

CONTENTS

<i>Meditation</i>	The Vision of the Holy God REV. GARRETT ERIKS	411
<i>Editorial</i>	The Effectual Fervent Prayer...Synod 2017 PROF. RUSSELL DYKSTRA	414
<i>Letters</i>	● Antinomian Ambiguity ● Psalter Revision	417 422
<i>Believing and Confessing</i>	True Worship REV. RODNEY KLEYN	423
<i>O Come Let Us Worship</i>	The Reformation and the Lord's Supper in Worship (12e) REV. CORY GRIESS	427
<i>Activities</i>	News from Our Churches MR. PERRY VAN EGDOM	429

Cover picture of Delegates to Synod 2017

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The Vision of the Holy God

In the year that King Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory. And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke.

Isaiah 6:1-4

God sets this amazing vision of His holiness before Isaiah at the time of his ordination. The call of Isaiah to the prophetic office is perhaps the most dramatic in all of Scripture, rivaled only by the call of Moses at the burning bush or Paul on the road to Damascus.

We are told God sent this vision to Isaiah in the year King Uzziah died. Uzziah was one of the better kings who ruled over Judah, becoming king when he was only sixteen years old and ruling over Judah for fifty-two years. He began his rule doing what was right in God's eyes. He served God and experienced God's blessing. During his early years of rule Uzziah defeated the enemies of Judah in battle and was able to fortify the walls of Jerusalem. But Uzziah's rule ended on a sad note because his wealth, power, and success went to his head. In his pride, Uzziah entered the holy place of the temple, where only the priests were allowed to go, to do the work only the priests were allowed to do. When the priests tried to stop him, he became enraged. At this moment the Lord struck him with leprosy. The spiritual decline in Uzziah's life led to a spiritual decline in Judah.

God called Isaiah to bring a word of judgment to Judah because of her sins. Isaiah was sure to face stiff opposition to the Word of God he would declare. Because of this opposition, God reminds Isaiah to keep focused on the thrice holy God in all of his work.

Rev. Eriks is pastor of the Protestant Reformed Church of Hudsonville, Michigan.

This is an abridged form of the pre-synodical sermon preached in Hudsonville PRC, June 12, 2017.

This same Word of God comes to us at the beginning of the synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches, reminding us to keep our focus on the God who is holy, holy, holy. This amazing vision motivates us for the work. It compels men to the highest calling of living and working for God's glory. This vision qualifies us for our work. It also assures us that the cause of God's kingdom and gospel will prosper.

The Glorious God

In this vision, Isaiah sees the Lord sitting on a throne in His glory. What he sees is beyond description, evident from the fact that there is no description of God Himself. The revelation of God comes through the actions and words of the seraphim. Isaiah sees seraphim, who serve the purpose of drawing our attention to the holy God in all of His glory.

Who are the seraphim? The book of Isaiah is the only place in the Bible where we read of the seraphim. The fact that the seraphim were unfamiliar to Isaiah, as they are to us, serves to make the vision even more stunning. It appears these seraphim are angels of high rank who served the purpose of singing the praises of the holy God. In the vision they hover around the throne of the holy God because the Lord's garments fill the temple. The idea is that God's holy presence so dominated and filled the temple there was no room for the seraphim to stand around the throne. This serves to focus our attention, not on the seraphim, but on the God of all glory and majesty who sits on the throne.

In the presence of the holy God, the seraphim cover their eyes and feet with their wings, while flying with two of their wings. Also this serves the purpose of showing the greatness and majesty of God. God is so great and holy that even the holy, perfect angels cover their eyes and feet in His presence.

This description of the seraphim serves to point us to the Lord who sits on the throne in the temple. Take notice of His name: the Lord. This is the not the covenant name of God, Jehovah. This is the name that reveals God

as the sovereign ruler over all things. This is God's title, as when we speak of the president of our country and call him President Trump. Our God is the *Lord* God, who has the highest office in Israel and in the world. He is the Sovereign One who rules over all.

The Lord dwells in the temple. The temple is the place in the Old Testament that pictured the presence of God among His people. The temple was the Lord's house where God lived with His people. This Lord, revealed in His glory and majesty, is a God who is pleased to dwell with His people in love.

Around His throne, the angels call to each other, "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of His glory." The song of the angels reveals the glory of our God.

What does it mean that He is holy? We might think of the holiness of God in connection with His purity. In Him there is no darkness or sin. Although this is true, the holiness of God is much more than this. The word "holy" means "set apart." There is no one like God. This is the way the holy God is described in Isaiah 40:25, "To whom then will ye liken me or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One." He is greater than the seraphim, who exist to praise Him. The holy God is set apart from all creatures.

What sets Him apart? He is the triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God is a spirit, who cannot be seen or touched because He is not physical. He is holy as the powerful Creator of the heavens, the earth, and all that they contain. He is holy as the eternal God, set apart from all creatures by the fullness of His perfections. God possesses all these perfections and He is the source of these perfections.

He is the holy God who hates sin. His just anger is the reaction of His holiness against sin that is always an offense to Him. This comes out in the chapter, as Isaiah is sent for the purpose of blinding some by the preaching of the Word, as the just judgment of God upon the wicked in Judah. As the holy God, He is a consuming fire in His holy wrath against sin.

But there is another vital aspect to God's holiness. He is set apart as a covenant God of mercy and grace to His people. This also comes out in the vision in verses 6 and 7. The holiness of God exposed the sin of Isaiah and the people of Judah so that Isaiah confesses, "Woe is me! for

I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts" (v. 5). In the following verses one of the seraphim comes to him with a live coal from the altar of burnt offering declaring the forgiving mercy of God, "Thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged" (v. 7). God is set apart as a God who establishes, maintains, and perfects His covenant with His people in Jesus Christ. He is holy as the God who forgives and shows mercy to His church. How great is our God of mercy and grace! No one is like Him in the mercy He shows to His people who sin against Him!

As the seraphim confess the majesty of God's holiness, they repeat the attribute: holy, holy, holy! This repetition is for emphasis. Each "holy" intensifies the one before it. Only once in all of Scripture is a perfection of God emphasized in this way. It is found in this passage. We do not find anywhere that God is love, love, love. But God is holy, holy, holy. He is so holy that the whole earth is full of His glory. The earth is full of the manifestations of His glory—the creation, the events of history, and the existence of the church. What a majestic, amazing, awesome God we serve!

The Necessary Knowledge

May we keep this vision of God's holiness before our minds as we work in the service of Him at synod this year. This is God's reminder to us as we begin our work.

As Isaiah begins his ministry, God is saying in this vision that the most important thing for Isaiah to see is the holiness of God. This must be before him in all of his work. This is the idea of the vision. In this vision, God allowed Isaiah to see heavenly realities not normally visible to the earthly eye. This vision was a special revelation to Isaiah in which God said to him, "In all of your work keep this vision before your eyes. May this vision motivate you in your work."

Isaiah needed this motivation because he would face stiff opposition to the word of judgment he was called to preach in a church that was turning away from God and His Word. God was calling him to preach a message that would make him the most unpopular and hated man in all of Judah, at least among those who rejected God's Word. When Isaiah faced this, it was essential that this vision of God's holiness be branded on his heart so that

he would cease working in the fear of man. He must be motivated to persevere in the work. What would motivate him would be this vision of the holiness of God. God is calling him to live to glorify Him, the God who is holy, holy, holy.

In this vision, God gives us motivation. What we need more than anything else right now is to see the glory of our holy God. Without this, what we fall into is the motivation of doing things to please man or to seek our own glory and honor. This is a danger also for the men who are being examined by synod. May the motivation in the answers you give be the glory and honor of the God who is holy, holy, holy.

In this vision, God sets before us what we must be most concerned with in all of our work and in all of our conduct as a synod—the glory of the thrice holy God. God is glorified when we do things His way. We must not be concerned when it comes to protests and appeals with who wins and who loses. We must be concerned with God's glory. When we are concerned with the glory of God, we will do things in His way instead of attempting to manipulate or to get our way. God is glorified when we work together to understand and apply what God's Word and the confessions say about the issues before us.

We need the knowledge of God's holiness because seeing God's glory qualifies us for the work. This is what qualified Isaiah to be God's servant in Judah at this time. In the verses following the text, Isaiah goes from shattered to saying confidently, "Here am I; send me."

After seeing the vision of God's holiness, Isaiah was shattered by the knowledge of the people's sins and his own against God. He confesses his sin of having unclean lips. He says, "Woe is me!" The presence of the holy God brought him to see his sin. Does not this vision do the same for us? Isaiah wondered how he could possibly go forth preaching the Word of God. We might wonder the same. How can I be used for this work? I am too weak and too sinful. It is good if we enter into the work of synod with this kind of humility.

But God assured Isaiah of forgiveness with the words of verse 7. Then God asked the question, "Who will go for us?" Isaiah answered, "Here am I; send me." With this vision of God's holiness, the Lord forged Isaiah into a willing servant. Isaiah is willing to serve the Lord, know-

ing the strength was not found in himself but in the holy God who called him to the work.

As delegates to synod, we also are forged by the living, holy God to be faithful servants of His with this vision of God's holiness. We are qualified as those who know the holy God. We are qualified, not because we are gifted and wise enough, but because we are forgiven in the blood of Jesus Christ. The God who calls us to the work will equip and strengthen us for it. We are qualified as those who know God and His mercy. We are qualified as those who have been and are in the presence of this thrice holy God.


We need this encouragement because of the greatness of the work ahead of us. We cannot do this in our own strength. But we can do this in the strength of the holy God who gives us His Word and Spirit to do the work He has called us to do.

The Sure Success

The result of these words spoken by the seraphim was that the posts of the door of the temple moved and the house was filled with smoke. What an amazing result! When God appeared and His glory was declared, the inanimate doorposts and thresholds were moved by the presence of God! These things could not hear or make sense of these words. Yet, they were moved by the presence of God in the temple. The literal idea is that they were shaken. They began to quake where they stood.

Knowing this was God's work in the temple, we can be assured of the presence of the holy God to do the same thing in our churches and in the Synod of the PRC in 2017. This is the confidence we have as churches—not in men who are delegated and their collective wisdom. Our confidence rests in the holy God who shook the doorposts and the thresholds. We can be assured that if the presence of God shook that building, the presence of God will move His church and this synod so that decisions we make are good and pleasing to Him.

As we do the work, let us trust in the holy presence of God. Let us look to His Word and pray for His Spirit and blessing repeatedly. As we do our work, we will see the amazing glory of God that fills the whole earth. We have no doubt that this glory will be seen in synod.

Let us then keep our eyes fixed on this God about whom the seraphim sing, "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory." 

The Effectual Fervent Prayer...Synod 2017

Editor's note: The decisions of the 2017 Synod have been reported to the Protestant Reformed congregations in daily emailed reports, and are available online at prca.org. Therefore, this editorial makes no attempt to be a comprehensive report.

Prayer is a wonder. It is a privilege that God gives to His people whereby they communicate with God. It is an act of worship, clearly. A believer, a sinful, earthly creature, is given access to the courts of heaven. From this earth, he addresses God, the “wholly Other,” the glorious Creator, exalted far above all that He has made. He is the One before whom the angels, who are without sin, cover their faces and their feet and cry out continually, “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory” (Is. 6:3). And when a believer prays, God hears and pays attention to the words. And then consider that such a believer is only one of millions of believers who may be calling on God in prayer at that same time. Prayer is a miracle.

That God answers the prayers of His people is astounding. God is the all-wise, omniscient Lord of heaven and earth, who knows the situation of each and every believer, and who knows precisely what each one needs before any request is made. This God answers prayer. He forgives sin, gives grace, com-

forts, heals, blesses, all in answer to the prayers of His people.

The relationship between the prayers of believers and the counsel of God is mysterious, but real. God's counsel is His comprehensive, sovereign determination of all creatures and all events. Of this counsel, God Himself declares, “My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure” (Is. 46:10). And yet, God executes His counsel, if I may put it that way, using the prayers of His people.

The relationship between prayer and God's counsel is evident from Isaiah 38. The prophet Amos brought this message to king Hezekiah from Jehovah, “Set thine house in order: for thou shalt die and not live” (v. 1). Hezekiah, who had no son, prayed to God and “wept sore” at the cutting off of his line, the line of David. The prophet Isaiah soon came with this word from God, “I have heard thy prayer.... I will add unto thy days fifteen years” (v. 5). What God intended eternally, namely, that Hezekiah would live fifteen more years and have a son, God fulfilled. But notice how God used Hezekiah's prayer.

Believers pray much; they pray daily; they pray often. Admittedly, and sadly, *urgency* in our prayers is often low. It is not until the need is great, or the crisis severe, that we pray fervently—the fervency of which James wrote, “The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man

availeth much” (James 5:16).

The 2017 Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches that met in Hudsonville PRC June 13-21 saw and experienced the truth of James 5:16. This was evident, first, in the seven graduates from the Protestant Reformed Theological Seminary. This is the largest class ever to graduate from the seminary. These men entered seminary proper in 2013, having started pre-seminary Greek in 2011. They came in response to the work of the Spirit convicting them that they must pursue the gospel ministry. But before they came to seminary, the Spirit had put the desire for ministers into the hearts of Protestant Reformed members. In 2008 we saw three vacant congregations, in 2009 five vacancies, and in 2010 six vacant churches. The churches prayed earnestly that the King of the church would give men equipped by the Spirit for the work of the ministry of the Word. The Lord answered, sending nine men. The churches continued to pray for the seminary and the students. And the Lord answered, preserving seven of these men through their studies, internships, and synodical exams, until Synod 2017 could unanimously say of each: We declare you “to be a candidate for the ministry of the Word and Sacraments in the PRCA, eligible for a call on or after July 15, 2017.”

The churches prayed. The Lord

answered graciously. Should we now cease praying? Clearly not. These seven men need our continued prayers for wisdom and grace, for a pastor's heart, and for courage for the struggles ahead.

And the need for more ministers continues. There will be no seminary graduates in 2018. Three are currently in the class of 2019, but then, so far as we know now, the earliest there would be a graduate from the PRCA is four years later! By that year (2023), many vacancies could be created with ministers and professors (perhaps ten?) laying down the active ministry. Let us continue to pray!

The churches besought the Lord for missions, in particular the work in the Philippines. We asked the Lord to provide a man to be a missionary in the Philippines. The Lord answered, convicting Rev. Dan Holstege that he was called to this work. The churches continued to pray as they saw a family with four young children preparing to move to a foreign land and live in a different culture. God used these prayers to give the Holstes grace, and all the reports coming to synod are that God is sustaining them mightily. They are adjusting well.

Not only that, but the work is progressing. A denomination of churches is coming into its own—teaching the youth catechism, preaching the Heidelberg Catechism, holding regular orderly meetings of consistory and classis, and seeing the need for a seminary to train their own ministers for the future. Under the blessing of God, the Protestant Reformed Churches

in the Philippines are ready for and desire to establish a sister-church relationship with the PRCA. And Synod 2017, with joy, voted to establish such a relationship, to be confirmed after consulting with our sister churches in Northern Ireland and Singapore.

Shall we now leave out of our prayers the Philippines' churches and the work? Do the Kleyns and Holstes no longer need the Lord's strength and blessing? Ought we not rather have more fervent requests? We have even more reason to press the Lord that He would give us another missionary—the work is overwhelming, and the need for theological education expands. Ought we not pray earnestly that God blesses the new sister relationship, as well as the existing relationships for the blessing of all involved and for the glory of His name?

And shall we not pray too that God continues to bless our other contacts—in Germany, Namibia, South Africa, as well as our brothers and sisters in Australia (the Evangelical Presbyterian Church)? And must not we be fervently praying that God will bless other mission projects of individual churches in India and Myanmar, and that He will open doors in North America for a missionary? Without God's blessing, all these activities are of no value. Let us continue to pray!

Not all of the work of the synod was so positive as these many blessings discussed thus far. As was reported in the preview of the synodical agenda, ten protests and appeals were brought to the Synod of 2017. They involved doctrine—the

place of good works in our salvation; practice—admittance to the Lord's Supper and discipline; and worship—Psalter revision.

In all the synod's deliberations, it was evident that the churches had been praying, and were still praying as synod met, that the delegates would have wisdom and guidance. It was very obvious. Delegates came to the deliberative assembly with their own views and convictions on these protests and appeals. They were not all of one mind on how to deal with each of these significant matters. Indeed, one doctrinal issue resurrected (by protest) decisions of the Synod of 2016, at which the delegates were quite divided. What would happen at the Synod of 2017, we all wondered.

The people prayed earnestly and fervently, and the Lord heard. There is no other explanation. There is no other explanation for the unanimity on the matters in the committees that prepared advice through many hours of collective study and writing (and rarely was any material recommitted to the committee). There is no other explanation for the Christian love displayed and the brotherly concern expressed in the discussions, even though the views were sharply and clearly expressed on all sides. And there is no other explanation for the fact that virtually all the motions were adopted unanimously, or very nearly so. God gave wisdom and guidance. The outcome was not what all who were praying hoped for, as regards the actual decisions. But their many petitions for wisdom and guidance God heard.

So, do we cease praying now? The conflicts are over at the synodical level, and the issues settled. The hour of need for the denomination is over, it would seem.

Whether that is the correct perception or not, the burden of this editorial is to urge us neither to reduce the petitions nor to diminish the fervency. Is it not obvious that those who appealed and protested need our prayers, particularly when issues for many still need to be resolved personally? Is it not apparent that troubled congregations, consis-

tories, ministers, and members alike need our prayers for wisdom, humility, guidance, and brotherly love?

We are a praying people. In a time of crisis—the sudden death of a seventeen-year old, a ten-year old diagnosed with leukemia, an unexpected death of a wife or husband—we pray much for those touched by grief and hardship. For a while. All who have gone through such trials testify that they experienced God's grace, that the prayers of God's people held them up, and that God provided astounding strength

through the prayers. But then we get caught up in the affairs of everyday life, and we neglect praying regularly for these saints. And the loneliness and burden can become overwhelming without the prayers and encouragement of the saints.

Let us not allow that to happen. Beloved saints, be encouraged. God hears and answers prayer. Keep on praying for His indispensable blessing on the decisions of Synod 2017, and on all who are yet struggling. He will hear when we call. ☞



Candidates for the Ministry of the Word and Sacraments in the PRCA, 2017

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Antinomian Ambiguity

I read with interest Rev. Jonathan Mahtani's article in the May 15, 2017 *Standard Bearer* entitled, "Antinomianism: A Heresy Within." I especially appreciated Rev. Mahtani's urgent and pastoral warning against the "practical antinomianism" of using the fact of our freedom in Christ as an excuse to commit sin. The call to holiness as the proper response for gracious salvation was edifying for me personally, and I pray that it was for others as well. May Rev. Mahtani's love for the church's holiness be in every pastor's heart as we minister to Christ's bride.

However, I was uncomfortable with the true/false quiz at the beginning of the article. In my opinion, a few of the statements that were called antinomian could actually be interpreted as sound Reformed doctrine. For example, the article called the following statement antinomian: "Because I am saved by grace alone, good works have nothing to do with my salvation." I think there is some ambiguity in how this statement is formulated. What does "good works have nothing to do with my salvation" mean? If it means that God does not command His redeemed people to obey Him, or that good works are not even the fruit of salvation, then the statement is antinomian. But if the phrase means that good works do not cause my salvation in any way, that good works have no meritorious power in my salvation, that good works are not the means of my salvation, then the statement is not antinomian, but Reformed. In fact, passages such as Ephesians 2:8, 9 and II Timothy 1:9 teach that "good works have nothing to do with my salvation" in the sense that my good works do not save me in any way, but that God's grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone saves me.

This one example is enough to highlight my concern, although I found other statements in the true/false quiz to be similarly ambiguous, along with the statement of the error of antinomianism later in the article ("[Antinomianism] teaches that *works of the law are not a necessary part* of our salvation.").

As the article noted, this issue is especially important to the Protestant Reformed Churches (and her sister churches) right now because of the current controversy in the ecclesiastical assemblies over these questions. An

article on antinomianism in the *Standard Bearer* is a welcome sight if it helps the churches understand the issues better. However, my concern is that, at best, the ambiguous statements about antinomianism in the article are only going to confuse the issue; at worst, they will actually harm the gospel by charging the truth with being antinomian heresy.

Rev. Andy Lanning
Singapore

RESPONSE:

As Rev. Andy Lanning notes in his letter, this topic is extremely important in the PRCA at the present time. For that reason I am thankful for the opportunity he has given me to re-visit it and clarify any misunderstanding.

In my article entitled "Antinomianism: A Heresy Within," I wrote with the young readers of the *Standard Bearer* in mind. The true/false quiz at the beginning of the article was meant to catch their attention and draw them in. These statements were also for them to return to for careful examination, as a way to guard their hearts against the deceptive lie of antinomianism to which we are all prone. I pray that they have done so or will do so in light of Rev. Lanning's letter and my response, as well as the controversy touching this topic in our churches.

Before anything else, I want to re-emphasize a point that I included in my article. Neither that article nor this response should be viewed as a support to either side in the controversy within our churches. I do not mean to accuse anyone of teaching heresy. Nor do I mean to defend anyone who may be teaching heresy. Practical antinomianism was a real and present danger within our churches *before* the controversy. It is a real and present danger within our churches *amidst* the controversy. It will be a real and present danger within our churches *after* the controversy. These words are not for the winning of an argument, but rather for the warning of our people.

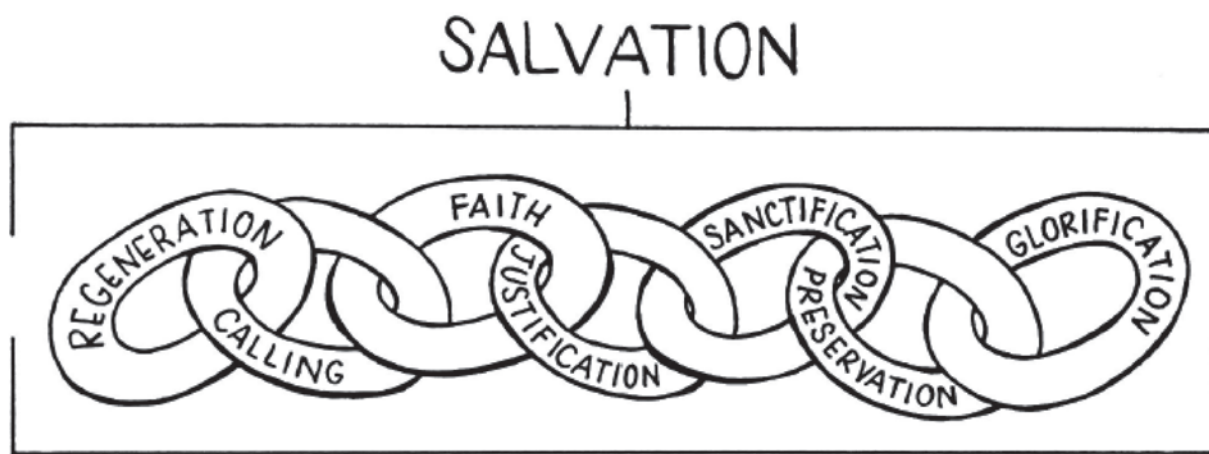
To begin, let me defend my article and the true/false statements in general. First, remember that I wrote this article with the young in mind. While I was conscious of all the readers of the *Standard Bearer*, I wrote for the rubric called *Strength of Youth*. Therefore, I tried to be brief and simple. That may have been the reason for some

ambiguity. Second, the nature of true/false questions is such that they are supposed to be a bit tricky. Admittedly, the statements were one-liners framed in such a way that, at first glance, they sound true. Yet upon careful consideration (especially after reading the article), the lie hidden within the statements should become evident. We must realize that the most deceptive lies are those mixed with truth, and the true/false quiz was meant to be a lesson in that. While I admit that my brevity and simplicity may have resulted in slight ambiguity concerning matters not the focus of my article (that is, whether we are saved *because* of our works), I respectfully disagree that the article “confused the issue” or “harm[ed] the gospel by charging the truth with being antinomian heresy.”

However, I do want to clarify any misunderstandings that may exist. If any young person is struggling to see how the true/false questions are all false, the best way to do so is by considering first the truth in the statement and then, secondly, the lie mixed in to corrupt the truth. Think about the first statement to which Rev. Lanning draws attention: “Because I am saved by grace alone, good works have nothing to do with my salvation.” What is the truth in that statement? As Rev. Lanning correctly points out in his letter, the truth is that good works do not *cause* my salvation, good works do not *merit* my

salvation, and good works are not *the means or instrument* used to give me salvation.

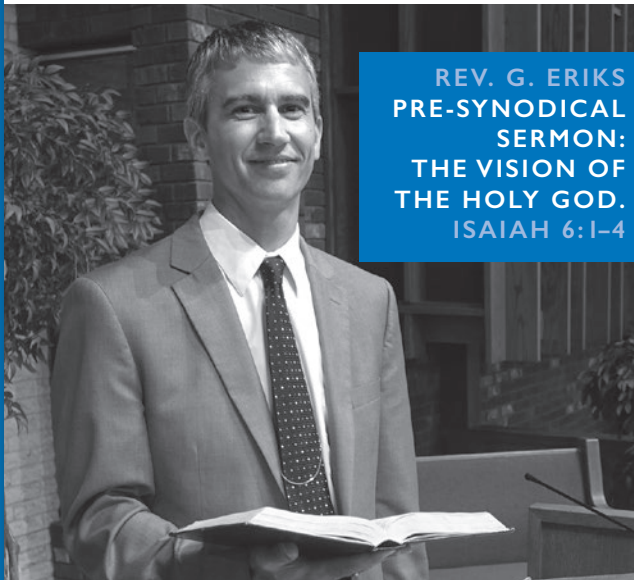
But is the statement as a whole true or is there falsehood mixed with the truth? May we say without any hesitation, “True. Good works have *nothing to do with my salvation*”? I contend that this is an overstatement and thus false. Good works *do* have a necessary part in my salvation—not the cause, the merit, or the means but the part in which Jesus Christ sanctifies, preserves, and glorifies me. Remember the basics of the Reformed faith, the essentials of Reformed doctrine. Salvation includes all of the golden links in the chain of salvation (see sketch below). Having elected us, God by His Spirit unites us to Christ, thereby giving us salvation in this important order: regeneration, calling, faith, justification, sanctification, preservation, and glorification. All of this is salvation. Do good works have anything to do with our salvation? Yes, indeed. They are what Christ in sanctification works in us, so that we want to do good works, so that we try to do good works, and so that we are active in doing good works. We earn none of this salvation by our good works, but after Jesus alone has without our works purchased it, His salvation of us includes infusing good works in us. Good works *do* have a necessary place in this order of salvation. Thus, it is false to say, “Good works have nothing to do with my salvation.”



Sketch by Mary Mahtani

Rev. Lanning rightly refers to Ephesians 2:8-9 to explain that works are not the cause of salvation, the way to merit salvation, or the means of salvation. “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.” The verse says that salvation is not of yourselves

and not of works. But the verse does not claim that good works have nothing to do with salvation. This is evident from verse 10 which immediately follows to explain this salvation further: “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before continued on page 422...



REV. G. ERIKS
PRE-SYNODICAL
SERMON:
THE VISION OF
THE HOLY GOD.
ISAIAH 6:1-4



OFFICERS





1



2



3



4



5



Brian
FEENSTRA



Jon
LANGERAK



Dave
NOORMAN



Joe
HOLSTEG



Stephan
REGENERUS



Matt
DE BOER



Justin
SMIDSTRA



PROF. B.
GRITTERS
THE
MINISTRY:
AN
EXISTENCE,
NOT AN
OCCUPA-
TION.



MONDAY, JUNE 19



WEDNESDAY, JUNE 21

ordained that we should walk in them.” Good works done for His glory are the very purpose God has for saving us!

To be even more specific, I am dead in sin according to my sinful nature. I cannot do any good works on my own. Even in sanctification, I cannot do good works on my own. It is not even that Christ gives me 99.99% of grace to do good works and I cooperate with my own .01% of free will to do good works. However, while 100% of the willing power and the doing power is from Christ, it is mysteriously also true that He makes me, according to the new man, want to do good works, choose to do good works, and actually do good works. In this sense, it is right to say, “I perform good works.” This is most certainly a necessary part of the salvation that Jesus works in me. Having earned for me all of salvation without my works, He then infuses salvation in me so that I do good works. If I deny this and say, “No, I don’t think this is necessary; I don’t think it is important, and I don’t think it is required; I don’t want this kind of salvation,” then I am antinomian. Then I do not have true faith. Then I must repent or perish.

Since many of us are reading this with the controversy at synod in mind, I conclude somewhat repetitively but fervently: This is *not* about who is right and who is wrong at synod! People of God, this is about your hearts and mine. Do you believe in Jesus, the true Jesus of the Scriptures? Then answer true or false:

_____ Jesus saves me by earning every part of my salvation without my works; but a necessary part of His saving work is sanctifying me so that I am willingly active in doing good works.

Our answer must be “true.” ☞

Psalter Revision

I write in response to an article in Vol. 93, No. 14 of the *Standard Bearer* [April 15, 2017] by Rev. Kuiper entitled “Psalter Revision: Governing Principles (3) Text (cont.).”

Depending on Synod 2017’s decision regarding the protest of a brother regarding the Psalter revision, this may become irrelevant, but I write regardless and will leave it to the discretion of the editor whether a response is warranted.

First, I wish to comment positively. I appreciate Rev. Kuiper’s articles regarding the principles the committee is following with the Psalter revisions. Breaking the principles down and providing examples has been very helpful in understanding what actually is going on with the revisions.

I write with concern as well. In the portion where he writes about archaic language, Rev. Kuiper writes they “stand ready to change them, as well as the word ‘ye,’ when they refer to people or places.” He goes on to give examples from Psalter #4. My concern boils down to this: Is changing this language a necessary change? Does this change benefit the church in the worship of God? In these cases at least, I do not think the change provides a benefit. It does not clarify the meaning. It does not make the sentence “flow” better.

It seems even detrimental, as the language of the Psalter currently is similar to that of the KJV, which language is beautiful and reverent. I dare say we all (members of the PRCA), as readers of the KJV, know the meaning of “ye” in these verses. I would argue that changing it should not be done when it does not provide a distinct benefit. Changing it just to change it because it is deemed archaic is unnecessary and, I would contend, detracts rather than benefits. In addition, an advantage of the use of this archaic language is the ability to distinguish singular from plural, something that is lost when changing to “you” and “your.”

I know our Psalter is not perfect, but I do have concerns. Changes in language bring to mind changes in the language of versions of the Bible and the language of prayer in the nominal church world, changes that seem never to have been for the better. So why make the changes if not needed? We are capable of understanding the language, even if it is deemed archaic.

Respectfully submitted,

Brian Hilt,

Member of Wingham PRC

Response to Brian Hilt

I thank Mr. Hilt for expressing both his positive comments about Psalter revision, and his concern regarding the change of pronouns from the archaic “ye, thou, thee, thy” to the more modern “you, your.”

Mr. Hilt’s concern regards part of the mandate that

the PRC Synod (and the synods of the FRC and HRC) gave its committee. Even before I was asked to be involved in this work, our synod was informed that updating archaic language would be included in this work, with one exception: “Replace when possible all instances of unfamiliar and archaic words. All pronoun references to the Lord will be retained in their Old English form” (*Acts of Synod 2015*, Art. 46, A, 3, a, 3, p. 46). The one exception implicitly made clear that other Old English pronouns would be considered for revision. Later, Synod 2016 approved this as one of the principles that guide the committee in its work: “Are there any archaic or unfamiliar words that should be replaced?”

Mr. Hilt’s basic question is whether this is necessary. For me to agree that this is unnecessary *in every instance*, so that we should not even face the question, would be to speak contrary to Synod’s wish and mandate. In my article to which Mr. Hilt responds, I was explaining how the committee is facing the question and implementing the principle where possible, without destroying the

rhyme. (As an update from my previous *SB* article, the committee is now recommending to keep “thee” at the end of the last stanza of Psalters 237-239, precisely because to change to “you” would destroy the rhyme. Because of this, we are also recommending to keep all the archaic pronouns the same in those Psalters, so that we are not singing “you” and “thee” in the same song with reference to the same antecedent.)

Regarding Mr. Hilt’s point that the archaic pronouns help distinguish singular from plural, my response is that a pronoun usually has as an antecedent a noun, and to my knowledge that noun is found in the Psalter numbers. Whether the noun is singular or plural will help us know whether the “you” is singular or plural. I can appreciate that in some verses of *Scripture*, (Luke 22:31-32 as a case in point), the distinction between “thee” and “you” is important for an accurate understanding of the text. But in the revised Psalter, the antecedent will be obvious.

—Rev. Doug Kuiper 

BELIEVING AND CONFESSING

REV. RODNEY KLEYN

True Worship

Lord’s Day 35

Question 96. What doth God require in the second commandment?

Answer. That we in no wise represent God by images, nor worship Him in any other way than He has commanded in His Word.

Question 97. Are images then not at all to be made?

Answer. God neither can nor may be represented by any means. But as to creatures, though they may be represented, yet God forbids to make or have any resemblance of them either in order to worship them or to serve God by them.

Question 98. But may not images be tolerated in the churches as books to the laity?

Answer. No; for we must not pretend to be wiser than God, who will have His people taught, not by dumb images, but by the lively preaching of His Word.

The first commandment, “Thou shalt have no other gods before me,” teaches us that there is only one God whom we are to worship. The

second commandment teaches us *how* we are to worship Him. This commandment has special application to the church and people of God. The first is broader, calling all to worship the one true God, whereas the second comes to those who do worship the true God, and tells them *how* they are to worship Him. Always the temptation for

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Israel in the Old Testament was to introduce new forms of worship, such as images, and only subsequent to image worship did they fall into the worship of different deities.

There are three things in the commandment itself that show the seriousness of the sin of image worship. First, the length of the commandment. Second, the jealousy of God expressed in the commandment for how we worship Him; “I the LORD thy God am a jealous God.” Third, the judgment threatened on those who do not worship Him in the proper way and the blessing promised to those who do.

Principles of Worship

Three principles concerning worship may be drawn from this commandment.

The first is that God demands that we worship Him *corporately*, with other believers. This commandment is addressed to the nation of Israel, not just to individuals. The God who has revealed Himself in Scripture, reveals Himself as the Savior of a church, not just of individuals. In the Old Testament, God called a people, the nation of Israel, to be His, and He chose to dwell with them in the land of Canaan. Their worship of Jehovah, as they kept the feast days and came to the tabernacle and later the temple, was a corporate activity. In the New Testament, this corporate aspect of salvation comes to expression in our life in the church, which is called the body of Christ. In the church God distributes different gifts to the different members that are for the profit of the whole. In that church He establishes an order, under the governance of the officebearers (minister, elders and deacons). To that church He gives the means of grace, the preaching and the sacraments, to be administered for the gathering of His elect and the salvation of His people. The church, that is the locally established congregation, is called “the temple of God” in the New Testament (I Cor. 3:16, 17). All of this means that we need to gather with the people of God for worship and that, as we do, God comes in a unique and saving way by His Word and Spirit to dwell with His own. So also, the Scriptures teach that we should not forsake “the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is” (Heb. 10:25). Worship is corporate, and this commandment addresses the corporate worship of the church.

The second principle contained in this commandment

is that worship is a *deeply spiritual* activity. Behind the prohibition of image worship is the truth that God is a spiritual Being who cannot be represented by physical things. In John 4:24, 25, speaking to the Samaritan woman at Jacob’s well, Jesus says, “God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.” As Spirit, God is invisible; He cannot be seen and has no physical form. Whereas all other spirits are created spirits, God is the eternal Spirit who is infinite and omnipresent. In Deuteronomy 4:15, Moses warns the people, “Take ye therefore good heed unto yourselves; for ye saw no manner of similitude on the day that the LORD spake unto you in Horeb out of the midst of the fire: lest ye corrupt yourselves, and make you a graven image.” In effect, Moses is saying to Israel, “You saw nothing but smoke and fire on Mt. Sinai, and these were not to hide the Being of God from you, but represented the incomprehensible majesty and glory of God.”

Because God is the infinite Spirit, our worship must be “in spirit.” It may not be a simple repetition of rituals and practices, but must be an expression of adoration, faith, love, and gratitude from the heart. God demands more than practice. He says, “Love me with all your heart, mind, soul and strength.” This means that as we come in worship before God, we must not form any earthly conception of Him, but must fill our minds with biblical descriptions of His character, and must believe these. There is, of course, the danger of creating mental images of God. Judah did this when she imagined God was blind and deaf to her woes, and that His arm was too short to save them (Is. 40:27; 59:1). Often we do the same when we limit the Being of God to our experiences, rather than believing His promises. Spiritual worship is an expression of faith in God as He has revealed Himself in all His glorious attributes in Scripture.

The third principle that we see in this commandment is expressed in the Catechism this way, “That we in no wise...worship Him in any other way than He has commanded in His Word.” This has been called, in Reformed circles, *the regulative principle of worship*. Jesus Himself teaches this principle when He adds the two words, “in truth,” in John 4. God must be worshiped “in truth.” The reason that we may not worship God with images is that they are not true representations of God. The only way we should and may worship Him, then,

is the way that He has commanded us. God demands not only *that* we worship Him, but also places demands on *how* we worship Him. Our worship must reflect the character, the glory, and the majesty of God.

The alternative is that man worships God according to his own will and imagination. Then man comes to God with the attitude, “I’ll bring to God whatever I please.” The outstanding example and contrast of this in Scripture is the worship of Cain and Abel. Abel brought what God demanded—a lamb for sacrifice, whereas Cain brought “of the fruit of the ground.” Abel’s was a worship in faith (Heb. 11:4), whereas Cain’s was “will-worship.” Such “will-worship” has a history in the church, not only in Old Testament Israel, but also over the last 2,000 years. Rome says that since God is so exalted, and since the worship of God “in spirit” is so difficult, we must bring God down to the level of the people (this is the idea of images as “books to the laity”). Today, you will hear something like this: “We are seeker-sensitive,” which is another way of saying, “We worship God according to what those who come in worship want, rather than what God’s Word demands.” All of this, of course, is backward. In worship, we are not first seeking God, but He is seeking us, and He seeks such as worship Him in spirit and in truth (John 4:24, 25). Worship is not us bringing God down to our level, but worship is the wonder of God, through the blood of His Son, bringing us up to Himself. In worship we meet with God, yes, but that comes only through the washing away of the filth of our sins so that we are fit to fellowship with the perfect and sinless God. And so, the only approach and possibility of worship is through the cross of Jesus Christ, what the book of Hebrews calls, “the new and living way,” which is “by the blood of Jesus” (Heb. 10:19, 20).

Elements of Worship

Following these principles, Reformed worship follows a careful liturgy in which we ask of each element of worship, “Has God commanded this in Scripture?” There is no need for us to be creative as we come to God in worship, for God has expressly set down in Scripture how we are to worship Him. What, then, are the biblically prescribed elements for worship? Basically, there are three.

The first element of worship is corporate *prayer*. God has given the gift of prayer not only to individuals, but also to the church. Jesus Himself teaches us to pray in the

plural, “Our Father....” Hence, the early church gathered together for prayer (Acts 2:42). When we are gathered publicly and the minister prays, this is not his personal prayer, but is a representative prayer. In this prayer, the pastor brings the people of God into the presence of God, and so brings to God the praise and petitions of the congregation as a whole. An aspect of our prayer, in worship, is *song*. The book of Psalms is a book of prayers to God, intended by God for the use of the church in worship. The New Testament speaks of our “admonishing one another” by singing together (Col. 3:16). The singing of the church should not take the form of a performance—one person singing to the rest—but should be the corporate lifting of prayer and praise to God in the songs that He has given.

The second element of worship prescribed in Scripture is *giving*. Paul says in I Corinthians 16:2, “On the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.” This passage prescribes the collection of money during the public worship of the church on the Lord’s Day. There are, basically, two causes that we support through giving in the church. One is the work of the church itself in the preaching of the gospel and the support of the ministry and missions (I Cor. 9:14). The other, which Paul is referring to in I Corinthians 16, is the collection of alms for the care of the needy. How often, when we put money into the collection, do we think of it as worship? Certainly, God demands that we do this from the heart with generosity and cheerfulness! (II Cor. 9:7).

The third main element of worship prescribed in Scripture for the church is the *administration of the means of grace*, that is, the preaching of the Word and the celebration of the sacraments. “And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them” (Acts 20:7). Early in the church’s history, on Sunday, believers gathered corporately to “break bread,” that is, keep the Lord’s Supper and to hear Paul preach. This element of worship, the administration of the means of grace, is the primary element of worship because in this God speaks to us. These are not our responses to God, our expressions of worship, but are the ways that God comes and speaks to us. Our prayer, our praise, and our giving are responses to what God has given us in the gospel.

As you look for a church that faithfully worships God, the primary thing for which you seek should be the faithful preaching of the Word of God. Romans 10 tells us how important this is when it says, "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." In worship, we do not come together to impress one another, but rather we come to be impressed with God Himself. Sadly, today in many churches where the worship is labeled "contemporary," the preaching of the gospel has fallen away and the church has slipped into ignorance and has departed from the Word of God. Though preaching may seem foolish to man, it is the tried and true, as well as the prescribed way for the preservation of the church. That which is foolish to man is the power of God unto salvation. This, and not the friendliness of the people or the programs in which I can get involved, is above all else what I should seek out in the church.

Motivations for Worship

The motivation for worship is expressed in this commandment both negatively and positively: "for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me. And showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments."

The result of disobedience to this commandment is that God will justly judge the church in her generations, visiting the sins of one generation on the next. Quite simply, this means that if one generation refuses to worship God as He commands, the next generation will be affected, and apostasy will come into the church. God is jealous of His name and of the allegiance and love of His people. And note, improper worship is a form of hatred for God. No matter how much Israel said, as they bowed to the golden calves, "Oh, but we love Jehovah who brought us up out of Egypt," still in their hearts they hated God because they did not worship Him as He had prescribed.

The commandment also expresses the motivation for worship positively in the promise of God to show mercy to thousands who love Him and keep His commandments. Just as the church who loses the preaching of the gospel and worships God according to its own desires will be punished generationally, so the church

that worships as God commands will be kept and blessed generationally. The method for keeping the youth of the church is not to reach them where they are at, but to bring them up to God through the preaching of the gospel and cross of Jesus Christ.

May God preserve among us a commitment not only to worship Him alone, but also to worship Him *how* He has commanded in His Word.

Questions for Discussion

1. In the first commandment God demands exclusive worship. What does He add to this in the second commandment?
2. Why cannot images be made of God (I Tim. 6:16; John 4:24; Jer. 23:24)?
3. Is the sinful heart of man able to think rightly about God and, hence, able to worship God correctly?
4. Why is image worship attractive to the human heart?
5. Give examples from Scripture of men who tried to worship God by their own methods and were punished for this.
6. What untrue mental images of God might we be tempted to make as we come to worship Him?
7. Which of these three is the correct view of worship, and why? 1) Anything is permissible, 2) If it is not expressly forbidden in Scripture it is permissible, or 3) Only what is commanded in Scripture is permissible.
8. Examine the different elements in the liturgy (order of worship) in your congregation, and find where in Scripture they are prescribed.
9. What makes the preaching of the gospel the most important element of worship? How is preaching worship?
10. How do we know that this commandment applies to other human inventions in worship, and not only to the use of images?
11. How does the threat of the second commandment work itself out in the New Testament church?
12. Why is corporate worship important? How has it helped you throughout your life? ☞

The Reformation and the Lord's Supper in Worship (12e)

Introduction

Public, corporate worship is a covenantal assembly in which God the Sovereign enters into a holy dialogue with His people at His command and under the government of His will. We have seen that God has commanded that the sacraments be used as a part of this dialogue. God speaks in the sacraments, and we respond. We have seen how our Reformed fathers captured this notion of the holy dialogue of worship in the Reformed Forms for Baptism and the Lord's Supper. We have seen that the unique way He speaks to us in the sacraments requires a certain type of response.

In this article and the next I would like to focus on the Lord's Supper specifically, and point out that the Lord's Supper *in the dialogue of worship* was not always understood the way we have described it. In the Middle Ages the understanding of the Lord's Supper deformed into something pagan and wicked, and in the Romish church it remains in that deformed state today. Led by Lord's Days 29 and 30 of the Heidelberg Catechism, I want us to see how important the Reformation of the sixteenth century was, not only for the restoration of the doctrine of the Lord's Supper generally, but also for the doctrine of the Lord's Supper *in worship*.

An Element From Man's Side?

The effect of the Reformation on the Lord's Supper *in worship* can be seen by observing the way the Roman Catholic Church viewed the Lord's Supper *in worship* before the Reformation, and the way she still views it. First of all, it is worth pointing out that long before the Reformation, the church had understood that worship was a holy meeting of God and His covenant people. That reality had lived in the consciousness of the New

Testament church going all the way back to the time of our Lord.¹ Ever since Jesus said, "where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them," the church knew this about corporate worship. Ever since Christ's appearances on the Lord's Day as the disciples were gathered in the upper room for worship, the church understood public corporate worship was a covenantal meeting between God in Christ and His people.

However, as the church of the Middle Ages began to identify herself more and more by the traditions of men rather than God's Word, she viewed worship increasingly as a meeting not so much where God graciously speaks and His people respond, but where God's people come to speak and give to God, and where God might say a few things in response to man.

The worship service became a time when the members would come together to appease God by what they did. The service was a time to buy God off, where they could appease His wrath. And so the parts of the service where God spoke to them, which were supposed to be the heart of the service, began to die off. The preaching began to fall away more and more. The messages got shorter and shorter. The Word of God was read in the service in a language that the people could not understand. The point was not that as the sovereign God He condescended to His elect people in grace to speak to them in His law and gospel. The people were not to come as children beckoned to the family gathering by the sovereign voice of Father. Rather, they were to come more or less as pagans to appease their deity.

And so it did not matter if the Word was read in a language the people could not understand. There was no need for sermons to edify the people of God. That was not the point. Even the reading of Scripture was more a work to appease God—to merit from Him. The people

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Previous article in this series: March 15, 2017, p. 277.

¹ It lived in the consciousness of the church going all the way back to Adam and Eve in the Old Testament. I limit myself to the New Testament church here.

were there simply to show they were offering the appeasement.

Especially they were there to appease God by offering to Him a sacrifice—the sacrifice of Jesus’ own body and blood as an atonement for sin. In the Roman Catholic Church, the teaching became and still is that the Romish priest has the power to call the actual body and blood of Jesus down from heaven and change the bread and wine into the physical body and blood of Christ. What is more, the teaching is that, after the priest does that, in a ceremony that is nowhere to be found in Scripture, he re-sacrifices Christ who has now come down upon the altar at the word of the priest. And that re-sacrificing of Christ pays for the continued sins of the people. So the priest holds up the bread and wine that he thinks is Jesus Himself, as though he were offering it on behalf of the people to God to appease His wrath for sin. At the same time, the people bow down to the bread and wine and worship it, for they believe it to be the very body and blood of Christ.

That became the heart of the appeasement. And, therefore, this distorted view of the Lord’s Supper came to be the center of the appeasement service. The Lord’s Supper was no longer an element where God speaks to His people. But it became an element in which the people, through the mediation of the priest, offered this re-sacrificed Jesus to God to appease His wrath for sin. It was man’s work to pay for his sins, and so the Lord’s Supper became an element mainly from man’s side, giving a sacrifice to God.

This teaching affected the whole way the worship place was set up. The table became an altar for the making of real physical sacrifices. And it stood not on the ground level by the people, as though God was condescending to His people, but on the highest level of the stage and back against the wall, because what was happening on it was not from God to us, but from us to God. When the Lord’s Supper was performed, the priest did not stand facing the people as though He represented God giving His grace to His people. But God, as it were, stood at the altar with His back to the congregation, for the priest was representing the people offering a sacrifice to God.

The partaking of the elements was not that important, because it was about offering to God, not God giving to us. In fact, throughout history there were many times where Rome did not even give the elements to the people.

And at other times, she only gave one of the elements. The sacrament was not viewed as an element so much from God’s side to us, but from our side to Him. What mattered was that you were offering this sacrifice to God to atone for your sins. That is why in the Roman Catholic Church you do not go to worship, you go to mass—to offer the sacrifice for your sins to God.

Doctrine Affects Practice

Why did the Lord’s Supper in worship devolve into this? The central reason is that Rome teaches, as the Heidelberg Catechism says, “the living and dead [dead believers also need their sins paid for, according to Rome, because they are being punished in purgatory], have not the pardon of sins through the sufferings of Christ, unless Christ is also daily offered for them by the priests.” The heart of Roman Catholic doctrine is a denial of the gospel found in Scripture, the gospel of the once-for-all atoning death of the Lord Jesus Christ upon the cross. The heart of the Roman Catholic message is that atonement has not been fully made. It must continually be made for you. The cross of Christ 2,000 years ago was effective, but only as it is repeated again and again for redemption. When Jesus cried out on the cross, “It is finished,” it was finished maybe for the moment; but then you continued to sin, and so you need the sacrificial act repeated over again.


And the message is, you are dependent upon Rome’s priests to make that atonement anew for your sin. No one else on earth has the power to call down Christ out of heaven and re-sacrifice Him as a non-bloody sacrifice for what you have done. To whom will the omnipotent Christ submit but to the voice of Rome’s priests! They alone have this power to make Him leave His exaltation and come again into His humiliation thousands of times. As the most updated version of the Roman Catholic Catechism says, “As often as the sacrifice of the cross... is celebrated on the altar, the work of our redemption is carried out.”² This teaching is the reason why this change *in worship* took place.

In addition, the answer to the question why Rome views worship this way and the Lord’s Supper in worship this way is that Rome teaches not only that the one

² Libreria Editrice Vaticana. *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Liguori: Liguori Publications, 1994), 343.

sacrifice of Christ on the cross is not enough to atone for sin, but also that our own meritorious works make us worthy before God. And this fits together. According to Rome, in the worship service, God is not giving to *us* in the Lord's Supper but we are offering something to *Him*; we are even offering *Christ Himself* to God as a sacrifice, as our meritorious act. In the biblical understanding, however, we do not offer Christ to God as a

sacrifice; *God* offers Christ to Himself. In the Romish understanding, *God* does not give Christ as a sacrifice for sin to His people; *the people* give Christ to God as a sacrifice for sin. And we are meriting by our offering of Christ through the priest on the altar as sacrifice for sin. The worship offering is from our side and we are earning.

Next time we will observe how the Reformation righted the ship. 

NEWS FROM OUR CHURCHES

MR. PERRY VAN EGDOM

Trivia Question

Once upon a time there was a Protestant Reformed congregation whose members all lived in one U.S. State and their church building was in another State. Do you know what town they worshipped in? Answer later in this column.

Denominational Activities

Classis East noted with thanks the work of its former stated clerk, Mr. Jon Huisken, for his faithful labors over the past 40 years.

The annual Synod of the PRC convened June 13 in Hudsonville, MI PRC. A large and weighty agenda was to be treated by the delegates. Seven students underwent examination, with all gaining synod's approval.

Our three seminary professors are approaching the age at which they must be replaced. Synod 2015 decided that Synod 2017 should appoint a replacement for Prof. R. Dykstra, and Synod 2019 and 2021 for the other two professors. The Theological School Committee recommended that Synod 2017 appoint a replacement from a nomination of Revs. G. Eriks, D. Kuiper, and A. Lanning. Synod chose Rev. D. Kuiper, with Rev.

A. Lanning as alternate. If both men decline, next year's synod repeats the process.

For more of this year's synod and its decisions, read Prof. R. Dykstra's editorial in this issue and visit prca.org for the daily reports on synod's actions.

Congregational Activities

The Council of the Edgerton, MN PRC held a special congregational meeting after their Ascension Day service, deciding to replace the main level windows in their parsonage.

The congregation of Heritage PRC, Sioux Falls, SD voted to replace all the shingles on the church building soon with monies from the Building Fund.

School Activities

The Western Michigan All-Schools Band Concert (including band students from Adams, Covenant CHS, Heritage, and Hope) was held in the new Hudsonville HS Auditorium in late May. Many joined the bands in praise to God as they concluded another school year!

The Hope PRCS held a Work Bee recently with volunteers working on the ceiling, renovating the landscaping, and cleaning and organizing the bus barn.

Genesis Protestant Reformed

School in Lacombe, AB, Canada completed its tenth year of covenant education in June! In celebration and thanksgiving for this milestone all school supporters were invited to a Tenth Anniversary Program on June 5. There were special numbers from the school children, a slideshow, a few short speeches, and a display table set up. Dessert and refreshments followed. It was a joyous evening of reflection, praise, and gratitude to God for all His bountiful gifts!

Minister Activities

Rev. Ronald Hanko, pastor in Lynden, WA PRC underwent surgery in mid-May, occasioned by a growth on his appendix. The surgery was lengthy and termed successful, and recovery will likely take months. We pray that the Lord who gives and takes health will grant that recovery. Rev. Arie den Hartog helped the congregation in Lynden, WA for more than two months. Pray for the Hankos and the Lynden congregation during this difficult time.

Rev. Cory Griess declined the call extended to him by Southwest PRC in MI. On May 21 Southwest called Rev. Nathan Decker be their next pastor. On June 25, he declined the call. Rev. Carl Haak declined the calls he had received from Byron Center, MI PRC to be home mission-

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

ary and from First PRC of Holland, MI. Doon, IA PRC extended a call to Rev. Heath Bleyenbergh to be missionary to the Philippines. On June 25, he declined their call. Immanuel PRC of Lacombe, AB, Canada called Rev. Cory Griess due to the fact that its pastor, Rev. T. Miersma is retiring soon. On June 18 Rev. Griess declined this call. Rev. N. Decker also declined the call from Zion PRC.

Mission Activities

The Steering Committee of Provident Christian Church of Marikina, Philippines decided that beginning July 2 they will have two full worship services, with an offering for the General Fund in the first service and an offering for the Benevolent Fund in the second service.

The regular meeting of the Classis of the PRCP convened June 12 at the Berean PRC.

Missionary-pastor Rev. Daniel Kleyn reports the rainy season has begun, with high humidity and often an inch of rain per day.

Trivia Answer


The tiny congregation whose members lived in South Dakota worshipped in the small town of Forbes, North Dakota, a stone's throw north of the SD/ND border. The following is taken from a Forbes centennial book:

The Ebenezer Reformed Church

had its beginning in December of 1956 when seven families separated from the German Reformed Church in Leola, South Dakota. They were seeking a purer teaching and manifestation of Reformed doctrine. This small group existed as an independent body for a time under the leadership of Rev. H. Mensch. They met first in the parsonage basement in Leola and then in a small schoolhouse located three miles south of Forbes. When the Rev. Mensch left the group in the summer of 1957, they continued their meetings with the help of Rev. G. Lubbers, Missionary in the Protestant Reformed Churches of America. During much of this time, they met in a schoolhouse located about seven miles west of Frederick, South Dakota. In June of 1960, this group was admitted into the Protestant Reformed Fellowship and became the Ebenezer Protestant Reformed Church. This group, along with a sister church in Isabel, South Dakota, tried without success to obtain a minister. In October of 1965, they obtained the church building from the Lutheran congregation of the Free Lutheran Church near Ashley, North Dakota and moved it to Block 2, Lot 9 and 10 in Forbes. At this time there were eight families and several individuals in the congregation. In July of 1966, disaster struck in the form of a tornado which moved the church off its foundation and damaged it extensively. The members of

the congregation met temporarily in the Forbes gym while repairing the damage to their building. By the end of August, they were back in their church, though the steeple was never replaced. For many years, the congregation continued to meet, although they were without a pastor of their own. They received occasional visiting pastors as well as summer seminary students. The membership of the congregation dwindled slowly until it reached three families and a few individuals. Finally in October of 1973, their call for help was answered, and in February of 1974 Rev. Mark Hoeksema became their first pastor. He remained in Forbes until July 1976.

Shortly thereafter the congregation in Forbes disbanded. The church and furnishings were sold to a nearby Hutterite colony. Rev. Rodney Miersma preached the last Sunday service in Forbes, in the home of one of the members. Members of the congregation sold their farms and moved to Loveland, CO, Isabel, SD, and Grand Rapids, MI. "Their love for the truth was greater than the love for their farms." Their older organ ended up with Rev. Miersma, the newer one in the church at Isabel, SD, and the communion set went to Trinity PRC in Katy, TX.

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Resolution of Sympathy

■ The Council and congregation of Grandville PRC extend our Christian sympathy to Mary Kaiser, Tim and Joan Kaiser and their family in the death of

HARRY KAISER

on May 28, 2017. "Cast thy burden upon the LORD and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved" (Psalm 55:22).

Rev. K. Koole, President
Mr. Herm DeVries, Assistant Clerk

Resolution of Sympathy

■ The Council and congregation of Georgetown PRC express their sincere sympathy to Chad and Jenn Richards in the death of their mother, **MRS. LOIS RICHARDS.**

We pray that they may receive comfort and assurance from the Word of God in Psalm 121:1 and 2, "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the LORD, which made heaven and earth."

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

Resolution of Sympathy

■ The Council and congregation of Georgetown PRC express their sincere sympathy to Doug and Lisa Lubbers, Kendra and Alex Overbeek, Ali Lubbers, and Carly Lubbers, along with their entire family in the death of their daughter and sister,

SAMANTHA LUBBERS.

It is our prayer that they and their extended family may receive comfort from the Holy Spirit in Psalm 23: 5-6: "Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever."

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

Wedding Anniversary

■ Praising God for His beautiful gift of marriage,

REV. AUD and ALVA SPIENSMA

celebrated their 40th wedding anniversary on May 27, 2017. Their children rejoice with them, and praise God for His continual faithfulness to them. We are blessed to see the love they have for each other throughout the years, and are thankful for the example they have set forth. The words of their wedding text: "That ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 15:6). It is our earnest prayer that they may continue to glorify God together in their marriage and walk with Him for many more years to come.

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|--|--|
| ✿ Tom and Shauna Spiensma
Aaron, Ethan, Justin,
Morgan, Quinton | ✿ Eric and Alicia Gritters
Camden, Brennan, Olivia,
Decklan |
| ✿ Brad and Esther Langerak
Carter, Aubrey, Luke, Ava | ✿ Tim and Jessica Ondersma
Riley, Avery
Byron Center, Michigan |
| ✿ Andrew and Michelle Spiensma
Grace, Sophia, Josiah, Annaliese,
Judah | |

Wedding Anniversary

■ In thankfulness to our heavenly Father for covenantal blessings, we rejoice with our parents, grandparents and great grandparents, **WILLIAM and JUDITH BOOTH,**

who celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary on June 13, 2017. We give thanks to our Lord for the years He has given to them and for His covenant faithfulness through their guidance and teaching. "For the LORD is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations" (Psalm 100:5).

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|---|---|
| ✿ Chuck and Sara Booth
Josh and Kelly Krikke
Caden, Jackson, Madeline,
Grace, Lucy
Lindsey Decker
Liam, Claire
Charlie and Nichole
Abel, Silas
Victoria | ✿ Jeff and Cathy Booth
Bill and Amanda Booth
Makayla, Hailey, Bill
Marc and Sarah DeBoer
Kristen, Karli, Grant
Michael and Leah Booth
Adelynn, Elsie, Emma
Austin and Rachel Naber
Grand Rapids, Michigan |
|---|---|

Wedding Anniversary

■ With joy and gratitude to their heavenly Father,

RONALD and LINDA CORSON

celebrated their 40th wedding anniversary on June 16, 2017. We are thankful for the years that the Lord has graciously given them and pray that He will continue to bless their marriage now and in the years ahead. "It is a good thing to give thanks unto the LORD, and to sing praises unto thy name, O most High" (Psalm 92:1).

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|---|--|
| ✿ Jon and Melissa Lubbers
Travis, Braden, Connor, Mekenzie | ✿ Rhonda Corson
✿ John and Anna Heyboer
Lily, Zack
Grand Rapids, Michigan |
| ✿ Chad and Michelle Corson
Deeana, Payton, Alden, Colin, Nolan | |

Wedding Anniversary

■ With thanksgiving and praise to God for His covenant faithfulness, we rejoiced with our parents and grandparents,

JIM and BARB HUIZINGA,

as they celebrated 50 years of marriage on June 16, 2017. We are thankful for their godly example and the instruction that they have given to us over the years. It is our prayer that the Lord will continue to bless them with many more years together. Psalm 36:5: "Thy mercy, O LORD, is in the heavens; and thy faithfulness reacheth unto the clouds."

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|---|--|
| ✿ Michael and Shari Bosveld
Jared and Lydia Bosveld
Zach and Annica Kuiper
Katelyn, Justin, Joshua, Emma | ✿ Vance and Sue Grasman
✿ Tom and Kristin Huizinga
Colton, Brooklyn, Kenzie
✿ Brad and Sara Schipper
Caleb, Alexa, Paige, Ella
✿ Laura Huizinga
Grand Rapids, Michigan |
| ✿ Brad and Julie Schwarz
Elyssa, Taylor, Zachary, Madison | |
| ✿ Joel and Barb Vink
Tyler and Allyson Ophoff
Meghan, Ethan | |
| ✿ Shon and Brenda Griess
Jesse and Mitch Kaiser
Amber, Quenton, Anthony, Brodie | |

Wedding Anniversary

■ We give thanks to our heavenly Father as we have had opportunity to celebrate the 40th wedding anniversary of our parents and grandparents,

DAVID and MARY KREGEL,

on June 30, 2017. Although their pilgrimage on this earth together is but a blink of an eye to our Father, we are grateful to God for the Christ-centered example they have shown to us throughout their life. We pray that God will continue to bless them in their marriage together that they may continue to give witness of the joy of our Savior found in their hearts.

"O God, preserve me, for in Thee alone my trust has stood;
My soul has said, Thou art my Lord, my chief and only good.
I love Thy saints, who fear Thy name and walk as in Thy sight;
They are the excellent of earth, in them is my delight"

(Psalter #27 stanzas 1, 2).

- | | |
|--|---|
| ✿ Bradley (in glory) | |
| ✿ Michael and Lisa DeBoer
Jenna, Allyson, Troy, Cameryn | ✿ Ryan and Melissa Kregel
Bennett |
| ✿ Brent and Kara Kregel
Nelle, Tessa, Clara | ✿ Joseph and Emily Joostens
Kaleb, Sadie
Grandville, Michigan |
| ✿ Jason and Jill Kregel
Anthony, Preston, Brooklyn | |

Teacher Needed

■ The Protestant Reformed School of Wingham is in need of a *part-time or full-time* teacher for the 2017-2018 school year. There is grade flexibility with grade assignments, etc. and the board is willing to work with an interested individual's preference. Please contact Jim Siertsema at jimsiertsema@gmail.com / 519-955-5665 or Preston Crich at prstnrcrh@gmail.com for more information and to apply.

Notification of Candidacy

■ All Protestant Reformed congregations are hereby informed that the 2017 Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America has declared 7 candidates for the gospel ministry in the Protestant Reformed Churches. Please see page 416 of this issue for names and contact information of all of the candidates. The candidates will be eligible for a call on or after July 15, 2017.

Rev. Ron VanOverloop,
Stated Clerk

Classis East

■ Classis East will meet in regular session on Wednesday, September 13, 2017 at the Grandville Protestant Reformed Church, Grandville, MI. Material for this session must be in the hands of the stated clerk no later than August 14, 2017.

Gary Boverhof,
Stated Clerk

Tribute to Retiring Stated Clerk of Classis East

■ The efficiency with which a classis conducts its affairs in the PRC depends to a large extent on the efficiency of its stated clerk. Accuracy in the recording of the minutes of every meeting is a small part of the reason. Preparing of agendas is another, along with the gathering of material to be treated at each session, photocopying of the same, and distribution to all the officebearers in the classis. Then there's the carrying out of all necessary correspondence in a timely manner. And the maintenance of the classical archives. All that service, and more,

MR. JON HUISKEN

provided for Classis East—for more than forty years! In the history of the PRC, unprecedented.

On the occasion, now, of his retirement from that office, Classis East extends to him this expression of its gratitude for those years of faithful, diligent, efficient, and, in the nature of the case, sacrificial service to the churches. May the Lord continue to use him, in other capacities, for the good of His church.

Psalm 90:17: "And let the beauty of the LORD our God be upon us: and establish thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish thou it."

Classis East
Gary Boverhof,
Stated Clerk

Classis West

■ Classis West of the Protestant Reformed Churches will meet in Hull, Iowa on Wednesday, September 27, 2017, at 8:30 A.M., the Lord willing. All material for the Agenda is to be in the hands of the stated clerk 30 days before classis convenes, that is, by August 28, 2017. All delegates in need of lodging or transportation from the airport should notify the clerk of Hull's consistory.

Rev. D. Kuiper,
Stated Clerk

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Reformed Witness Hour

July 2017

Rev. Carl Haak

Date	Topic	Text
July 2	"Husbands, Love Your Wives"	Ephesians 5:25-27
July 9	"Husbands, Love With Purpose"	Ephesians 5:27
July 16	"The Husband Is the Head of His Wife"	Ephesians 5:23
July 23	"To Provide and Protect"	Ephesians 5:23
July 30	"A Wife's Submission to Her Husband"	Ephesians 5:22-24