular and molecular biologist and a member of Hope Protestant Reformed Church, Redlands, California

Reason in the Christian life

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

Romans 12:1.

“All Thy works shall praise Thee!” Our rubric’s title is a certain truth found in Psalm 145:10. “All thy works shall praise thee, O LORD; and thy saints shall bless thee.” Prior to and after this verse, numerous praiseworthy attributes and works of our great God are listed. Immediately following this verse, the idea contained in the second phrase of verse 10—“and thy saints shall bless thee”—is extended. Bible commentaries commonly describe the idea of this second phrase to be something along the lines of the following: Man is the pinnacle of God’s creative work and has been endowed with attributes that allow believers to praise God most effectively and to the highest degree among all His works. Some commentaries point to the enumeration of praiseworthy works and attributes listed in this psalm as reasons that believers perceive to praise God. That is, believing humans offer praise to God through their ability to *reason* that God is praiseworthy. In one sense, Psalm 145 lays out in front of believers compelling evidences of the goodness and greatness of God. Believers then recognize these evidences and use their capacity of *reason* to conclude that God is most assuredly worthy of praise! Anyone familiar with the Psalms knows that Psalm 145 is not unique here—this is a common feature of many Psalms. Therefore, it may be useful to consider God’s work of creating the capacity for reason in humans.

Entire academic disciplines are founded on the topic of reason and, therefore, numerous definitions of reason exist. However, most definitions approximate Merriam-Webster’s definition: “the power of comprehending, inferring, or thinking especially in orderly rational ways.” *Rationality* carries many of the same ideas as reason and is usually defined as the utilization of reason, while the term *logic* can be thought of as a specific system of using reason.

Topics related to reason have been treated at length

in the pages of the *Standard Bearer* before. George C. Lubbers described the difference between *rationalism* and *Christian logic* as a difference between positing that “the logical is true” (rationalism) and “revealed truth is logical” (Christian logic),¹ and later described the error of the Galatians, in part, as an error in applying true or sanctified logic.² Herman Hoeksema treated human logic and reasoning related to revealed truths in Scripture when he reviewed claims of rationalism brought against Gordon Clark,³ and earlier addressed the concepts of reason, incomprehensibility, and irrationality.⁴ In the 1990s, Rev. Bernard Woudenberg authored a series describing the proper use of logic as we approach God’s Word.⁵ These are just a few examples—many more articles directly and indirectly touch on the subject. The interested reader can learn much that is quite relevant to today’s religious and secular societies by a careful reading of these articles.

We all use this capacity to think in our everyday lives. We must constantly make decisions and resolve problems. For the sanctified believer, decision-making and problem-solving include prayer and the study of Scripture. Our Scripture-searching and prayer life vitally influence our rational decision-making processes and the resulting actions we take. We also critically use reason when we interact with fellow believers in the pursuit of sharpening iron by discussing doctrine and things of the kingdom. On the other hand, as we recognize that we are fallen creatures, we can reflect on how the Fall has affected our rationality. Based on information from a recent doctor’s visit, we can use reason to resolve to eat healthier and with more moderation. And yet, when presented with large quantities of our favorite unhealthy

1 *Standard Bearer*, December 15, 1942 (vol. 19, no. 6).

2 *Standard Bearer*, September 1, 1978 (vol. 54, no. 20); January 15, 1979 (vol. 55, no. 6); March 15, 1979 (vol. 55, no. 12); April 15, 1979 (vol. 55, no. 14).

3 *Standard Bearer*, March 1, 1945 (vol. 21, no. 11); March 1, 1945 (vol. 21, no. 15); June 1945 (vol. 21, no. 17).

4 *Standard Bearer*, March 1, 1944 (vol. 20, no. 11).

5 *Standard Bearer*, April 15, 1994 (vol. 70, no. 14); August 1994 (vol. 70, no. 19); October 1, 1996 (vol. 73, no. 1).

food, we can “rationalize” our way into overindulging. Everyone with besetting sins has likely experienced an internal rationalization again and again that these sins are really not so bad. Whether we are using this aspect of our created nature in God’s service or against Him, we have to admit that we employ it almost constantly throughout our conscious lives.

In our current society, reason is a ‘hot’ topic. Some philosophers who make the topic of reason their livelihood contend that the last five to ten years has yielded a surprising mix of both a return to the dark ages and a reinvigoration of the Enlightenment as far as reason and rationality go. With respect to the former, readers of the *Standard Bearer* know from the “All Around Us” and “Church and State” rubrics that a wave of irrationality seems to have gripped the globe. This movement sometimes seems to make its express purpose to counteract all forms of reason and often leaves even steadfastly secular institutions and thinkers bewildered. The “glimmerings of natural light” seem to grow dimmer. If the results of this movement were not so sad (indeed dangerous!), one might even be somewhat entertained by the lengths to which those who yearn to be “culturally relevant” go in order to be accepted by this anti-reason movement. It is nearly impossible to read with a straight face officially issued corporate and public statements that bow to this irrationality. It seems the Mad Hatter is making a good career out of writing policy statements.

For evidence of the latter, one can observe the recent phenomena of theaters and lecture halls (which hold thousands of people) regularly selling out across the nation (and globe) when contemporary thinkers come to town to hold public lectures, discussions, and debates. These thinkers are best-selling authors who boast some of the most influential podcasts and YouTube channels through which they reach millions of people on a weekly basis. While the movement seeking to reinstate reason into society may seem safer than the irrational alternative, some of the most prominent rationalists have turned their foremost efforts towards extinguishing religion. The “New Atheists”—who some point to as the initiators of the “reason movement”—have turned out numerous best-selling books that challenge modern people to use their reasoning capabilities to conclude that all religion is utterly irrational and, in fact, holding back and even hurting society at large. Many of the new rationalists claim that reason, rationality, and logic always oppose religion. But we should never give in to this charge, even when it may seem that these thinkers are right. Numerous Christian thinkers such as Gordon Clark, William Young, and J.P. Moreland have ably defended Christianity (and often Reformed Chris-

tianity) *through* reason. Reason and rationality are not opponents of the regenerated mind and, therefore, do not need to be ceded to the opponents of Christianity. The rationality movement has directly clashed on many occasions with the irrationality movement, and both now spend considerable time launching assaults on each other. For now, it is difficult to tell whether the irrationality movement or the new rationalists are “winning.” Leaders of the irrationality movements have succeeded in closing college campuses, forcing institutions to cancel lectures by the new rationalists, and convincing institutions to sever the employment of some of the rationalist thinkers. However, the new rationalists’ audiences continue to grow at a breathtaking pace and the rationalists have generally been successful in courts of law when they bring litigation against institutions that have aggrieved them. The battle rages on over reason—the capacity with which humans were endowed for the purpose of bringing high praise to the Creator.

These battles and our own experience, of course, demonstrate that every aspect of human nature was totally corrupted by the Fall. As a clear result, reason in unregenerate man can only be pressed into the service of rebellion against God. Reformed Christianity has historically recognized this sad truth. Even as Reformed Christianity has admitted that fallen humanity retains the capacity for reason and can use this capacity to develop society, fallen humanity cannot use this capacity rightly—it is corrupted (Belgic Confession, Art. 14; Canons of Dort, Heads III/IV, Art. 4).⁶

Some powerful examples of corrupted human reasoning have arisen from the new rationalists referenced above—examples that have effectively drawn some away from at least nominal Christianity. In one example, these rationalists accurately demonstrate that nominal Christianity is always playing catch-up with secular morals at the expense of historical, biblical-based morals. They then rationally conclude that this “Christianity” is a religious impostor and has no right to a voice in the modern worldview conversation. They recognize that as long as this trend continues, true religious morals will steadily erode, leaving it up to secular society to define what is acceptable in the complete absence of any religious context. In another example, they argue against Christianity based on erroneous views that have crept into Christianity and become accepted by almost all Christians. Examples include the belief that God is only love and only wants good for all creatures (with love

⁶ See John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Henry Beveridge, transl. (Peabody, MA: Hendrikson Publishers), 2008, 165-171 for specific applications.

and good defined outside of a true biblical context), and the belief that prayer is chiefly a means to heal sick loved ones, ameliorate an undesirable situation, or attain a desirable material good. The new rationalists provide much evidence that these are, in fact, mainstream beliefs, and subsequently perform an admirable job of demonstrating that these beliefs cannot be true. Therefore, they rationally dismantle important aspects of what many Christians believe to be core tenets of their religion. While these false beliefs are straw men with respect to orthodox Christianity, they are apparently central beliefs for much of nominal Christianity and, therefore, are fair targets for the new rationalists' insightful critique.⁷ While the reasoning of these thinkers may be sound from one point of view, it is certainly corrupted in that it is used to "prove" that Christianity is senseless rather than used to demonstrate the disastrous consequences of allowing unbiblical ideas to take hold in the church. Corrupted reasoning is not new to this age: John Calvin and Martin Luther wrote extensively on how a certain corruption of reasoning can lead men to teach that God is the author of sin, election is based on foreseen faith, and that after the Fall, man retains a free will. The Canons of Dort further caution against using corrupted reasoning ("unstable minds wrest" [that is, twist], Head I, Art. 6) when contemplating the decrees of election and reprobation.

In contrast with the corrupted reasoning of unregenerate man, regenerated man can and must press his capacity to reason for the glory of God. Within the Reformed tradition, reason and rationality occupy an honorable place and the right use of these capabilities is revealed. Man's rationality, that is, his ability to think about, comprehend, and subsequently act on given data is an essential aspect of his created nature.⁸ It is man's rationality within his nature, in part, that gives him the ability to be an image bearer and has been described as one component of his being endowed with God's image in a formal sense.⁹ Further, the ability to reason is one characteristic God created in man so that man could exist in covenant fellowship with Him. This fact alone should cause us to take an intense interest in what reason is and how we can use it to heed the call of Psalm 145 to praise God.

A prime example of using reason for God's glory is the careful reading and analysis of Scripture for the purpose of ordering essential doctrines in a coherent, logi-

cal fashion. This is the practice of generating systematic theologies and dogmatics, a practice that, in addition to providing a valuable resource for believers, often produces clearer or deeper understandings of doctrinal truths. As a result of better understanding the Christian faith, believers are able to offer more fruits of praise. One well-known systematic theology, *The Christian's Reasonable Service* by Wilhelmus à Brakel, was written for this express purpose: to lead readers into high praise of God by engaging the believer's intellect and rationality as it encountered the revelations of Scripture.

Reason, rationality, and logic are also to be employed at every level and within every charge of ecclesiastical assemblies. Whether an annual budget is being developed, a particular action on the mission field is being considered, or an aspect of a doctrine is being debated, reason must be employed, and must be employed in a God-glorifying manner. Of course, in these pursuits, reason is never the end goal, as though an academic correctness is the real objective of its exercise. Instead, reason is an essential tool to be wielded for God's glory and the building up of His church.

As described above, our everyday lives are also saturated with the need for reason and rationality—they are not limited to seminary professors and officebearers. A friend recently described to me a "practice of rationality" that ties everyday activities to deep understanding of doctrine. He pointed out to me, that when he teaches his children catechism and the basic doctrines of faith, he makes a point of not allowing them to memorize a doctrine or an answer without encouraging them to draw out the implications of that doctrine or answer. In this way, his children are constantly engaged in reasoning and critical thinking in the context of working out Reformed doctrines. The point is not to base our children's theology, piety, and practice on reason—that is the firm territory of faith and Scripture. The point is to demonstrate that Reformed doctrines are reasonable, and that reason can be used in explaining and defending these doctrines.

Finally, we must keep in mind that, while sanctified believers can and must use their capacity for reason to God's glory, our rationality is both finite and affected by the Fall. Therefore, again, reason and rationality must not be the ultimate objective of the Christian's praise. We know that there are some revealed truths that are reasonable but that our finite, fallen minds cannot comprehend. In the end, therefore, we (reasonably) believe and take great comfort in the truth that the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and we can praise Him for saving us through the foolishness of preaching.

7 See Jerry Coyne, *Faith versus Fact* (New York: Viking Publishers, 2015), for striking examples of these rational strategies.

8 John Calvin, *Institutes*, 168.

9 Herman Hoeksema, *Reformed Dogmatics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Reformed Free Publishing Association, 1966), 208-209.



Go ye into all the world

Rev. Daniel Kleyn, missionary of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America, stationed in Manila, Philippines

The Canons of Dordt and missions (2)

In our previous article we noted that the creeds are at times criticized for not saying enough about missions and are, therefore, to be blamed for the lack of missionary zeal in Reformed churches and their members. We noted, however, that the very existence and possession of creeds in Reformed churches means that those churches are (by God's grace) mission-minded churches.

We now turn our attention more specifically to the ways in which the Canons of Dordt speak about missions. We do this especially in light of the 400th anniversary of the writing and adoption of this creed.

Missions is to preach the gospel

One way in which the Canons of Dordt specifically speak about and promote mission work is by how much they have to say and what they actually say about the preaching of the gospel. And that, after all, is at the very heart of mission work. Mission work is not about addressing social or economic or political woes. But the mission calling of the church is to go into all the world and preach the gospel. That gospel must be preached to sinners. Those sinners must be called to repentance and to faith in Jesus Christ. The Canons have much to say about all this. This creed is, therefore, clearly missionary in character.

This is evident already in the opening articles of the creed. In those articles, the Canons immediately point out that all mankind have fallen into sin and deserve to perish, but that God calls and sends forth men to preach the gospel with a view to calling and bringing sinners to repentance and to a saving faith in Christ (I, Arts. 1-3). The Canons make the point that because sin is universal, the preaching of the gospel must also be universal. In this way the Canons echo the language of the Great Commission, namely, that the gospel must be preached to "all nations." The objects of mission work are not merely the poor, the oppressed, and the sick, but also the rich, the strong, and the powerful. That is, all men are the proper objects of mission work, because all men are sinners.

The Canons, in response to the teachings of the Arminians, speak boldly concerning man's total depravity and corruption. This bears on missions, for as the

Canons make very clear in Heads III/IV, Articles 4-5, there is no possibility that any sinner will find or know or turn to God either by means of the light of nature or by means of the law. But what "neither the light of nature nor the law could do, that God performs by the operation of the Holy Spirit through the Word or ministry of reconciliation, which is the glad tidings concerning the Messiah" (III/IV, Art. 6). The point is that gospel preaching is needed for salvation. Nothing else will bring anyone to faith in Christ. God's Spirit saves the elect by means of preaching. The Spirit of God works where the Word of Christ is faithfully preached and heard. The Word must, therefore, be proclaimed throughout all the world.

Closely related is the fact that the Canons also point out what the *content* of gospel preaching must be. Man's sinfulness and sin must be proclaimed (III/IV, Arts. 1-6). The call of the gospel must be issued, namely, the call to repent and believe (II, Arts. 5-6). The good news of salvation must be declared (II, Art. 5; III/IV, Art. 6). All of this bears directly on the church's mission work. The Canons teach what must be the content not only of a pastor's sermons in an established congregation but also of missionary preaching.

Missions is to preach promiscuously

More significantly, the Canons of Dordt give an explicit call to the church to do mission work. Among the Three Forms of Unity, the Canons is the only creed to do this. This more than anything else proves the missionary character and missionary usefulness of this creed.

The Canons orders the church to go out into the world with the gospel. That order is found in Head II, Article 5, which reads:

Moreover, the promise of the gospel is that whosoever believeth in Christ crucified shall not perish but have everlasting life. This promise, together with the command to repent and believe, ought to be declared and published to all nations and to all persons promiscuously and without distinction, to whom God out of His good pleasure sends the gospel.

Who can deny that this call to missions is in full harmony with the biblical commands concerning missions? Even if no other passages in the Canons either taught or implied anything regarding missions, Head II, Article 5 would be enough to prove that the Canons promotes mission work.

The word “promiscuously” is key here. This means the preaching must go far and wide, to every land and nation under heaven. This must be done by the church “without distinction.” God is not a respecter of persons (Acts 10:34). The church must not be such in her mission work either.

God’s purpose is that the promiscuous preaching of His Word will be used by Him to bring the elect to a conscious faith in Christ. The church and missionaries do not and cannot know who the elect are. They must, therefore, preach God’s Word to all to whom God gives them opportunity. In this way the elect will hear that Word and will, by the power of the Spirit, be saved.

Missions and God’s election of a catholic church

Another way in which the Canons speak to and promote mission work is by what it states concerning God’s election of a catholic or universal church.

We read of this in Head II, Article 8, which states that it was the will of God to “effectually redeem out of every people, tribe, nation and language, all those, and those only, who were from eternity chosen to salvation and given to Him by the Father.” Because the elect are to be gathered from every people, tribe, nation and language, the clear implication is that the church must preach the gospel to every people, tribe, nation, and language.

Another statement concerning the catholicity of the church is found in Heads III/IV, Article 7. There we read: “This mystery of His will God discovered to but a small number under the Old Testament; under the New (the distinction between various peoples having been removed) He reveals Himself to many, without any distinction of people.” This clearly reflects the historical record of the church’s mission work in the book of Acts. The promise of the gospel was proclaimed by the church to Jews as well as to those who were afar off (Acts 2:39). The book of Acts records the apostles faithfully preaching the good news, not only in Jerusalem and Judea, but also “unto the uttermost part of the earth” (Acts 1:8). They traveled to the ends of the then-known world, proclaiming the gospel as they went.

The Canons also mention the closely related fact that God’s election and thus God’s work of sending forth preachers is not on account of any worthiness in man. God does not elect and send His gospel to certain nations or individuals because “one people is better and

worthier than another” (I, B [Rejection of Errors], Art. 9). This point underscores the fact that God is not partial to one or just a few nations, but elects a church from every land and nation under heaven. The church must preach the gospel, therefore, to the ends of the earth.

God’s sovereignty over missions

Another significant point made by the Canons is that God is absolutely sovereign over the mission work of the church.

God is sovereign over preachers and preaching. He determines who preaches the gospel, and to whom that gospel is preached. It is God who “mercifully sends the messengers of these joyful tidings to whom He will and at what time He pleaseth” (I, Art. 3). Those messengers of the gospel, through God’s sovereign directing, go to those “whom God out of His good pleasure sends the gospel” (II, Art. 5). The preaching of the gospel goes along the path that God has determined for it according to His good pleasure. When the gospel comes to anyone, it does so because of the eternal will and determination of God. God eternally decided who must hear the gospel. God sends it to them. And God is not arbitrary in this, for He sends preachers to those nations and places where He has His elect.

God is also sovereign with regard to the fruit of the preaching. The sinner does not search for and find God, but God finds and saves the sinner, that is, the elect sinner. The Canons state that “faith in Jesus Christ and salvation through Him is the free gift of God,” adding the explanation that the reason why “some receive the gift of faith from God and others do not receive it proceeds from God’s eternal decree” (I, Arts. 5-6). The Canons also point out that it is God who has determined that the “saving efficacy of the most precious death of His Son should extend to all the elect” and “it was the will of God that Christ...should effectually redeem out of every people, tribe, nation, and language all those, and those only, who were from eternity chosen to salvation and given to Him by the Father” (II, Art. 8).

The Canons have much to say about God’s sovereignty. It is this truth that gives the church confidence in the work of missions. God’s sovereignty (in His decree, as well as in His governing all things) guarantees that there will always be fruit.

That fruit is sure, first of all, because of the decree of predestination. God will see to it that His elect are turned to Him by means of the Spirit and Word. None of them will go lost. No Reformed church, preacher, missionary, or church member needs to feel guilty (as the Arminians make their members feel) because he has failed to reach everyone in the world, as if it is his fault

that some will perish in hell. No, God will make sure that His gospel reaches and is the means to save every last one who has been ordained to eternal life.

The fruit of missions is sure, in the second place, because God sovereignly governs the preaching and its effect. The elect are saved, not merely “by the external preaching of the gospel, or moral suasion,” but because regeneration

“is evidently a supernatural work, most powerful, not inferior in efficacy to creation or the resurrection from the dead” (III/IV, Art. 12). It is God who saves.

Let us, therefore, thank God for this valuable creed and for the Spirit’s work in leading the Synod of Dordt to speak as it did in the Canons of Dordt concerning the church’s important work of missions.



Pertaining to our churches—Domestic Mission Committee

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

Missionary report to the churches

The year 2018 has come to an end, and the year 2019 has begun. So also it is with some of the mission work done in 2018 and work now begun in 2019. The calling of the missionary is to “work to develop a field of labor and then preach and teach on any field that the Spirit gives through that work.” My wife and I were in St. Petersburg, Florida for three weeks at the end of March and the beginning of April. It was a group of folks from many different Christian backgrounds and expectations of what church and worship ought to be. We can expect that in missions. It is what missions is all about, giving biblical instruction. On Easter Sunday, we were joined in our worship by several families from our churches who were on vacation that week in Florida. Members of the fellowship were delighted at the many visitors, and surprised that these families were willing to drive for two hours to attend the worship service. What a nice testimony to the group of what Sabbath observance means to us!

We returned there again in late June. By this time many of the members of the fellowship had left in order to join a charismatic church nearby. The fellowship was reduced to one married man and his three sons. There were serious challenges to doctrines that we in the PRC hold dear and there was not a desire to reach out and do evangelism in the neighborhood. There were not sufficient contacts to consider St. Petersburg as a possible church plant.

I was able to work with several evangelism committees of our churches in regard to how to set up Bible studies in their outlying areas, attending and at times filling in as a leader. I continue to lead Byron Center PRC’s Bible study, begun before I was a missionary. Byron Center started one in Wayland, and about one year ago transferred the Bible study to the Dorr area, gaining

many new members. Those who attend come from a variety of church backgrounds. It is a pleasure to see men and women faithfully come, eager to dig into the study of the Word. This group meets year around, no breaks! This, I believe, is important for consistency, rather than having to start up again each Fall. This group has been meeting for about three years. We began by going through the various sections of Reformed doctrine. Having finished that, we have now begun a study of the Gospel according to John.

At our Dorr Bible study in July, a contact suggested that I help fill the pulpit of the New Hope Reformed Fellowship in Dorr. Meetings were held, and a request came to our DMC New Fields committee for me to preach twice a month in the second worship service. After various committees examined this request and gave approval, I began to lead these worship services the first Sunday of January 2019. An elder from Byron Center PRC is present to gauge interest and receptivity. What a privilege to share the rich Reformed heritage that has been given to us as churches!

I am also presently following up on two contacts that came to two of our churches requesting a church plant in their area. There were communications via email and the distribution of our literature. We are thankful for such literature; for it causes people to examine the Scriptures as did the saints in Berea of old. Visits were made to each of those contacts, and we wait to see if this is where the Lord is opening up a field for us in which to labor. Again, I encourage our churches to send me contacts that they have whom they wish me to follow up on.

Working with those whose knowledge of Scripture is limited demands that we produce tracts that are

easy to understand, with plenty of Bible texts to support it. Therefore, I have written nine tracts with the theme “Who is Jesus?” These are based on the Gospel of John, including the seven “I am” statements of Jesus. These are being proofread and edited, and will soon be available for our churches and members to distribute to others.

I have enjoyed giving presentations in our churches in Wisconsin, the greater Chicago area, and in Singapore regarding the work of the home missionary, and the role of the church members in evangelism. I look forward to doing so in the future in other areas of our churches.

While in Singapore in January and February, I hope to be working with their evangelism committee, looking at what they have done in the past and what they are continuing to do now.

I continue to work with the DMC to develop a manual for doing home missions. This demands that we look at all pertinent synodical decisions, write up scriptural principles, and then practical applications as we do the work as missionary and denomination. This way, the “wheel” does not need to be “reinvented” each time there is a new missionary. I close with thanks for the many prayers that are uttered for our work in domestic missions.

Report of Classis East

Classis East met January 9, 2019 at Hope PRC in Walker, MI. Rev. M. VanderWal by rotation chaired this meeting.

An appeal was ruled to be illegal because it violated Article 30 of the Church Order. A portion of a protest was ruled illegal; another portion of this protest was judged to be legal, but it was not sustained.

The church visitors gave a favorable report of their work in 2018. Rev. K. Koole and Rev. R. VanOverloop were chosen to be church visitors in 2019. Rev. N. Decker was elected to the Classical Committee. He replaces Rev. K. Koole whose term was completed. Rev. C. Haak was elected delegate *ad examina primus* and Rev. J. Mahtani delegate *ad examina secundus*. Trinity PRC was granted pulpit supply for their evening services during their vacancy.

Elected to represent Classis East at Synod 2019 were:

Revs. G. Eriks, C. Griess, C. Haak, C. Spronk, and R. VanOverloop; elders: Mike Bosveld (Hope PRC), Rick Gritters (Trinity PRC), Gary Lanning (Hudsonville PRC), Pete VanDerSchaaf, and Kevin VanOverloop (both Faith PRC).

Classis advised a consistory to proceed in their discipline of a member after the consistory gave a detailed report of their work and gave evidence of the on-going impenitence of the member under discipline.

Three subsidy requests were forwarded to Synod 2019 with the approval of the Classis.

The expenses for this meeting of Classis East were \$1,482.88.

The next meeting of Classis East will be May 8, 2019 at Georgetown PRC, the Lord willing.

Gary Boverhof

Stated Clerk, Classis East



News from our churches

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

Trivia question

The Synod of Dort (or Dordt) was an international Synod held in Dordrecht in 1618-1619 by the Dutch Reformed Churches to settle a divisive controversy initiated by the rise of Arminianism. The first meeting was held on November 13, and the last on May 9. Do you know how many times this body convened including those dates? Answer later in this column.

Denominational activities

Classis East met on January 9 at Hope PRC in Walker, MI. For the full report, see the Stated Clerk’s report earlier in this issue (above).

Minister activities

The Consistory of Immanuel PRC in Lacombe, Alberta presented the following trio to the congregation: Rev.

R. Barnhill (Peace, PRC), Rev. B. Huizinga (Redlands, PRC), and Rev. J. Laning (Hull, PRC). Voting to extend a call to one of these ministers to be their next pastor took place on Sunday, January 6, with Rev. Huizinga receiving this call. On January 27, he declined this call.

Trinity PRC in Hudsonville, MI called Rev. G. Eriks (Hudsonville, MI) to serve as their new pastor. Rev. Eriks was led by God to decline this call. Trinity subsequently formed a new trio consisting of Revs. J. Engelsma, E. Guichelaar, and W. Langerak. On January 20, Rev. J. Engelsma received this call.

Grandville, MI PRC formed a new trio for a minister-on-loan to Covenant ERC in Singapore, which included Rev. J. Engelsma (Doon, IA), Rev. G. Eriks (Hudsonville, MI), and Rev. E. Guichelaar (Randolph, WI). From this trio, Rev. Guichelaar received the call. On January 20 it was announced that he had declined this call.

Rev. Daniel Kleyn, missionary-pastor to the Philippines, and his wife Sharon arrived in the USA on New Year's Day. As they traveled, they were extended New Year's greetings in three countries on the same day. Synod 2018 approved Rev. and Sharon Kleyn taking an extended furlough in 2019. The purpose of the furlough is to give Rev. Kleyn time to take some courses with a view to obtaining an advanced degree, to prepare classes to be taught in the PRC (Philippines) seminary in the future, and to give both Rev. and Sharon opportunity to be refreshed and to reconnect with family. They plan to stay in the States until June 18.

Congregational activities

In this case, a couple non-activities. With snow showers and high winds, the congregations at Edgerton, MN PRC and Heritage PRC in Sioux Falls, SD cancelled their services on December 31. Visibility was greatly reduced that day and evening.

Missionary activities

Ladies and gentlemen, if you have not seen fireworks over Manila at the moment of New Year, well, you have not really seen fireworks! The lights and noise begin before midnight and extend for a lengthy period of time after the start of the New Year. Our missionaries have opportunity to view this first hand. You may have to check it out on YouTube. Some believe the fireworks scare away evil spirits.

Young adult activities

Lynden PRC Young Adults Retreat updates: A reminder that registration for this retreat is now open!

Instructions on how to register will be announced in the bulletins as well as posted to the Facebook page—Lynden PRC Young Adults Retreat 2019. If you haven't already, request an invite to see the page and invite your friends as well! As previously announced, the retreat will take place at Mt. Baker Bibleway Camp during July 1-5, 2019. Speakers for the retreat will be Prof. B. Gritters and Rev. S. Regnerus. Our retreat theme is "An Unchanging God in an Ever-Changing World." Come join Lynden for a wonderful retreat in beautiful Northwest Washington!

School activities

The 8th-grade class of Hope Christian School Redlands, CA has recorded a CD entitled "Songs of Thy Salvation." Cost is \$12 per CD. Please email orders to lorianne.karsemeyer@hcsredlands.org. Thank you for your support!

Young people's activities

Southwest and Providence Protestant Reformed Churches will be hosting the 2019 Young People's Convention on August 12-16, the Lord willing. The convention will be held at the Michindoh Conference Center in Hillsdale, MI. Registration for chaperones is now open! Please view the website prconvention.com to register.

Trivia answer

The Synod of Dort convened 154 times including the dates of November 13 and May 9. What follows here is the solemn oath recited before Synod proceeded to its business:

I promise before God, in Whom I believe, and Whom I worship, as being present in this place, and as being the Searcher of all hearts that during the course of the proceedings of this Synod, which will examine and decide, not only the five points, and all the differences resulting from them, but also any other doctrine, I will use no human writing, but only the Word of God, which is an infallible rule of faith. And during all these discussions, I will only aim at the glory of God, the peace of the Church, and especially the preservation of the purity of doctrine. So help me, my Savior, Jesus Christ! I beseech Him to assist me by His Holy Spirit.

More trivia next time.

"To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven." Ecclesiastes 3:1.

Announcements

Call to aspirants to the ministry

All young men desiring to begin studies in the Protestant Reformed Theological Seminary in the 2019 - 2020 academic year should make application at the March 21, 2019 meeting of the Theological School Committee.

A testimonial from the prospective student's consistory that he is a member in full communion, sound in faith, and upright in walk, and exhibits the qualities and personality necessary for a gospel minister; a certificate of health from a reputable physician; and a college transcript must accompany the application. Before entering the seminary, all students must have earned a bachelor's degree and met all of the course requirements for entrance to the seminary. These entrance requirements are listed in the seminary catalog available from the school or on the Seminary's website (prcts.org).

All applicants must appear before the Theological School Committee for interview before admission is granted. In the event that a student cannot appear at the March 21 meeting, notification of this fact, along with a suggested interview date, must be given to the secretary of the Theological School Committee before this meeting.

All correspondence should be directed to the Theological School Committee,

4949 Ivanrest Avenue SW
Wyoming, MI 49418

Bob Drnek, Secretary

The Protestant Reformed Seminary admits students of any race, color, and national or ethnic origin.

Resolution of sympathy

The Council and congregation of First Protestant Reformed Church of Edmonton extend their sincere sympathy to Mr. Henk Nieuwenkamp, Mr. and Mrs. Albert Nieuwenkamp, Mr. and Mrs. Jon Miersma, and their children in the passing into glory of their wife, mother, grandmother, and great grandmother, **Korien Nieuwenkamp**. "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens" (II Corinthians 5:1).

Rev. J. Marcus, President

Russ DeVries, Vice-president

Classis West

Classis West of the Protestant Reformed Churches will meet in Heritage PRC on Wednesday, March 6, 2019, at 8:30 A.M. the Lord willing. All delegates in need of lodging or transportation from the airport should notify the clerk of Heritage's consistory.

Rev. J. Engelsma,
Stated Clerk

Seminary

All students enrolled in the Protestant Reformed Theological Seminary who will be in need of financial assistance for the coming school year are asked to contact the Student Aid Committee secretary, Mr. Steve Bylsma (Phone: 616-828-3699). This contact should be made before the next scheduled meeting, February 27, 2019, at 4 P.M. in the seminary, D.V.

Student Aid Committee
Steve Bylsma, Secretary



MARCH ISSUE

Subscribe today at beaconlights.org

Are you dating?
Have you dated?
Will you date?
As a Christian,
how should
you date?



Announcements continued

Teacher needed

The Edmonton Protestant Reformed Christian School is in need of a full-time teacher for the 2019–2020 school year. The school will be starting with grades 1–4, and the board is willing to work with the teacher on a curriculum suited to their preference. Please contact Gord Tolsma at gr.tolsma@gmail.com / 780-777-5780 or Scott Ferguson at s_r_ferguson@hotmail.com.

Teacher needed

Faith Christian School of Randolph, WI is seeking one full-time teacher for a high school position in 2019-2020. There is the possibility of teaching some 7th & 8th grade classes depending on the applicant's abilities and preferences. All interested individuals should contact Jack Regnerus (jackbuiltregs@gmail.com or 920-296-3529) or Mike Vander Veen (mvanderveen@randolphfcs.org or 920-296-4406) for more information or to apply.

The image shows a large vertical logo on the left that reads "DORDT 400" in white, with a stylized red and green arrow pointing to the right between the "D" and "400". The background is a historical illustration of a church interior with people seated at desks, likely representing the "Great Synod" of 1618-19.

DORDT 400

Safe-guarding the Reformed tradition

A three-day conference commemorating the "Great Synod" of 1618–19

April 25–27, 2019

Trinity Protestant Reformed Church
3385 Van Buren Street, Hudsonville, MI 49426

Learn more and enter the writing contest at dordt400.org

Sponsored by the Theological School of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America

Hosted by Trinity Protestant Reformed Church