

The Standard Bearer

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Hiding the Word in our hearts

Rev. James Slopsema

Gathering at the river

Prof. Barrett Gritters

“What saith the Scripture”: The Bible’s sufficiency

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REFORMED
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Meditation

Rev. James Slopsema, minister emeritus in the Protestant Reformed Churches

Hiding the Word in our hearts

Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.

Psalm 119:11

Psalm 119 was written by a young man who was being persecuted for righteousness' sake. We do not know the identity of the psalmist or when in Israel's history he lived. It is apparent from the Psalm, however, that it was a time of departure for the nation of Israel. The result was that the psalmist was being persecuted for his godliness. This persecution came from the highest levels of the land. He was being opposed by the rulers. He was imprisoned, facing possible death.

The Word of God figures prominently in this Psalm. Seven different terms are used for the Word of God in all but two of the verses. The psalmist sets forth the Word as the power to persevere in godliness. This thought is certainly set forth in the verse before us in this meditation. The psalmist speaks of the Word of the Lord. This Word he had hid in his heart. He had done so specifically that he might not sin against the Lord.

Notice, *the Word of the Lord* was the key to the godliness of this young man. You will find in the church today those who are strong in godliness and those who are weak. This is true not just of the young, but of every age group. The difference is the Word of the Lord. Those who hide the Word of the Lord in their heart as the psalmist did are strong in faith and godliness. Those who have neglected the Word are weak.

"Thy word have I hid in mine heart"!

The "word" here is specially the Word of the LORD. Throughout this Psalm the LORD is addressed. "Thy word," therefore, is the Word of the LORD. And the name "LORD" in our KJV is really the name "Jehovah."

Jehovah is God's covenant name. Jehovah's covenant is the intimate relationship of friendship that He establishes and maintains with His chosen people in Jesus Christ. As their friend, He saves them from all their sins, provides for all their needs, and lives with them in blessed fellowship. The name "Jehovah" emphasizes especially God's faithfulness to His covenant.

The Word of Jehovah is Jehovah's Word about His covenant. It is the Word of Jehovah about His love for His people, about the salvation He brings them in Jesus Christ, about His intentions to provide for them, body and soul, for both time and eternity. It also includes the requirements He has for His people as their part in the covenant. These are covenant requirements that they are able to keep only in the power of Jesus Christ, but that are necessary for them to live with Jehovah their God and to enjoy Him forever.

That Word of the Lord is contained in all of Scripture. For the psalmist, that Word was the Old Testament Scriptures. The Old Testament was dominated by the law, as suggested by the terms law, statutes, commandments, testimonies, precepts—all terms found in this 119th Psalm. That law proclaimed the gospel of the covenant. This was because this law was not just the Ten Commandments but also the civil and ceremonial law. The ceremonial laws instructed Israel in how to worship God through the priests of the house of Aaron, the tabernacle, the bloody sacrifices, and the feast days. The civil law organized Israel's national life in the land of Canaan. Both sets of laws pointed Israel ahead to the great Savior of God (Jesus Christ) in whom the covenant and its blessing would be fully realized in the everlasting kingdom of God. But that Word of God was incomplete. It only pointed ahead to what was to come. Today, the Word of Jehovah is full and complete. The New Testament shows how God has fulfilled the covenant promises of the Old Testament in Jesus Christ. We now have the full revelation of Jehovah God.

This Word the psalmist hid in his heart.

The word translated "hid" is rich in meaning. The word originally meant to conceal something for a definite purpose, either for protection or for sinister reasons. Moses was hid by his parents from Pharaoh's soldiers for three months (Heb. 11:23). The wicked hide themselves in order to ambush the innocent (Prov. 1:11). From this basic meaning developed the idea of laying up treasure that is hidden from public view for safekeeping. From the idea of laying up treasure came the idea of laying up as a treasure in your heart the instruction and knowl-

edge you receive. In that case, the idea of being hidden falls to the background, except that what you treasure in your heart is hidden from the view of others. And so the word used here is in other passages simply translated as “laying up.” “My son, keep my words, and *lay up* my commandments with thee” (Prov. 7:1). This latter is the meaning here, only with respect to the Word of Jehovah God.

The psalmist considered the Word of Jehovah God to be a great treasure. He considered it to be a great treasure exactly because he himself belonged to the covenant of God. He knew Jehovah as his covenant friend. The Word of Jehovah assured him of God’s love, spoke of the salvation God had for him, and assured him of the wonderful promises of the covenant.

And so the psalmist laid up (stored up) the Word of the Lord in his heart. He sought out the Word of the Lord so that he grew in the knowledge of the Word. He accumulated knowledge. He did that by hearing the Word of the Lord, studying it, meditating on it day and night (Ps. 1:2), and discussing it with fellow saints.

Have you hidden the Word of the Lord in your heart?

“...that I might not sin against thee”!

The psalmist understood his inclination to sin against the Lord. Having been brought into God’s covenant of grace, the psalmist had also been changed by the grace of God. He was born again. In that new birth He loved the Lord and was empowered to serve the Lord with a new life. Nevertheless, the psalmist was much inclined to sin, as are all who belong to the covenant of grace. This was due to his sinful nature. The works of God’s grace are only begun in this life. This leaves us with a sinful nature that not only inclines our hearts to sin but also leads us into sin daily. And the devil works on that sinful nature. He does so through the intimidation of persecution, the allurements of sin’s pleasures, discouragement, and many other means.

It was the psalmist’s purpose not to sin against God but to live a godly, sanctified life. All those who truly belong to the covenant of God hate their sin. This is because sin dishonors and offends the God whom they love. This is the emphasis of the word “sin,” which means to “miss the mark.” In keeping with this, the psalmist speaks of sinning *against* Jehovah. Sin does this too: it disrupts the fellowship and friendship he had with God in the covenant.

Hence, that he might not sin the psalmist laid up the Word of God in his heart. He found that the Word of the Lord was that power of God to keep him from sin

and to make him faithful to the God of the covenant. This is true because the Lord uses His Word to preserve and advance His work of grace in the hearts and lives of His people. This fact is explained in the Canons of Dordt, V, 14: “And as it hath pleased God, by the preaching of the gospel, to begin this work of grace in us, so He preserves, continues, and perfects it by the hearing and reading of His Word, by meditation thereon, and by the exhortations, threatenings, and promises thereof, as well as by the use of the sacraments.” Notice, God begins His work of grace in us by the preaching of the gospel. God also preserves, continues, and perfects that work of grace in us by the same Word. Mention is made specifically of the hearing, reading, and meditation of that Word. The content of that Word is also identified, namely, its exhortations, threatenings and promises. Because it was the psalmist’s desire to turn from sin to live a godly life, he laid up the Word of the Lord in his heart.

We too must lay up as a treasure the Word of the Lord in our hearts.

There are many today who are not doing this. They do not consider the Word of the Lord to be a treasure to be laid up. They rather treasure such things as the human philosophy, wisdom, and learning of this world. They treasure also the music and entertainment of this world. To this list you can add the earthly pleasures of houses, clothes, vacations, recreation, and sports. And the list goes on. These then become the things they seek and lay up to themselves. And they neglect the Word of the Lord.

Sad to say, this is true of many in the church!

As members of the covenant of God and the household of faith, we must lay up the Word of the Lord. We may certainly treasure music, sports, learning, and many other things. But our great treasure must be the Word of the Lord. And that must reflect itself in that we lay it up in our hearts by hearing it, studying it, and meditating on it. We must do this by coming regularly under the pure preaching of the Word. We must study and discuss God’s Word daily in our homes and in the fellowship of the church. Parents and children alike must take catechism instruction and Christian education seriously.

And our purpose must be that we not sin against the Lord. Those who truly belong to God’s covenant hate their sin and desire to walk godly.

Let us lay up the Word in our heart that we not sin against our covenant God!



Editorial

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

Gathering at the river

No, not the *Grand* River in Grand Rapids, Michigan, where some of our spiritual relatives gathered after immigrating from the Netherlands in order to *establish* Reformed churches.¹

But the *Tiber* River in Rome, Italy, where some of our ecclesiastical relatives are gathering today, there to *destroy* Reformed churches. They are there, ready to forsake Reformed tradition and join the Roman Catholic Church.

“Crossing the Tiber” is an old expression describing what a Protestant does when he leaves the Reformation faith for the Roman Catholic fold. The Tiber River ran alongside old Rome; to get to Rome, one crossed it. Thus, “crossing the Tiber” refers to entering the Roman Catholic enclave. Today, descendants of our Reformed fathers gather on the banks of the Tiber River, preparing to cross.

In the past few decades, some notable individuals have crossed the Tiber, the Romish hierarchy welcoming them heartily. The “erring brethren” (since Vatican II we Protestants are given the friendlier label “the departed brethren”) are finding their way into ‘Papa’s’ arms. *Rome Sweet Home* is the title of one book that gives the conversion testimony of two notable Tiber-crossers, Scott and Kimberly Hahn.² The Hahns, a former Presbyterian minister and his seminary-educated wife, crossed separately in the late ’80s and early ’90s and became popular speakers on the Roman Catholic circuit, luring more Protestants to ford the river. Since then, many have followed. “The Coming Home Network” and “The Journey Home Program” are two flourishing organizations that both promote such conversions and support the defectors once they go “home” to Rome.

What may not be so well known to readers of the *Standard Bearer* is that the banks of the Tiber are swell-

ing with crowds of nominal Protestants who show fervent interest in defecting. And yet more are considering how to get to those banks. Reformed and Presbyterian men and women. Most grievously, Reformed leaders, men and women, from our mother church.

The present editorial reports this with no ill-will, but with deepest sorrow and the ardent prayer that God will use it to inform and warn. Are some yet unaware of the leanings of their denominations, or of their relatives or friends?

“What can Protestants and Catholics learn from one another today?”

That question is posed on the cover of the recent *Forum* magazine, the newsletter of Calvin Theological Seminary, official seminary of the Christian Reformed Church (CRC). This newsletter reports on an October meeting between representatives of Calvin Seminary and the Roman Catholic Church (RCC). With some of Calvin Seminary’s staff were a Roman Catholic professor from Hope College (Holland, MI; college of the Reformed Church in America) and the Roman Catholic Bishop of Grand Rapids, who “brought their own voice to this important topic.” Participants discussed what they could “learn from one another and see as points of convergence....”

The President of Calvin Seminary notes that their previous *Forum* highlighted the five *solas* of the Reformation. Now, and “out of that framework,” is the seminary’s present issue, “What Can Catholics and Protestants Learn From One Another Today?” There was no attempt to explain how commonality with Rome fits in the framework of the *solas* of the Reformation.

The first article, by the Director of the Meeter Center for Calvin Studies and Editor of the *Calvin Theological Journal*, Karin Maag, examines Reformed and Romish unity in *worship*. Maag asks, rhetorically, “...are Reformed and Roman Catholic congregations still so far apart when it comes to worship?” and says that “steps are being taken to highlight areas of common agreement.” Both the CRC and Reformed Church in Amer-

1 The title of my editorial plays off the title of a book, *Gathered at the River*, which describes “Grand Rapids, Michigan, and its people of faith” (by James D. Bratt and Christopher H. Meehan, Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1993).

2 *Rome Sweet Home: Our Journey to Catholicism*, San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1993.

ica (RCA) “formally signed the ‘Common Agreement on Mutual Recognition of Baptism,’ with the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.” And there are long-running partnerships between local CRC congregations and RCC groups where “confessional differences shrink away.” Maag participated recently with Roman Catholics in a “panel discussion on how to commemorate the Reformation.” This last beggars belief: discussing with Rome how to celebrate the Reformation! This is not unlike the children of a man—who in grossest wickedness tried to kill their mother and still today is impenitent—children who have finally freed themselves from the man, now asking him to discuss with them how to celebrate his attempted murder. In the end, Maag urges that “arguments over who is more faithful to the teachings of Scripture and the practices of the Church throughout the ages tend only to reinforce divisions.”

The seminary’s Assistant Professor of Moral Theology,³ Matthew Tuininga, believes that two forces reduced the antipathy between Protestants and Catholics in the twentieth century. First, in Vatican II, the RCC opened herself ecumenically (which certainly is the *posture* the RCC seeks to show). Second, “Protestants and Catholics alike came to view secularism and the increasing abandonment of Christianity as the far graver threat.” That is, the *theological* differences become relatively insignificant in light of the foes called secularism and paganism. Now read carefully his conclusion: “faithful Protestants and Catholics of all denominations will increasingly find that, as pilgrims on the same journey, serving one Lord with one faith, they will come much nearer to their goal if they walk together than if they walk separately.” Re-read that, without blinking, for its significance. If that is believed, Christian Reformed ministers will instruct their members that they and Roman Catholics are on the same journey, serve the same Lord, have one faith, and have the same goal. Thus, they must walk together.

The seminary’s Director of Communications wraps up with the report that speakers “noted shared

beliefs and values...even around religious beliefs and practices such as the concept of *Justification* or the observance of the sacraments” (emphasis added). The evening concluded with a shared blessing on the event by the President of the Seminary and the Catholic Bishop.

It is as though the evening was spent entering coordinates into *MapQuest* to determine the best road from the Grand River to the Tiber. Has it ever looked more bleak for our mother church?

A stronger impetus and a wider road to the Tiber

But the CRC’s friendly leanings toward Rome give only a small glimpse into a much larger movement of Protestants hasting toward the Pope, with his devotion to Mary, rosaries and indulgences, patron saints, and the doctrine of purgatory.

When “Evangelicals and Catholics Together” (ECT) published their first ecumenical statement in 1994 (*ECT: The Christian Mission in the Third Millennium*), Protestant denominations were emboldened to meet in public with Rome’s delegations. Since then, ECT has been actively publishing statements, even if this further work has not had the publicity of 1994. Nine more statements have been ‘nailed on church doors’ (now, however, on *Protestant* church doors) on Justification,

...the true church must be prepared to die for her faith, as were Luther and the other Reformers whose traditions are being betrayed, even under the façade of celebrating their work. Unity apart from Scripture truth is *not* the unity “for which Jesus Christ himself prayed.”

Scripture, the Communion of Saints, Sanctification, Abortion, the Virgin Mary, Religious Freedom, Marriage, and (in December of 2017) “the Christian Way.” In a preface to a collection of these statements,⁴ J.I. Packer calls those who oppose them “Evangelical isolationists,” serious condemnation

of those who do not join them, and a forewarning of more severe condemnation to come. Timothy George, co-editor of the collection, is certain of the soon-coming day Protestants and Roman Catholics are “*fully* united in the common witness for which Jesus Christ himself prayed.”

The names of Protestants who took part in writing

³ It may be worth noting that in *Reformed* seminaries historically this position was called “Professor of Ethics” and in *Roman Catholic* institutions “Professor of Moral Theology.”

⁴ All but the 2017 paper are included in the recent *Evangelicals and Catholics Together at Twenty: Vital Statements on Contested Topics*, “at twenty” referring to the twenty years since the first statement in 1994 (eds., Timothy George and Thomas Guarino, Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2015)

or who support these joint statements are notable.⁵ The following list is enough to give the reader an idea *how* prominent: Bill Bright, Bryan Chapell, Hans Boersma (formerly Canadian Reformed), Charles Colson, Frank James and Harold Brown from Reformed Theological Seminary,⁶ Peter Leithart, Peter Lillback, Max Lucado, Eric Metaxas, Richard Mouw, J.I. Packer, Joni Eareckson Tada, and Kevin VanHoozer. Finally, and most noteworthy for *Standard Bearer* readers, Dr. Laura A. Smit, ordained minister in the CRC and professor at Calvin College. These and hundreds more influential church leaders press for the unity of Protestants and Roman Catholics.

By the way, the fact that so many are interested in Rome presages the nearness of the end when the false church will persecute the true church who will not join her. For now the persecution may be merely pejorative labels—“isolationists!” Soon, there will be threats. But the true church must be prepared to die for her faith, as were Luther and the other Reformers whose traditions are being betrayed, even under the façade of celebrating their work. Unity apart from Scripture truth is *not* the unity “for which Jesus Christ himself prayed.”

An explanation

Such a strong movement toward Rome is astounding, but should not be surprising. The simple reason so many are able to anticipate “crossing the Tiber” is that the doctrine in many Protestant, even Reformed and Presbyterian, churches has so warped and deformed that it is more like Roman Catholic dogma than Reformation truth (deformation in liturgy and ethics is close behind). Combine this doctrinal deformation with the doctrinal *illiteracy* of the common member—sound catechism instruction of the youth has long disappeared in most denominations—and the heavy traffic on the roads to Rome is not at all surprising. If Calvin Theological Seminary can report “shared beliefs...even around... the concept of *Justification*,” there is not much truth yet to abandon before all their members recognize that the Tiber, at this point, looks to be a pretty narrow ford.

But the common denominator among these who desire to join in Rome is not agreement in theology, even

the doctrine of salvation, significant as this agreement is. Instead, it is their united aim of world transformation, desire for the “common good,” for promotion of the “kingdom of God.” All their writings breathe such sentiments.

We may never weary of reminding each other and our children that the *common grace* goal of “transforming the world,” “renewing communities,” “redeeming creation,” and “seeking ‘shalom’ in the city,” is what binds these Reformation-abandoning groups together. They may have many other aspirations, but the one yea that binds them all is their will to Christianize the world, their hope that common grace will transform it into the “kingdom of God.” Protestants are abandoning their traditions—biblical traditions—for this. For this, our mother church relinquishes her Reformed heritage. Abraham Kuyper, what hast thou wrought?!

Our hearts’ desire for their salvation

We say the truth in Christ: we have heaviness and sorrow in heart. Our hearts’ desire and prayer is that those traveling Rome-ward might be saved. They have zeal, indeed, but not according to knowledge—saving knowledge governed by Scripture alone.

O, beware of Rome! Be members of the *true* church, for “out [outside] of it there is no salvation” (Belgic Confession, Art. 28).

Shall one of the churches’ Evangelism Committees sponsor a lecture that will explain the similarities between Roman Catholicism and the teaching and practice of contemporary Protestantism—and publicize it broadly in Reformed communities—so that some may yet be rescued? Shall a capable writer extend this effort and show clearly that Rome is not moving toward Protestantism, but Evangelicals toward Rome? Rome does not budge, despite its claims to be “open” to ecumenical dialogue. (As they say, ‘the mountain does not come to Mohammed.’) Let preachers in faithful Reformed and Presbyterian churches be clear in their public preaching and in their instruction of the youth in catechism. Let parents and preachers alike prepare the youth to attend the Christian colleges where they will face smart and amiable professors who may try to direct them to the roads that bend toward Rome.

With genuine love for those who remain in these churches angling Rome-ward, we call them loudly, clearly, urgently: “Come out from them or perish with them.”

⁵ The difficulty of research to determine all the names is compounded by the fact that ECT has no website, calls itself an “ad hoc” and “informal” fellowship, whose statements have no “imprimatur or endorsement” from the churches of which the signers and endorsers are members (*ECT at Twenty*, 166). News of ECT will be found in the (mostly) Roman Catholic journal *First Things*.

⁶ On January 31, 2018, the RTS website did not list these two as *current* faculty at RTS.



All around us

Rev. Martyn McGeown, missionary-pastor of the Covenant Protestant Reformed Church in Northern Ireland, stationed in Limerick, Republic of Ireland

The march for life

Two marches took place in Washington, D.C. recently for two very different causes. The first was the forty-fifth “March for Life” on January 19, 2018, a pro-life event held every year since 1974 in protest against the infamous pro-abortion *Roe v. Wade* U.S. Supreme Court decision of January 22, 1973.

Last year, on January 27, 2017, U.S. Vice President Mike Pence became the first sitting American V.P. to address the pro-life crowd:

I’m deeply humbled to stand before you today. I’m deeply humbled to be the first vice president of the United States to ever have the privilege to attend this historic day.... President Trump actually asked me to be here with you today. He asked me to thank you for your support, for your stand for life, and for your compassion for the women and children of America....

Life is winning in America for many reasons. Life is winning through the steady advance of science that illuminates when life begins, more and more, every day. Life is winning through the generosity of millions of adoptive families to open their hearts and homes to children in need. Life is winning through the compassion of caregivers and volunteers at crisis pregnancy centers and faith-based organizations who minister to women in towns across this country. And life is winning through the quiet counsels between mothers and daughters, grandmothers and granddaughters, between friends across kitchen tables, and over coffee at college campuses. The truth is being told. Compassion is overcoming convenience. And hope is defeating despair. In a word, life is winning in America because of all of you.

So I urge you to press on. But as it is written, “Let your gentleness be evident to all.” *Let this movement be known for love, not anger. Let this movement be known for compassion, not confrontation. When it comes to matters of the heart, there is nothing stronger than gentleness.* I believe that we will continue to win the hearts and minds of the rising generation if our

hearts first break for young mothers and their unborn children, and if we each of us do all we can to meet them where they are, with generosity, not judgment.¹

Around the same time, President Donald Trump chided the press for their mediocre media coverage of this important annual, pro-life event:

ABC’s David Muir asked Trump if he “could hear the voices from the women’s march here in Washington?”² “I couldn’t hear them, but the crowds were large,” Trump responded. “You’re gonna have a large crowd on Friday, too, which is mostly pro-life people.... Some people say it’s gonna be larger.... And they say the press doesn’t cover them.” Muir quickly said he didn’t want to compare crowd sizes. “What they do say is that the press doesn’t cover them,” said Trump. Friday’s March for Life is the 44th annual gathering demanding human rights for the pre-born. It is the largest annual American civil rights demonstration.³

If garnering support from the vice president is a boost for the March for Life movement in the USA, even more significant was *President* Trump’s historic speech to the pro-life crowd delivered directly from the White House Rose Garden:

The March for Life is a movement born out of love. You love your families, you love your neighbors, you love our nation, and you love every child, born and unborn, because you believe that every life is sacred, that every child is a precious gift from God. We know that life is the greatest miracle of all. We see it in the eyes of every new mother who cradles that wonderful, innocent, and glorious newborn child in her loving arms. I want to thank every person here today and all across our country who works with such big hearts and tireless devotion to make sure that parents have the

1 <https://www.lifesitenews.com/news/vp-mike-pence-full-transcript-2017-march-for-life-address>.

2 The “Women’s March” is the second march I will discuss in this article—see below.

3 <https://www.lifesitenews.com/news>.

care and support they need to choose life. Because of you, tens of thousands of Americans have been born and reached their full, God-given potential—because of you. You’re living witnesses of this year’s March for Life theme. And that theme is: Love saves lives.⁴

Despite the historic occasion—President Trump is the first sitting U.S. president to address the March for Life directly by video from the White House—the media again largely *ignored* the event:

2 minutes, six seconds. That’s how much time the networks spent on more than 100,000 marchers this Friday. That’s how much time the networks gave an event where President Trump spoke. That’s how much time the networks offered a rally remembering 60 million unborn who perished through abortion.⁵

Time will tell whether President Trump’s support for the March for Life will result in any major pro-life legislative victories. He has indicated a willingness to sign pro-life legislation, but Congress has not passed anything yet. But the current president’s attitude toward abortion is in stark contrast to his predecessor, former President Barak Obama, who vigorously supported Planned Parenthood, the largest provider of abortions in America. He concluded his 2013 speech to Planned Parenthood’s National Conference with these words:

As long as we’ve got to fight for a woman’s right to make her own choices about her own health, I want you to know that you’ve also got a President who’s going to be right there with you fighting every step of the way. Thank you, Planned Parenthood. God bless you. God bless America.⁶

“Open thy mouth for the dumb in the cause of all such as are appointed to destruction. Open thy mouth, judge righteously, and plead the cause of the poor and needy” (Prov. 31:8-9).

The women’s march

The second march is the “Women’s March,” a protest movement largely formed in response to President Donald Trump’s election (his inauguration took place on January 20, 2017; the first “Women’s March” took place on January 21, 2017, while this year it occurred on January 20, 2018), which was viewed by many as a

major setback for women’s rights. (Some women are worried that they might *lose* their right to abortion!) The women marched also as an expression of their personal repugnance for the president, whose history with women has been controversial.

The “Guiding Vision and Definition of Principles” of the Women’s March reveals a radical, leftist agenda, which is the antithesis of the “March for Life.” The organizers call their movement one of “resistance and self-determination.” Some of their principles are as follows:

We believe Gender Justice is Racial Justice is Economic Justice. We must create a society in which all women—including Black women, Indigenous women, poor women, immigrant women, disabled women, Muslim women, *lesbian, queer and trans women*—are free and able to care for and nurture themselves and their families, however they are formed, in safe and healthy environments free from structural impediments.

We believe in Reproductive Freedom. We do not accept any federal, state or local rollbacks, cuts or restrictions on our ability to access *quality reproductive healthcare* services, birth control, HIV/AIDS care and prevention, or medically accurate sexuality education. This means *open access to safe, legal, affordable abortion and birth control for all people*, regardless of income, location or education. We understand that we can only have reproductive justice when reproductive health care is accessible to all people regardless of income, location or education.

We firmly declare that LGBTQIA Rights are Human Rights and that it is our obligation to *uplift, expand and protect the rights of our gay, lesbian, bi, queer, trans, two-spirit or gender non-conforming brothers, sisters and siblings*. This includes access to non-judgmental, comprehensive healthcare with no exceptions or limitations; access to name and gender changes on identity documents; full anti-discrimination protections; access to education, employment, housing and benefits; and an end to police and state violence.

We believe that all workers—including domestic and farm workers—must have the right to organize and fight for a living minimum wage, and *that unions and other labor associations are critical to a healthy and thriving economy* for all. Undocumented and migrant workers must be included in our labor protections, and we stand in full solidarity with the sex workers’ rights movement. We recognize that exploitation for sex and labor in all forms is a violation of human rights.⁷

⁴ <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings>.

⁵ <https://www.newsbusters.org/blogs/culture/katie-yoder/2018/01/19> and <https://www.lifesitenews.com/news>.

⁶ <https://www.politico.com/story/2013/04>. Of course, by “choices about her own health,” President Obama meant *abortion*, which is also a choice about a baby’s health, and his/her life or death.

⁷ <https://static1.squarespace.com> (my italics). A “trans woman” is actually a man.

Radical feminism, abortion on demand (and paid for by the taxpayer), transgender rights for men who think they are women, prostitution, and rebellion against the employer in the form of union membership—this is what women march for in modern America, in a nation where women have full equality in every area of life. “She is loud and stubborn; her feet abide not in her house. Now she is without, now in the streets, and lieth in wait at every corner” (Prov. 7:12).

The readers of the *SB* will not find it difficult to guess which of these two marches got the most positive media attention!

Free offer article in the *Puritan Reformed Journal*

In a recent issue of the *Puritan Reformed Journal*, the journal of the Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary in Grand Rapids, Michigan, David B. McWilliams, pastor of Covenant Presbyterian Church of Lakeland, FL, seeks to defend the “free offer” or “well-meant offer” of the gospel against some unnamed critics.⁸

Frustrating about his article, however, is the failure (apart from one footnote on Herman Hoeksema) to interact with the critics of the offer. Surely, in 2018, if one

⁸ David B. McWilliams, “The Free Offer of the Gospel,” *Puritan Reformed Journal*, 10:1 (2018), 57-90.

wants to defend the offer, one should attempt to refute the writings of the Protestant Reformed Churches and their sisters, who, whether one agrees with them or not, have written much on the subject!

McWilliams does not prove the “free offer.” Instead, he proves that all men everywhere are commanded to repent and believe in Jesus Christ, which is not the gospel *offer*, but the gospel *call*, something with which the Protestant Reformed Churches and their sisters agree. What we oppose is the idea that in the preaching God expresses a sincere, even passionate, desire to save all the hearers, including the reprobate. However, by not referencing the Protestant Reformed Churches, the leading ecclesiastical opponents of “free offer” theology, McWilliams fails properly to define the terms of the debate (offer, invitation, promise, etc.), and he fails properly to present the position that he claims to refute.

Given that the “All Around Us” rubric is not the place for lengthy articles, I make the readers of the *SB* aware of the article. I intend to provide a detailed response to McWilliams’ article in the April 2018 issue of the *Protestant Reformed Theological Journal* (D.V.). Readers should know that subscriptions to this *Journal* are *free of charge*. If you are interested in receiving the *PRT Journal*, contact the seminary’s secretary at: doezema@prca.org.



Search the Scriptures

Rev. Thomas Miersma, minister emeritus in the Protestant Reformed Churches

Joined to the living

Previous article in this series: February 1, 2018, p. 202.

Ecclesiastes 9:4-10

We saw last time that one event, namely death, comes upon all, both the righteous and the wicked without distinction. This shapes the lives of the sons of men, who are fallen in sin and who shall die. The reason it shapes the lives of men lies in the finality of death and the contrast between the living and the dead. In setting forth this truth and its implications, Solomon turns, first of all, to a description of this contrast in its various elements. This is similar to his approach in Proverbs,

where he frequently makes various observations before drawing a conclusion.

“For to him that is joined to all the living there is hope: for a living dog is better than a dead lion” (Eccl. 9:4). The text, first of all, sets before us the sphere of human activity, the road of life in which a man walks under the sun. It embraces all his earthly existence as he interacts with other men and the life of the creation. He is united or joined to it. It is his allotted place under the sun. God, his Creator, gave him that place, uniting him to all the living in a bond of earthly life.

In that life there is hope or confidence that arises out of being joined to the living. The hope or confidence spoken of here is not the eternal hope of the believer, but the daily expectation, planning, and activity of a man as he goes about his life under the sun. It is something we tend to take for granted, though as believers, we make it also a matter of prayer (James 4:15). The wicked live out of the same form of confidence of life, but their hope is rooted in themselves and their plans and desires. Though outwardly the earthly lives of believer and unbeliever are similar, the internal spiritual principle is markedly different.

But death, coming suddenly, often without warning, hovers over that life of men as a dark cloud. That union with the living is, in reality, very tenuous, for we are creatures of the dust and like the grass of the field that passes away. Nor does man have power over death. Solomon has said, "There is no man that hath power over the spirit to retain the spirit; neither hath he power in the day of death: and there is no discharge in that war; neither shall wickedness deliver those that are given to it" (Eccl. 8:8).

"For a living dog is better than a dead lion" (Eccl. 9:4). To draw out the comparison, Solomon uses what may have been a colloquial proverb with a contrasting picture. The dog mentioned is not a household pet but a scavenger who slinks down dark streets and across the fields, much like a coyote. Its character here is not so much its cunning but that it is an animal that shies away from danger, having a strong sense of self-preservation and caution. By contrast, the lion is bold and fierce, ready to stand its ground, roaring its presence. The term "better" in the text does not have a moral connotation. The figure applied to people is one of the contrast between shrinking self-preservation and brave courage. The admired lion, however, is dead; his boldness leads to his destruction. The slinking dog lives, for he knew when to run away. The dog's lot is better because he abides among the living; he yet has hope in the world. The lion is a rotting carcass and has ceased from the earth.

Solomon then states the point more plainly: **"For the living know that they shall die: but the dead know not any thing, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten"** (Eccl. 9:5). The living have yet a portion under the sun, though with the knowledge that this present life shall end. They can still plan and carry out the activities of life. For the dead, the door of life has closed, and that closing is final. The rewards or present benefits of life, its fruitful activity, have ceased. Their place and portion under the sun is taken away by death; even their name in the world departs and is forgotten.

Solomon expands this latter thought, **"Also their love, and their hated, and envy, is now perished; neither have they any more a portion for ever in any thing that is done under the sun"** (Eccl. 9:6). This is the grim reality of death under the sun. It is exactly this that also makes the life of man one of transient vanity. Death takes everything from him in this world in a moment. Solomon uses vivid language to drive home his point: his love, his hatred, his envy perish. All his plans and purposes, all his desires for good or evil are ended. He has no more any portion under the sun. Death shuts the door of this present life forever. As we contemplate what the text is saying, we must keep in mind that the viewpoint is that which can be seen *under the sun*. Solomon is not rejecting the higher realities of judgment, salvation, eternal life, and death. But that cannot be seen under the sun, as he has said previously: "Who knoweth the spirit of man that goeth upward?" (Eccl. 3:21).

In contemplating this, we must keep in mind that God is sovereign over the affairs of life. God brings us into this world, and appoints our place and calling, our portion under the sun. God gives life, but God also is sovereign over death to close the door of life and take us from this world under the sun. Having described this reality of death, Solomon sets before us the first conclusion he would draw, and does so by exhortation. He would address the believer, particularly in his youth, as he walks the pathway of life. He is still leading us to the conclusion he will make in chapter 12:1—"Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth...."

Therefore, he comes with the exhortation: **"Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart; for God now accepteth thy works"** (Eccl. 9:7). The calling to enjoy the things of this present life is a point he has made before. They are good gifts of God to His people by the labor of our hands as our daily bread. That enjoyment is also a privilege, for the wicked are in bondage to covetousness, as he has shown.

He adds here a basis for that exhortation, that our works are accepted with God, or already pleasing in His sight. The picture is of one who, remembering his Creator and covenant God, serves Him in his labor and his work as a sacrifice of thankfulness pleasing to God. This thought he develops more fully, for it comprises the believer's response to the reality of death and the present purpose of his or her life. That response is one of present joyful thanksgiving before God in the things of this life, knowing that although they shall also end, being transitory, it is the portion that God has given us in His grace (Eccl. 9:9).

Solomon gives us a number of injunctions in connec-

tion with this exhortation. He says, first of all: “Let thy garments be always white; and let thy head lack no ointment” (Eccl. 9:8). The picture is one of joy and rejoicing, of celebration and thanksgiving, both in the color white and in the anointing of the head with oil. While the figure refers to our daily earthly life, it has also an underlying spiritual connection, for white is also the picture of cleansing from sin, of the white robes of salvation and righteousness. Likewise the refreshment of oil poured upon the head in a hot climate, making the face to shine, is also a picture of the anointing of the Spirit and His blessing.

This rejoicing with a merry heart is the rejoicing of one who walks in covenant fellowship with God, in His forgiving mercy and with a good conscience before the Lord. His inner spiritual blessings come to expression in his joyful daily walk in the things of his life.

To this walk he then adds a second element, namely the blessing and gift of marriage: “Live joyfully with the wife whom thou lovest all the days of the life of thy vanity...” (Eccl. 9:9). “Live,” or more literally, “look upon life with the wife whom you love,” again draws a picture of daily life, through which we walk under the sun. In that life under the sun God has set the blessings of marriage that we may walk together in communion of life. Marriage is for this life. It too belongs to the things that pass away. By it God enriches the life of His people and works the blessings of His covenant.

This thought he further develops: “Live joyfully with the wife whom thou lovest all the days of thy van-

ity, which he hath given thee under the sun, all the days of thy vanity: for that is thy portion in this life, and in thy labour which thou takest under the sun” (v. 9). Food and drink, rejoicing in this present life, and marriage, all belong to this life, which is transitory. The days of our life are the days of that transitory vanity, a point made twice in the text to emphasize that truth; but they are also our portion from the hand of God. They are God’s gift to His people who walk in the fear of His name. Rejoicing in them with contentment and thanksgiving belongs to that portion.

He then adds the labor we take or in which we labor under the sun. For that too is given of God, by His design. Yes, that labor is one of toil in a passing thing that does not abide. We are not to cling to it, nor to earthly riches, for they shall end in death. But our labor is also that which God has given, and therein lies the real foundation for the meaning and purpose of our life. By our labor we serve Him. The calling, therefore, is to stewardship, to diligent and faithful labor that is fruitful, not in itself, but in the service of God.

Thus he concludes: “Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave, whither thou goest” (Eccl. 9:10). Now in this present life is the time of work, of planning and carrying out those plans or devices. Death will close that door and with it all that belongs under the sun. Serving the Lord—that labor is not in vain, for it is accepted of God in His grace.



Taking heed to the doctrine

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

Revelation, inspiration, and infallibility (22)

“What saith the Scripture:”

The Bible’s sufficiency

Previous article in this series: December 1, 2017, p. 99.

God’s holiness and Scripture’s perfection

Just as God has attributes, so does also the Word of God. Because Scripture is the Word of God, it partakes of the attributes of God whose Word it is. This has historically been the position of the church and has been an important part of its defense of the Bible’s infallible

inspiration. Over against those who deny Scripture’s divine inspiration, the church has historically appealed to the perfection of God Himself. Since God is perfect and holy, so also is His Word.

Today prominent theologians are contending that God’s perfection does not necessarily imply the perfec-

tion of His Word. They argue that although God is holy, He could and did choose to give the church a Bible that is not necessarily holy. He could and did choose to give the church a Bible instead that is in every respect a truly human book, though with an exalted message. They contend that the Bible, like any other human book, contains errors in judgment, historical and scientific inaccuracies, and even doctrinal inconsistencies. It was this kind of book that God determined was best suited to convey His message to lost humanity. This belongs, it is argued, to God's condescension.

Such is the position of men like the Presbyterian theologian and former professor at Westminster Theological Seminary (Philadelphia), Dr. Peter Enns, as set forth in his book *Inspiration and Incarnation: Evangelicals and the Problem of the Old Testament*, the second edition of which has recently been published by Baker Academic. Apart from the fact that many of us had no idea there was a problem with the Old Testament, the far greater problem is with Enns' unbiblical and unreformed view of inspiration. Enns contends that "the Bible we have is the Bible that God means for us to have" (x). And this Bible "that God means for us to have" is not necessarily holy and perfect just because God Himself is holy and perfect. In fact, it is not.

But this is a clear break with the historic position of the church. Historically, the church has always argued from God's holiness and perfection to the holiness and perfection of His Word. Denial of the holiness and perfection of the Bible has been viewed by the church as an attack on the holiness and perfection of God. And in truth, it cannot be otherwise, unless God were to deny Himself. And that He cannot do. As impossible as it is for a sinful human being to produce a work of perfection, so impossible is it for the all-perfect God to produce something imperfect.

The Bible itself often proceeds from God's perfection to the perfection of His Word. "The works of his hands are verity and judgment" and "all his commandments are sure" because "holy and reverend is his name" (Ps. 111:7 and 9). Repeatedly, the psalmist in Psalm 119 affirms the holiness of God's Word *on the basis of* the holiness of God Himself. "Righteous art thou, O LORD" and therefore "upright are thy judgments" (v. 137). Because "Thy righteousness is an everlasting righteousness," therefore, it follows that "thy law is the truth" (v. 142).

The sufficiency of Scripture

We are at present considering the attributes or perfections of Scripture, as the Reformed faith has historically identified them. Thus far we have examined

Scripture's authority, Scripture's necessity, and Scripture's perspicuity. Because Scripture is the Word of God, it possesses the authority of God, which is the ultimate and only authority. Because Scripture is the Word of God, it is necessary. It is necessary for the true knowledge of God, as well as for the right worship of God. It is necessary for faith and for life. Is it necessary that we know, love, and live to the glory of God? If so, Scripture is necessary as the means by which we know God, love Him, and live for the glory of His name. Apart from Scripture, men perish in ignorance and unbelief, outside of God and the true knowledge of God. That Scripture is authoritative and necessary, in turn, depends on Scripture's perspicuity. Only if Scripture is understandable, can it function as the authority in the church. And only if Scripture is understandable, can it function as the necessary means for the faith and the life of the believer.

The fourth attribute of Scripture to which the Reformed faith calls attention is the attribute of *sufficiency*. As God is the believer's all in all, and as the believer finds all that he needs for body and for soul, for time and for eternity in God, and so needs nothing outside of God or in addition to God, so does the believer find in God's Word all that is necessary for this life and his hope for that which is to come. As God is God alone, the only true and living God, so is His Word the only infallible and authoritative Word of God. God answers to every need that the believer has, but God does that in and through His Word. "Our sufficiency is of God" (II Cor. 3:5), to be sure, but God is our sufficiency by means of His holy Word. Since Scripture makes known the Word and will of God, it is through Scripture that God is our sufficiency.

Since Scripture is the Word of God, infallibly inspired and authoritative, it can be sufficient. If the Bible were the weak, fallible word of man, it would certainly be necessary that something should be added to the Bible. But since the Bible is the Word of God—the Word of God entirely—there is no need for anything instead of or in addition to the Bible. It was exactly in connection with the Reformers' confession of Scripture alone, *sola Scriptura*, that they defended the sufficiency of Scripture and rejected any additions to Scripture.

Not only *is* the Bible sufficient, but the believer *finds* the Bible to be sufficient. Everything that he needs for his life in the world, he finds in Scripture. This is why the believer reads Scripture diligently. This is why he searches Scripture and meditates on it. This is why he turns to Scripture with his problems, questions, and troubles. The reason is that he finds the solution to his problems, the answer to his questions, and the relief

from his troubles in the Word of God. He is built up by its instruction, warned by its admonitions, comforted by its good news, and strengthened by its encouragements. Scripture is sufficient *in the experience* of the child of God.

Implications of Scripture's sufficiency

That the Bible is sufficient implies especially two things. Positively, it means that the believer finds Scripture to be adequate for all his needs. The Bible is adequate in the life of the believer personally. It provides all the necessary guidance and lays down every spiritual principle that is necessary for the child of God to live a God-glorifying life in the world. It is sufficient for his personal life, his life in his marriage and in his family, his life in the church, and his life in the midst of this wicked world. The Bible is also sufficient for the church. It is sufficient for the church's worship and witness. It is sufficient for the minister in his preaching, the elders in their oversight, and the deacons in their bringing of comfort. Scripture is also sufficient for the assemblies of the church. It is sufficient for the consistory in its supervision of the congregation and its work of discipline. It is sufficient for the classis and synod, or the presbytery and general assembly, in their work on behalf of the churches in common.

That the Bible is sufficient means, negatively, that the believer has no need of any one and anything alongside of Scripture or in addition to Scripture. Nothing need be and nothing can be added to Scripture. Neither the church nor the believer is in need of something to supplement Scripture, something that perhaps speaks to our day and to the life of twenty-first century Christians in a way in which Scripture is lacking.

This was the error of the Jews of Jesus' day. They added other authorities alongside the authority of Holy Scripture. To them Scripture was not sufficient, and so to it they added their own human traditions. The authority in the church of that day was Scripture *and* tradition, as Jesus makes plain in Mark 7:9, "Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own [human] tradition."

What was true in Jesus' day was also true at the time of the Reformation. The Roman Catholic Church then and now denies the sufficiency of Scripture. Scripture was not enough. Not Scripture alone, but Scripture *and* the writings of the church fathers, Scripture *and* the Apocrypha, Scripture *and* the decisions of the church councils, Scripture *and* the infallible decrees of the pope. A fundamental issue between Rome and the Reformers was the issue of the sufficiency of Holy Scripture. According to Rome, something in addition

to Scripture must have a decisive role when judging the validity of such things as the infallibility of the pope, purgatory, the seven sacraments, prayers for the dead, the veneration of the relics of the saints, the immaculate conception, perpetual virginity, and worship of the virgin Mary.

Today, too, there are those in the church who deny the sufficiency of Scripture in a number of practical ways. For some, Scripture is not sufficient in its account of the origin of all things. For a proper understanding of the opening chapters of Genesis one must also take into account the findings of science and the conclusions of paleontology. For a proper understanding of Old Testament history, the biblical record is not sufficient, but must be supplemented by what archeologists have uncovered. For a proper understanding of relationships between husbands and wives in marriage the teaching of the Bible is not adequate, but the wisdom and insights of experts in human relationships must be added to Scripture. For a proper view of same-sex relationships the teaching of Scripture is outdated and must be supplemented by, and in most cases replaced by, the consensus of modern experts in human sexuality. These are practical denials of the sufficiency of Scripture.

Proof of Scripture's sufficiency

The two classic proof texts for the infallible inspiration of Scripture also teach clearly the sufficiency of Scripture. In II Timothy 3:15, the apostle Paul says that the holy Scriptures are able to make the child of God "wise unto salvation." He needs nothing besides or instead of Scripture as the means of God unto salvation. Scripture alone is sufficient to make us "wise unto salvation." He goes on to teach that Scripture is "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." The Christian needs nothing in addition to Scripture for doctrine, reproof, correction, or instruction in righteousness. Scripture is adequate for every aspect of the life of the believer. And the apostle concludes: "That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (v. 17). Scripture is sufficient to make the "man of God" complete—"perfect" in that sense. If Scripture is sufficient to make the Christian complete, what need has he of anything in addition to Scripture? And if Scripture is capable of "thoroughly," that is, "entirely" or "completely," equipping the child of God to perform good works, which is the great goal of our salvation, what need has he of anything in addition to Scripture?

In II Peter 1:19-21, the apostle Peter also teaches the sufficiency of Scripture. This present evil world, according to the apostle, is a "dark place" (v. 19). In the

blackness, there is one light that penetrates the darkness and dispels the darkness. There is one light that is able to illumine the way through the darkness and light the way “until the day dawn.” That one light is the light of

God’s holy Word. It alone is sufficient, and it alone is sufficient because it alone is the Word of God, the Word written by “holy men of God [who] spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost” (v. 21).



Previous article in
this series: February
15, 2018, p. 228.

Things which must shortly come to pass

Prof. David Engelsma, professor emeritus of Dogmatics and Old Testament in the
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Reformed critique of the premillennial explanation of Romans 11 (2)

Chapter Five: Premillennialism (18)

“...blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob.”

Romans 11:25, 26

The error concerning “until”

The error of dispensational premillennialism regarding the text of Scripture itself, in Romans 11, is twofold. First, the premillennialists assume, falsely, that “until” in verse 25 implies that subsequently, in history, there will follow an age in which the Jews will no longer be blinded in part. This deliverance from their partial blindness means, for premillennialism, a future saving of multitudes of Jews, the vast majority of them.

This assumption is mistaken. “Until,” in verse 25 does not imply a deliverance of the Jews from blindness after the fullness of the Gentiles is come in. “Until” does not imply an age (dispensation) following the coming in of the fullness of the Gentiles, an age (dispensation) when Israel will no longer be blind.

“Until” only expresses how long and for what divine purpose the Jews are blinded in part. “Until” suggests nothing as to a subsequent deliverance from blindness, so that masses of Jews will be saved and the nation of Israel will be restored to its former, earthly power and glory.

“Until” states, and means, that God blinds the Jews in part for a period of time—the present age, from the ascension of Jesus to His second coming—during which the fullness of the Gentiles is coming in. “Until” suggests that the gathering of the mainly Gentile church is the purpose of the blinding of the Jews.

When the fullness of the Gentiles, that is, the church, which is mostly composed of Gentiles, has come in, or been saved, history ends with the second coming of Jesus Christ. No dispensation follows. The blindness of the Jews in part has achieved its purpose. The entire church has been gathered from the nations, including some elect from the Jews.

That the word “until” in scriptural usage does not imply a subsequent change in the reality that goes on until a goal is reached is evident from I Corinthians 15:25: the risen Jesus Christ “must reign, *till* he hath put all enemies under his feet.” Jesus does not cease reigning when the goal of putting all enemies under his feet has been reached. He will continue to reign at God’s right hand forever. “Till” in I Corinthians 15:25, like “until” in Romans 11:25, only expresses the time and purpose of the reality that lasts “till,” or “until.”

The error concerning “so”

The second error of premillennialism regarding Romans 11:25, 26 is even less excusable. It is the insistence upon understanding the word “so,” or “thus,” as “then.”

The premillennial explanation of verse 26 is that *after* the fullness of the Gentiles, the Jews will be delivered from blindness with regard to Jesus as the Christ of God. And *then* all Israel shall be saved. “*Then*,” in the future, masses of Jews will be saved. They will be saved in such a way as to form a restored, earthly kingdom of God.

But the text does not read “*then*.” Neither does the text *mean* “*then*.” Nor may anyone explain the text as teaching “*then*.” The text reads, means, and must be explained as “*so*,” or “*thus*,” or “*in this way*.” *In the way* of the blindness of Israel only “*in part*,” which means that always some Jews are being saved all the while that the fullness of the Gentiles is coming in, all Israel shall be saved throughout this present age.

When the fullness of the Gentiles shall have come in, at the very end of history, also all Israel shall have been saved. All Israel shall have been saved in the ongoing salvation of the elect Jews throughout New Testament history.

The premillennial notion that the text predicts a future salvation of multitudes of Jews in a dispensation that is to follow the present age is obviously mistaken. It is inexcusable error. Learned theologians should be embarrassed by their mistake regarding the meaning of the word “*so*” in Romans 11:26. They should hasten to correct their mistake, even though doing so will virtually destroy their dispensational doctrine. A first-year student of Greek grammar can, and ought to, spot the error. “*So*” in the Greek language, as in the English translation, does not mean “*then*.”

I repeat: “*So*” in Romans 11:26 means ‘*in this way*,’ not ‘*in a dispensation following the coming in of the fulness of the largely Gentile church*.’

Positive, Reformed interpretation of Romans 11

The gospel of Romans 11, therefore, is the good news that the seemingly evil blindness with regard to Jesus Christ on the part of national Israel and a majority of Jews, which continues throughout all of New Testament history to the present day, is made by God to serve a good purpose. The good purpose is the saving of the precious church of Jesus Christ out of all nations. The good purpose is the extension of salvation, once limited to Israel, to the nations.

This has always been God’s main purpose with history: the gathering of His beloved elect church out of all nations. The unbelief of the Jews has served this purpose.

Nevertheless, the blinding of the Jews has never been total. It has always been a blindness “*in part*” (v. 25). Despite the rejection of the Christ by the majority of

Jews, a grievous sin, especially in view of their privileged status in the time of the old covenant, God has always had His elect among them. Throughout the present age, God has provoked them to jealousy by the saving of the Gentiles, grafted these elect Jews into their own olive tree, saved them, and made them one body with the Gentile believers in Jesus Christ.

“*So*,” “*thus*,” “*in this way*,” all Israel is being saved, along with the fullness of the Gentiles.

And “*so*” the entire church is being saved and the grand, spiritual kingdom of God is being formed.

Eschatological false doctrine and heresy

Premillennialism is false doctrine concerning the truth of the end. The present age is the last age, or dispensation, in history. As the age of the saving of the church out of the Gentile nations as well as from the Jews—the bride, body, and kingdom of Jesus the Christ, the present age is the culmination and goal of all the ways and works of God with regard to history.

There is no dispensation to follow, as the climactic age.

There will be no rapture of the church while history continues.

The church, therefore, will not escape the tribulation under Antichrist. On the contrary, she will be the object of his persecution. So is the church one with Christ, as the body of which He is Head, and so is Christ identified with His church, as the head with His body, that the apostle can refer to the church as “*Christ*”: “*As the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ*” (I Cor. 12:12; where the reference is to the church). And the coming Antichrist is *Anti-Christ*, not *Anti-Jews*.

There will be no dispensation of the carnal glory of a restored earthly nation of Israel, a Jewish kingdom of God.

A future millennium of carnal peace, power, and prosperity for the Jews, indeed for the entire world, under the rule of Jesus, heavenly king of an earthly nation of Israel in old Jerusalem, is sheer fantasy and utter folly.

At the root of this false doctrine of the last things is heresy. The heresy is twofold, and grievous in the extreme.

Dispensational premillennialism is a form of the denial of Jesus Christ.

It is also a denial of election.

Nothing less.

This I will demonstrate in the articles that follow.

(to be continued)



When thou sittest in thine house

Rev. Arie denHartog, minister emeritus in the Protestant Reformed Churches

Raising a covenant family

The covenant family is God's gift to those who marry in the Lord. It has as its highest calling to reflect the beauty, holiness, and blessedness of the personal covenant life that exists within the triune being of God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The covenant family exists where husband and wife are bound together in the love of Christ in the unity of faith. The covenant family is created by God through the work of regeneration in the hearts of the two so married. The purpose to raise a covenant family begins with a serious attitude about marrying a fellow believer with whom we are truly one in the truth of the Lord. We must avoid being overwhelmed by feelings about a pretty face or an attractive body when seeking a life's partner, rather than with the inner spiritual beauty and godliness of the heart. If we are guided mostly by sexual attraction, we are in danger of joining ourselves to the wrong partner. Sober judgments must be made before marriage concerning the prospective person with whom we will covenant together and spend our life.

The heart of Christian marriage is and must be the reality of personal friendship and fellowship, as well as of tender affection between husband and wife. In as far as this is absent or marred by grievous sin, our marriage has lost its heart and does not in fact reflect the life of God's blessed covenant.

Establishing and maintaining a covenant home is the calling and solemn obligation God gives to the married couple. This is one of the chief purposes of Christian marriage. The married are not to live for themselves or for their own worldly pleasure or earthly glory. They are to live serving one another and, if God gives children, to raise these children in the fear of the Lord. The life of the covenant home has its source in living faith in the Lord and abiding union with Him. The covenant family serves for the continuation of the church of Jesus Christ in the world and the cause of His kingdom. It has, therefore, a very high calling. The name 'covenant family' is rich in meaning and significance.

Raising and maintaining a covenant family in this ungodly world is a daunting task. It requires the life-long devotion of the Christian husband and the Chris-

tian wife. As husband and wife, we must be partners in the work of the Lord. God in His Word has defined the role of each partner in the marriage. This order was designed by the wisdom of God to serve the welfare of the marriage and of the family. The husband and father is to be the head of the home. He has the responsibility to rule the home in love and to maintain its godly order and discipline. The wife is to be the helpmeet of her husband. She is to serve her husband and children in love. She is to be 'the keeper of the home,' indicating that she has a role for which she must stay home for the great work of building her family in God-given knowledge and wisdom.

We are living in this sin-cursed earth with its many troubles and miseries, and we still have our corrupt nature with us. This sinful nature is the cause of all strife among men. Because of our sins, the above description of the covenant family will always fall far short of its beautiful and happy ideal. Nevertheless, we must constantly strive for God's ideal, for His glory and the blessedness of our marriages.

In the covenant home, sin between husband and wife must be regularly confessed before the cross of Jesus Christ. There must be sincere humble and godly sorrow for the many sins that mar the beauty of our marriages. There must be repentance from these sins and sincere forgiveness offered. This is hard; it requires much grace. Festered sin, if left unresolved, will destroy the heart of marriage for a time, until it is again restored by the grace of God. Wounds and offenses must be healed with the balm of Jesus' blood and righteousness. This must be done with great haste and urgency. The sun must not be allowed to go down on our sinful anger against each other in our marriage.

Husband and wife must be committed to a life-long relationship of faithfulness and love together, until they are parted by God through death. Strife and division, especially that which ends in divorce, is treachery before God. When one of the members of a broken marriage remains faithful to the Lord, He will also give grace to such a one to continue the covenant home and give

grace to endure the deep pain of rejection and the suffering of separation.

Marriage must be a true and spiritual covenant relationship between husband and wife before children are born into the marriage. Great spiritual effort and much prayer must go into building a covenant home before children are born. This home must prepare the healthy spiritual environment that receiving and nurturing of God-given covenant children requires. This is much more important than making a pretty, cozy room before the infant arrives.

The spiritual reality of the bond of love, fellowship, and friendship that exists between the husband and wife will by the grace of God create an environment of personal warmth and protection, security and happiness that children so urgently need. Such an environment is vital for helping children grow up into mature and stable adults. The importance of this cannot be over-emphasized for the spiritual, psychological, and social well-being of the children and the development of their personalities as children of God and as citizens of the kingdom of Christ.

God by the Spirit and Word of the Lord Jesus Christ must live in the family for a home to be truly a covenant home. Without this reality, the home is not truly a covenant home. Practically, this means that there must be structured family worship in the covenant home. This family worship must include the regular daily, serious study of the Word of God. The Word of God must be applied to the lives of the members of the family in the regular course of the functioning of the family. The family must pray together and for one another. Both father and mother must be engaged in this family worship with their covenant children. The father must be the leader of this family worship. Leadership in this area is truly more important than any other. Mother must teach her children the truth of God's Word while they are sitting on her knees and embraced by her tender affection. An excellent part of regular family worship is the singing together of songs of praise and thanks to God. There is great joy in singing. Covenant children usually delight in it. The covenant home should be a place of great joy in the Lord by such singing.

Especially while the children are still in the home, both parents must help the children with their many daily sin problems and the struggles and disappointments of life. They must, in the course of life in the home, give wise counsel and advice for all the great issues of life. The father must be careful not to be cold and distant from his children. He has the calling to lead His family. He must do this in fatherly love and in sincere, tender-hearted concern for the welfare of his

growing children. Father certainly must not behave like a cruel tyrant in his home. For then he will grievously abuse his wife and children and cause them deep psychological and spiritual harm. The grievous effects of this behavior will often last a lifetime for those who have experienced such abuse in their childhood.

One of the greatest challenges of parenting over the years is to maintain a personal relationship with children in the covenant home. This must continue even into adulthood, especially during the difficult teenage years. Father especially and also, of course, the mother must themselves be an example of godliness, holiness, reverence, humility, and the fear of God. Only then can they hope to instill this same attitude in the hearts of their children.

All of this requires time and sacrifice, both on the part of father as well as on the part of mother.

Father must not be so busy with his earthly career that he has very little time for the care for his children or to show interest in their lives as they are growing up. Children are with us in our homes only for a very short time. Woe unto the father who is seldom home long enough to take any genuine interest in the lives of his own children! Mother must be devoted in love to the daily care of her children and to being the keeper of her home. She is too busy with this calling to have an independent career in the world for her own glory and satisfaction. There are very few roles in life that require more self-denial and self-sacrifice than the role of the covenant mother in the home.

To maintain a covenant home there must be firm, consistent, and loving discipline of the children. This ought not to be given hastily or in anger or out of despair with the sinful behavior of the children. Through discipline children must be taught the seriousness of sin and the importance of holiness, obedience, and the fear of God. Children need constant correction and turning from sin. They need to be positively encouraged in the way of well doing. Every child, even in the same home, is different. God made them each unique. Some are in need of more discipline than others. Some occasionally need serious corporal discipline to deliver their souls from sin and turn them from hard hearts. Parents who neglect this, according to the book of Proverbs, do not truly love their covenant children. Though discipline is grievous at the time for both parents and children, it will yield the peaceable fruits of righteousness in the life of the children for the whole of their future.

We raise our covenant family in the midst of an ungodly world that is desperately wicked, increasingly so as the end of time approaches. In this world our children and young people are tempted on every side

and surrounded by vanity. The Word of God tells us that we are not to love the world nor the things of this world. We need to condemn this world and its ungodly philosophy and lifestyle, especially its entertainment. This we must do for our children's sake. This is urgent. The friendship of the world is, according to the Word of God, enmity against God and makes ongoing covenant fellowship with God impossible. Our homes and our children must be guarded from worldly influence. We must guard the books that are read, the television that is watched, and how the Internet and electronic devices are used by our children. Our families must be protected from the great evils of this world, such as fornication, alcohol abuse, and illicit drug use. By the grace and Spirit of God we must seek also to deliver our children from heart-sins such as pride, enmity against the neighbor, self-centeredness, covetousness, and materialism. Negligence in this task of raising our covenant family will greatly endanger our children for becoming worldly and joining the friendship of the world.

Parents need to do all in their power to protect their children in the choice of friendships and the company they keep outside of the home. There is hardly a more urgent need for this than with regard to our children's need for finding a life partner. How foolish it is for parents to have nothing to say about this in the lives of their young people! How many young people make foolish choices for a spouse that sometimes have disastrous consequences for them in later life.

In conclusion, let me make one more important point. God's covenant with His people was known in Zion in

the Old Testament. Psalm 128:5 says, "The LORD shall bless thee out of Zion." In the New Testament, God's covenant is known through a living, active membership in the true church of Jesus Christ. There God's people come together to worship the covenant God of their salvation. There He dwells with them and they with Him. God shows us His greatness and glory, His mercy and loving kindness and great salvation. We enjoy and appreciate the reality of God's covenant with us through the preaching of the blessed gospel in the church. God protects and keeps us as our mighty Lord and God in Zion from our many enemies we have in this world. The great blessedness of the communion of the saints is experienced in the church of Jesus Christ. Often this is the place where good, strong bonds of Christian friendship are formed. We maintain our covenant families by bringing them with us to the house of God. Leaving and forsaking the true church of God will have serious consequences for our covenant families. Our children must be instructed in the church's catechism classes to raise them to maturity in knowing and understanding the great doctrines of His Word. The goal is to prepare them to confess their faith in the midst of God's people. There our covenant children will learn to live as citizens of Zion. Godly friendships in the sphere of the communion of the saints will often lead them to find good spouses for marriage. In the church they will learn the great wisdom and grace of God to establish their own covenant homes.

Let us strive with all our God-given powers to maintain this ideal for our covenant homes.



Strength of youth

Rev. Joshua Engelsma, pastor of the Protestant Reformed Church in Doon, Iowa

"Male and female created He them"

To understand what it means to be a mature man, we must ask this question: "What saith the Scriptures?" Or, to put it differently, "What does God say? What does He demand of me as a man?" Our view of manhood may not be formed on the basis of culture, the expectations of society, or tradition. We need a foundation that is more solid than any of those. Our

understanding of masculinity must be grounded in the bedrock of God's Word.

The fact that we need to turn to God's Word for this instruction ought not to surprise us, but this approach is not popular. Many will scoff at this idea, claiming that to understand what it really means to be a man we need the latest findings of science, psychology, and so-

ciology. To base our understanding on some outdated, old-fashioned Bible, they say, is laughably ignorant. It is the proverbial head-in-the-sand mindset.

But their mockery does not move us. We take our stand unashamedly on the inspired Scriptures, which is the Word of the thrice-holy God Himself.

Back to the beginning

To begin in our description of biblical masculinity, we have to start at creation. For a right understanding of anything, it is helpful to go back to its origin. To understand what it means to be a man, we have to go back to the beginning and God's creation of all things to learn what was God's original design and intention.

The account of God's creation of man is found in Genesis 1-2. Genesis 1 gives a briefer description of God's creation of mankind, and Genesis 2 gives a more detailed, in-depth description of God's creation of man and woman.

It is important to remember that these two chapters are not giving two separate accounts of creation. Many who hold to theistic evolution will claim that these chapters are two different and even contradictory accounts of creation. They make this claim in the interests of undermining the literal interpretation of these chapters and promoting the idea that this history cannot be trusted as factual.

But these are not two separate accounts. Genesis 2 is not even a mere retelling of the creation account in Genesis 1, nor is it an appendix to that chapter which gives a few extra details. In Genesis 1 God describes broadly His work of creating all things. Then in Genesis 2 God begins to describe in detail the history of man. Genesis 2 describes God's creation of man, the garden that God made for man, the two important trees of the garden, and the creation of the woman and her relationship to the man. God is setting the stage for the history of mankind that is to come.

What we learn from this history is that God made man and woman with many similarities, but also with many differences. They are similar, but not identical.

The same...

Let's start with the similarities. There are especially three things we can identify.

First, men and women are similar in their *creation*.

They were both made in a special way by the hand of God. When God made all the other creatures, He simply spoke and those things came into exist. But when God made human beings, He, so to speak, "got His

hands dirty." When He made the man, God scooped up the dust of the ground, formed a man, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life (Gen. 2:7). When He made the woman, God caused Adam to fall asleep, removed one of his ribs, and from that rib formed the woman (Gen. 2:21-22). Both were made in a special way with God's own hand.

Both male and female were also necessary parts of God's creation. This was true of Adam as the king of God's creation. But this was also true of Eve. On the sixth day, after God had already created Adam, He looked down at His creation and for the first time said, "It is not good" (Gen. 2:18). What was not good was that man was alone and there was no woman yet. Only after God created the woman did He look down and say, "Behold, it [is] very good" (Gen. 1:31).

Both male and female are created to be similar creatures. They have similar bodies made up of brains, eyes, ears, mouths, hands, fingers, hearts, lungs, livers, kidneys, legs, toes, blood, bones, skin, and so on. They both have a soul, a conscience, a will, an intellect, and emotions.

Second, men and women share in the *Fall* into sin.

Although both were created by God perfect and without sin, they were also created in such a way that they were capable of falling. Some have suggested that the reason why the devil came to tempt Eve and not Adam was that she could more easily fall into sin. But that is not true. It was not the case that the woman was somehow morally weaker. She was no more inclined to sin than the man was.

Although they had different roles in the Fall, the reality is that man and woman both fell into sin. Both disobeyed God's command, both ate of the forbidden fruit, both covered themselves in fig leaves, and both ran and hid from the presence of the Lord.

Although there were different consequences of the Fall for man and woman (Gen. 3:16-19), they both shared in the primary consequence: "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Gen. 2:17). Today man and woman alike are conceived and born dead in trespasses and sins. Today man and woman alike are by nature the children of wrath.

Third, (elect) men and women share in *salvation*.

In the beginning, God made both man and woman in His image: "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them" (Gen. 1:27). This meant that God made them both to resemble Him spiritually. He made them to be His son and His daughter, and caused them both to enjoy covenant friendship with Him.

The same thing is true after the Fall for redeemed men and women. The apostle Peter exhorts husbands to honor their wives “as being heirs together of the grace of life” (I Pet. 3:7). As we will come to see, there are many differences between man and woman, but in this area there is no difference. They are equally recipients of God’s grace and the life and salvation of Christ. “[T]here is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:28).

For all these reasons, we men may not look down upon or think less of our sisters in Christ. They must be treated with honor and respect.

...But different

While there are many similarities between men and women, there are also many differences. God did not make them identical. The male/female distinction is the most basic distinction in the human race.

The most obvious difference between men and women is in their physical anatomy, particularly their different sexual organs. This is so obvious a point that you might wonder why I bring it up. But, sadly, it has to be said today because this most basic point is denied today. Many today claim that gender is not based on one’s anatomy but rather on how they feel and the way that they have always identified themselves. So, a young man born with male genitalia feels more feminine and wants to identity as a woman; therefore, he must be viewed as a she. Or, a young woman born with female genitalia feels more masculine and wants to identity as a man; therefore, she must be viewed as a he. Both then are encouraged to mutilate their bodies in order to bring their anatomy into line with their feelings. The result is that Joe becomes Jane, and Jane becomes Joe.

But this is not only a wicked mutilation of the body, it is an attack on the Creator. In the beginning God created them male and female, and blessed them with the ability to be fruitful, to multiply, and to replenish the earth (Gen. 1:28). He made them with distinct physical traits, traits that complemented one another in such a way that they were able to conceive and bear children. What distinguishes men and women is, first of all, their anatomy. Any feelings that a person might have to the contrary are to be brought in line with their anatomy, and not the other way around.

There are further differences in the makeup of men and women. Generally speaking, men have greater

physical strength than women. I Peter 3:7 calls the husband to give honor to his wife “as unto the weaker vessel,” which implies that the man is stronger. There are also many passages of God’s Word that connect manhood with strength (Prov. 20:29; Is. 40:28-31; I John. 2:13-14). Even the world grudgingly recognizes this; there is a reason why women use a smaller basketball than men and why the ladies’ tees are moved forward on the golf course. As a whole women, do not possess the raw strength that men do.

Another difference in men and women is in regard to reasoning and emotions. Generally, men are guided more by reason and logical thinking and less by their emotions. Generally, women are guided less by reason and logic and more by their emotions. I have heard numerous women say, “There’s a reason why God didn’t call us women to serve in church office! We couldn’t handle these situations emotionally! We would let our emotions get in the way!” This is not a criticism of women; it merely acknowledges the differences in the way God has formed us.

Another of the key differences between men and women is the roles that He calls them to fill. I would argue that the chief role of a mature men can be captured by the word *leadership*. And the chief role of a mature women can be captured by the word *support*. God has given men and women different responsibilities, and then He has also created them in such a way that they are uniquely qualified to carry out these responsibilities.

This idea is biblical. In the beginning, God made the man first. He created Adam to be the head of the human race and the king of the creation. The woman was created after the man, out of the man, and for the man (I Cor. 11:8-9). She was uniquely designed to be a complement and helper to the man (Gen. 2:18, 20). This also is the emphasis of passages that address the calling of the husband as the head and leader of his wife (Eph. 5:23). This is the emphasis of passages that address the place of men as leaders in the church (I Cor. 14:34-35; I Tim. 2:11-14).

But what does it mean that men are to be leaders? For that we wait until next time.

What distinguishes men and women is, first of all, their anatomy. Any feelings that a person might have to the contrary are to be brought in line with their anatomy, and not the other way around.



News from our churches

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

Trivia question

Which Protestant Reformed Church in Classis East has been served by the largest number of different ministers? Answer later in this column.

Minister activities

Rev. Cory Griess preached his farewell sermon January 28 in Calvary PRC, after which a program was held for him and his family. The Griess family moved that week to the parsonage of First PRC of Grand Rapids. Rev. Griess was installed on February 11, with Rev. J. Slopsema leading the service. Rev. Griess preached his inaugural sermon that evening. May God provide for them as they leave one church family for another.

On January 21 the congregation of Calvary PRC of Hull, IA voted to extend a call to Rev. Brian Huizinga (Hope PRC, Redlands, CA) to be their next pastor.

On January 28 Candidate David Noorman announced his acceptance of the call extended to him from Southwest PRC in Wyoming, MI. We give thanks to God for supplying a pastor to our sister congregation and for opening up the way for Candidate Noorman to serve in the ministry! Candidate Noorman was examined at the special meeting of Classis East on February 28. Upon approval of his exam, his ordination and installation were scheduled for March 7 with Prof. Cammenga leading the special service.

Sister-church activities

BRF Conference: Join Reformed believers from around the world at the 2018 British Reformed Fellowship Family Conference at Hebron Hall in South Wales from Saturday, July 21, to Saturday, July 28. Prof. David Engelsma and Rev. Andy Lanning will lecture on “The Reformed Family—According to the Word of God.” More information and booking forms are available at <http://brfconference.weebly.com> or contact Briana Prins (616-214-2779; bprins@covenantchristianhs.org).

Congregational activities

The congregation of Byron Center, MI PRC is growing

enough that there is an increasing strain on the capacity of their sanctuary. Therefore, the Council approved an improvement of seating, lighting, and HVAC for their fellowship hall to make it more conducive for use during worship services. The Council planned to prepare a list of families to worship in the fellowship hall in rotation. A time to be thankful for the growth God has given!

At a special congregational meeting the members of Kalamazoo, MI PRC approved by a large majority the proposal to obtain drawings and artist renderings for a possible expansion project.

The Young Calvinists invited all young people and young adults to join them at the Special Needs Bible Study on February 15. The Bible study was to be held at Faith PRC at 6:30 P.M. There was a brief Bible study followed by a time of games and refreshments. All were encouraged to bring a game and a friend.

The dates for the 2018 Family Conference have been finalized! The Edmonton, Alberta PRC plans to host a Family Conference July 20-22, D.V. Hear from Revs. B. Huizinga, N. Langerak, and J. Marcus on the topic of ‘Seeking the Lord.’ Mark your calendars and plan to attend what promises to be a spiritually encouraging time of growth and fellowship with saints from Canada and abroad, as well as an opportunity to see some of the beauty that God has created in Canada. For more information or to register, please visit the website <https://edmontonfamilyconf.wixsite.com/conference2018>, or contact Scott Ferguson at EFC2018@outlook.com.

Cake and coffee were served downstairs after the morning service on February 4 as the congregation of First PRC, Grand Rapids welcomed Rev. Cory Griess and his family on their first Lord’s Day there. In honor of the Griess family, a church potluck is planned for Friday, March 9 at 6 P.M. in the church basement. Games and an open gym were to follow in the basement and school.

Young people’s activities

The young people of Grandville, MI PRC recently sold delicious fudge from Old Bell Bakery (Moelker Orchards) as a way to raise funds for the convention.

For those of us with a sweet tooth, that sounds like a tasty fundraiser!

Providence PRC of Hudsonville, MI young people hosted their annual Chili/Soup Cook-Off fundraiser in February. Delicious soup and chili recipes were accepted, with proceeds going toward the 2018 PR YP's Convention to be held in Minnesota.

Providence and Grandville young people both hosted fundraisers at Rainbow Grill in West Michigan, and Southwest PR YP's Pancake Breakfast is back on the schedule this year—March 24 from 8-10:30 A.M.

School activities

Genesis PTA of Lacombe, AB, Canada sponsored a bowling night at Ambassador Bowling Lane in Lacombe in February. The bowlers worked up an appetite, and satisfied that by meeting at Boston Pizza later in the evening!

The Loveland Youth Band thanked everyone who gave to the collections taken at the last two band and

orchestra concerts. Because of the generosity, the band was able to purchase 18 music stands and a storage cart. Now the students can look forward to using the stands regularly in rehearsals and concerts as their band program continues to grow.

Trivia answer

According to the PRC *Acts of Synod*, First PRC of Holland, MI and Southwest PRC in Wyoming, MI have had 12 different ministers in their history. Rev. Justin Smidstra recently became the 13th pastor of First PRC of Holland. And Candidate Dave Noorman recently accepted the call to be Southwest's 13th. More trivia next time.

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

Announcements

Resolution of sympathy

The Council and congregation of Loveland PRC express their Christian sympathy to Tim and Mary Bertsch, Brent Bertsch, and the family of Kevin and Nicole VanBaren in the death of Tim's mother, **Mrs. Madeline Bertsch**. “Therefore the redeemed of the LORD shall return, and come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy shall be upon their head: they shall obtain gladness and joy; and sorrow and mourning shall flee away” (Isaiah 51:11). “Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints” (Psalm 116:15)

Pastor Steven Key, President
Robert VanUffelen, Clerk

Resolution of sympathy:

The Council and congregation of Randolph PRC express their Christian sympathy to Rachel Buiter and Bob and Kris Buiter and family in the death of their mother and grandmother **Mrs. Joan Buiter**. May their comfort be found in God's Word where we read, “As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness” (Psalm 17:15).”

Rev. Erik Guichelaar, President
Kent Hoksbergen, Clerk

Resolution of Sympathy

The Council and congregation of Loveland PRC express their Christian sympathy to Gary and Valerie Kortus and Marissa Kortus and family in the death of Valerie's mother, **Mrs. Betty Postma**. “And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away” (Revelation 21:4).

Pastor Steven Key, President
Robert VanUffelen, Clerk

Resolution of sympathy

The Council and congregation of Georgetown PRC express their sincere sympathy to Don and Rose Poortvliet and family in the death of their mother **Mrs. Marian “Mary” Poortvliet**. We pray that they may receive comfort and assurance from the Word of God in Revelation 14:13: “And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.”

Rev. Carl Haak, President
David S. Miedema, Clerk

Announcements continued

Classis West

Classis West of the Protestant Reformed Churches will meet in Loveland PRC on Wednesday, March 7, 2018, at 8:30 A.M., the Lord willing. All delegates in need of lodging or transportation from the airport should notify the clerk of Loveland's consistory.

Rev. Joshua Engelsma, Stated Clerk

Teacher needed

The **Edmonton Protestant Reformed Christian School** is in need of a full-time teacher for the 2018-2019 school year. The school will be starting from grades 1-3, 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.

Reformed Witness Hour

Rev. Rodney Kleyn

Mar. 4 "Hope for Those Who Are Empty"

Ruth 2:18-23

Mar. 11 "Seeking Rest in Marriage"

Ruth 3:1-10

Mar. 18 "Boaz, a Willing Redeemer"

Ruth 3:11-18

Mar. 25 "Weep Not for Me, but for Yourselves"

Luke 23:28

Call to aspirants to the ministry

All young men desiring to begin studies in the Theological School of the Protestant Reformed Churches in the 2018-2019 academic year should make application at the March 15, 2018 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 (prca.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 15 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.