

# The Standard Bearer

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## CONTENTS

<i>Meditation</i>	Falsely Charging the Temple-Builder <b>REV. RON VAN OVERLOOP</b>	290
<i>Editorial</i>	Our Need for Seminary Students: Time to Be Praying <b>REV. KENNETH KOOLE</b>	293
<i>Letters</i>	Christ's Submission, a Model for Marriage?	296
<i>All Around Us</i>	■ Playing God with Human DNA ■ Disney's <i>Beauty and the Beast</i> <b>REV. ERIK GUICHELAAR</b>	297 298
<i>A Word Fitly Spoken</i>	Re- <b>REV. BILL LANGERAK</b>	300
<i>Believing and Confessing</i>	Second Helvetic Confession (4B) Of Idols or Images of God, Christ, and the Saints <b>PROF. RONALD CAMMENG</b>	301
<i>All Thy Works Shall Praise Thee</i>	Cancer <b>DR. BRENDAN LOOYENGA</b>	304
<i>Bring the Books...</i>	<i>Called to Watch for Christ's Return</i> <b>REV. RYAN BARNHILL</b>	308
<i>Reports</i>	Classis West Report <b>REV. DOUGLAS KUIPER</b>	309
<i>Activities</i>	News from Our Churches <b>MR. PERRY VAN EGDOM</b>	310

# Falsely Charging the Temple-Builder

And the chief priests and all the council sought for witness against Jesus to put him to death; and found none. For many bare false witness against him, but their witness agreed not together. And there arose certain, and bare false witness against him, saying, We heard him say, I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands. But neither so did their witness agree together. And the high priest stood up in the midst, and asked Jesus saying, Answerest thou nothing? What is it which these witness against thee? But he held his peace, and answered nothing.

Mark 14:55-61a

The Apostles' Creed uses one word to describe the whole of Jesus' life: "suffered." There are times when discouragement fills all our thoughts and we conclude that our life is only suffering. But God declares that our suffering alternates with moments of joy (Ps. 30:5). On the other hand, Jesus' experience was that He suffered without interruption.

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

He suffered in His body and in His soul. He suffered at the hands of men. He suffered especially at the hand of Almighty God. Even when He suffered at the hands of men, He saw them to be instruments of God.

Among the human instruments God used to bring suffering to Jesus were members of the ungodly world such as the Pilate and the Roman soldiers. God also brought suffering into Jesus' life through His own siblings, for He came unto His own and His own received Him not (John 1:11). This refers especially to fellow Jews. Our text describes Jesus' suffering at the hands of the church institute, namely, the chief priests and elders, the Sanhedrin.



After Jesus was taken in Gethsemane, He was brought to be tried by the Sanhedrin, the highest Jewish court. This court, which consisted of seventy-one members, was the consistory of Jesus' day. The Sanhedrin sat in judgment of moral and ecclesiastical matters, but also of civil and criminal cases (at that time the church and the state were interwoven). But the Sanhedrin was limited in its ability to punish because Israel was under the con-

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trol of the Roman Empire. As a result, while they could determine that a sin was worthy of the death penalty, they were not allowed to implement capital punishment. Rome kept this right to itself, to be performed by its representative, Pilate.

Almost all the church leaders, including the members of the Sanhedrin, were very angry with Jesus. During the course of His ministry, their anger increased until at this point it reached the boiling point. His popularity with the people was a constant source of irritation to them, especially after He raised Lazarus from the dead. In fact, “from that day forth they took counsel together for to put him to death” (John 11:53). He repeatedly frustrated their efforts to embarrass and challenge Him. Just a few days earlier Jesus openly and harshly criticized them (Matt. 23). When their frustration and anger reached a fever pitch, they determined to have Jesus killed secretly. They did not want any kind of public trial because they feared the people. But they decided to postpone any effort to “take him by craft and put him to death” until after the Passover, “lest there be an uproar of the people” (Mark 14:1, 2).

But their way was not God’s way. God’s way was for Jesus to be arrested on the night of the Passover feast and for Him to endure a public execution on the accursed tree. And so Jesus frustrated their plans by dismissing Judas during the Passover feast. They wanted to kill Him in the garden of Gethsemane, but could not because Jesus sent them tumbling to the ground (John 18:6). It was obvious that they were not able even to arrest Him except He allowed them to do so.

As a result of Jesus forcing their hand, the chief priests and elders had to put Him on trial before their highest court. Because it was the night of the Passover, all the members of the Sanhedrin were at their homes. Messengers were immediately sent out to call the members of the Sanhedrin together for a quick trial that night. In order to give them time to gather, they had Jesus taken to a secondary courtroom and stand before Annas, the previous high priest (John 18:13). It was as a preliminary hearing.

Their frustration only grew. Every effort to find a lawful charge against Jesus, both before Annas and Caiaphas, met with failure. They resorted to bribing people off the street in order to bring false charges against Jesus. But

also this was not successful, for the false witnesses could not agree with each other.

The trial of Jesus before the Sanhedrin was blatantly illegal and a violation of their own rules. First, it was illegal for them to meet after sunset, in the dark of night, for they were to pass judgments only in the light of day. That is why they quickly re-assembled in the morning prior to bringing Jesus to Pilate. And second, their meeting was illegal in that there was no real charge, because they could not find two witnesses to agree even with their trumped-up charges.

The Lord used this mockery of a trial to demonstrate that Jesus was truly innocent. And the Lord used this to demonstrate how crooked and perverse the Jewish nation and church were.



What charge could they bring against Jesus that was strong enough for the Roman governor to judge Him to be worthy of death? The only charge that they believed would make Jesus worthy of death was that He said He would destroy the temple of the Jews and then rebuild it in three days (Mark 14:57, 58).

What was the significance of this charge? What is meant by the “temple.” The temple represented God and His people dwelling together in a relationship of loving fellowship (the covenant of grace). The tabernacle and then the temple had two rooms under the same roof: the Most Holy Place where God symbolically dwelt, and the Holy Place where the elect church dwelt.

The original earthly temple was in the garden of Eden, where God and His image-bearers dwelt together, walking and talking together. But Adam (and all mankind in Adam) destroyed that temple. He did so when he purposefully disobeyed God and violated God’s covenant. God then became man’s enemy (Rom. 8:7).

God immediately exercised grace and maintained His covenant relationship. He declared the promise that the Seed of the woman would crush the head of the serpent, that is, that the Christ would rebuild the “temple” in a far higher and more beautiful form than in the first paradise. The covenant is rebuilt in the blood of Jesus, who paid the penalty earned by man’s rebellion in the garden. And, Jesus lived so perfectly in loving obedience to God that He also earned a glorious righteousness for all those given

Him of the Father. God judged them in Christ to be in harmony with Himself. This put God and man together. The covenant house is built by Jesus.

That Jesus Christ could build the temple is because He Himself is the temple of God, God and man united in one person. He is in Himself what the temple symbolized. What Jesus by His suffering and death established was the fulfillment of the temple. Hence, the veil of the temple was rent at the moment He commended His human spirit to the Father. When the Spirit of this Jesus resides in the hearts of the elect, then they are the temple of the Holy Spirit (I Cor. 6:19, 20).

So, as Jesus stood before the Sanhedrin, He was the Temple and He was the Temple-Builder. False witnesses were bribed to lie (v. 56), to accuse Him of saying that He would destroy the temple. This was something Jesus *never* said. In fact, He could not say it, for He is the Temple! We cannot even imagine how deeply He must have felt the insult of the lies told against Him. They pierced His soul, for He is the very representation and revelation of the Temple! The “worst” sin they could accuse Jesus of committing was saying that He would destroy the temple.

Let us note two things to the contrary. First, what Jesus did say was that *they* would destroy the temple (John 2:19). That is precisely what was happening with their condemning and killing Him. The Temple of God stood before the Sanhedrin, and they were making every effort to destroy Him, who is Immanuel. To accuse the Temple-Builder is to commit a grievous sin.

And second, Jesus was building the temple. In His suffering at the hands of the Sanhedrin Jesus was receiving from God the penalty for the sins of the elect. By enduring this suffering in loving obedience to His Father, Jesus was making the foundation for elect sinners to have a relationship with God. He was rebuilding the relationship of God with man, which the unbelieving Jews were deliberately destroying when they denied that He was Immanuel.



*His silence means that  
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for all those whom  
the Father had given to Him.*

At this terrible miscarriage of justice we want to shout, “Foul,” “Objection,” or “Point of order.” But Jesus “held his peace” (v. 61). We must not draw the conclusion from His silence that He thought their “justice” was just.

Jesus was silent because He knew they were lying. And the false accusers knew they were lying, as did the members of the Sanhedrin. More importantly, Jesus was aware that God knew that they were lying. This was an important instance in Jesus’ life of suffering at the hands of men of how He left us “an example, that we should follow his steps”; ...“who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously” (I Pet. 2:21, 23).


There was a second important reason Jesus was silent. He was deeply conscious that He was standing guilty before the Jewish council in the stead of His guilty people.

It was in our stead that Christ received the grievous insult, for we are temple destroyers. Every sin you and I commit destroys the temple. And the depraved natures we have constantly destroy the temple. So it was in our stead that Jesus stood before the church court, and before God Himself. His silence means that He willingly and deliberately bore the charge of sin for all those whom

the Father had given to Him. It is by bearing our sins and our punishment that He is satisfying God’s justice.

And this is why He was silent on the cross as well. Especially during the three hours of darkness He was silent, consciously accepting the responsibility for taking on Himself the penalty that our sins deserved. This is how He is the Temple-Builder.

In this way Jesus Christ completed the task given Him by His Father. He suffered! He suffered all His life. He bore the full penalty for all of our sins. He suffered! He suffered the divine wrath we deserve. He restored the relationship of loving friendship and fellowship—the life of the covenant with God.

Let us never stop thanking Him for suffering on our behalf. And, for turning our suffering around so that it is for our profit. To God be the glory! 

# Our Need for Seminary Students: Time to Be Praying

Imagine with me the year of our Lord 2025, the year of the Protestant Reformed Churches' centennial anniversary. Not that far away when you think about it—just eight short years.

Now imagine seven or eight vacant PR churches at that time as well.

Actually, not all that imaginary. Not when you consider how few college-aged men of our churches at present have indicated an interest in preparing for the gospel ministry—just three (3) at latest report. And they are only thinking of and prayerfully considering it at present—two in their second year of college (sophomores), one in his first year (a freshman). Which means, even if their contemplations turn into reality, two would enter seminary in the fall of 2019 and one in 2020, giving us possibly three more candidates to be ordained into the gospel ministry by 2024.

Possibly!

Because a lot can happen between preparing oneself for the gospel ministry and actually sitting for a classical exam, having received the lawful call that confirms one's desires and years of preparation.

But, you respond, this year seven young men are to graduate from our

seminary and will likely receive calls into our churches, and three more will be graduating in 2019, D.V. That's ten new candidates to fill our vacancies and other denominational callings in the next three years.

That sounds like more than sufficient.

Indeed it does, until you start doing some assessing and calculating.

The first hard fact is that we, like a number of other Presbyterian and Reformed denominations (as we as observers heard at NAPARC this past year), have an aging ministry. In other words, a substantial percentage of our ministers are either in their late fifties or in their sixties, which, in turn, means that in the next eight to nine years they will either have been granted emeritation or will be facing it. In fact, according to our calculations, of our 35 'serving' clergy (ministers, missionaries, and professors), 12 are fifty-seven years old and above. And, keep in mind, a couple of others have already drifted into their early fifties. (You can look it up).

So, within fifteen (15) years, about half of our present clergy will have laid aside the mantle of their active pastoral ministry.

And by then, how many churches will we as a Protestant Reformed de-

nomination number? (Not that we feel real comfortable 'numbering the people.' But, for all that, past trends and realities must be considered.)

Likely, there will be more than our present 33 congregations.

At present at least two more of our larger congregations (following our Faith congregation with the recent formation of its daughter congregation, Zion PRC) are seriously considering the need for the formation of daughter congregations (which would bring our total congregations to 35). In eight years there are likely to be more. A number of our congregations are showing significant internal growth, and if they continue to 'bring forth' at the rate experienced in the past decade, they will be compelled to consider the need for 'giving birth' to daughter congregations as well.

Are we heading for 40 congregations by our 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary? That is not all that far-fetched. Certainly, it is within the realm of possibility.

Be that as it may, to the above information add this reality: from the pool of remaining 'younger' clergy (once you subtract the 12 who are either nearly sixty or older) we are committed to drawing three new professors as well as some new

missionaries. Calls continue to go out for a third missionary to the Philippines as well as for a home missionary (or two). And we are convinced the cry and need for new missionaries will not end there. There are new fields on the horizon. In light of what has developed in India due to visits and work there by men of our churches over the last decade, there has been talk of the possibility of and even need for sending missionaries to India.

Missionaries? In the plural?

Yes.

To a culture and environment as demanding as that of India, surely two-by-two will be the way of wisdom.

And it seems the time is ripe. Certainly, the need is great.

Which brings us back to the need of our churches to consider the very real likelihood of a shortage of ministers a decade or so down the road to serve both the needs of our own congregations and calls from others to “come over and help us!” The call from the ascended Christ to press more and more of our resources into filling the Great Commission “while it is yet day” becomes more pressing as the great Day of the Lord draws near.

Contemplating the graduation of seven young men from our seminary this Spring and their being declared qualified academically and spiritually for calls to the gospel ministry gives reason for gratitude. Three more following in two years will certainly help avoid an immediate shortage.

But all that these ten young graduates will do is fill immediate

needs, thereby avoiding a present shortage.

With three vacancies at present, with three professors needing to be replaced in the next few years, with two calls for additional missionaries going out, and then six or so of our ‘senior’ ministers looking emeritation in the face the next few years, those ten young men should not lack for a call and a place to serve.

It’s what looms following the placement of these ten that must be considered. As far as the Theological School Committee and seminary faculty are aware, there

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is a scarcity of young men coming down the pre-seminary ‘pipeline’ at present.

We have been heartened to hear that there are a couple of young men from our sister church in Singapore, the Covenant Evangelical Reformed Church, who are seriously considering preparation for the ministry and who will be looking towards our seminary for instruction. One should be ready for our seminary in the Fall of 2018 (on track to graduate in 2022), the

other (due to Singapore’s two-year military service requirement) would be ready, at the earliest, to apply for admittance in 2021.

This, of course, is good news for various reasons; the needs of our sister church in Singapore being answered coming first to mind. But also the enrollment of these young men would give our ‘newly-to-be-appointed’ professors at least some bodies (and minds) to teach!

But, as things stand right now, when the three men of the class of 2019 graduate in the Spring of that year, there will be no students from our churches remaining in seminary even to teach in the Fall of 2019. Not unless a young man or two presently in college apply for admission at that time. There will be, hopefully, a couple of young men from the CERC of Singapore enrolled, one of whom is presently already enrolled and finishing his first year of seminary. But he, and the others from Singapore, are thinking of the gospel ministry in terms of returning to the CERC with the great ‘fishing shoals’ of East Asia in mind, not with the PRCA in mind.

It certainly would be gratifying if our newly-appointed professors would have, in addition to students from foreign lands, young men (or even, not so young!) from our own churches to instruct as well.

The ‘grim’ reality, at last report, is that we will have no young men from our own churches applying for admission to our seminary this coming Fall (for the school year of 2017-18), nor for the year following.

This means, not only will we not have any Protestant Reformed candidates for the ministry in the years 2018 and 2020 (we have no PR seminary students presently in the junior or freshmen classes), but neither will we be graduating any students in the years 2021 or 2022.

It will not exactly be raining PRC candidates for the ministry in the five years following 2017. That's quite a drought when the need is great and the fields are white with harvest.

And those are exactly the years when many of our experienced pastors and preachers will be declaring emeritation, stepping out of the active ministry with few, precious few, stepping into the gospel ministry as replacements.

And if no others of high-school age are thinking seriously of preparing themselves for this high and important calling, the drought of candidates for the gospel ministry within our churches could extend for some time.

A sobering thought.

What can we do about it?

From a human point of view, seemingly, not a whole lot. Qualifications for ministers of the gospel is a matter of the Holy Spirit granting the necessary intellectual gifts, and then working a not-to-be-denied internal call in a young man's heart to prepare himself. That is God's work, beginning already within the womb, not ours.

But we recall the statement found in the Heidelberg Catechism dealing with why prayer is 'even' necessary (in the context of the sovereignty of God who knows everything any-

way). If memory serves me right, the answer is that God will give His grace and Holy Spirit to those *only* who ask them of Him. And ask for them *continually* at that!

Well, if there is any calling in life that has to do with God's grace (for His church) and the operations of and directing by the Holy Spirit in the heart and soul of someone, it strikes us that it would be the calling to prepare for being a preacher of the gospel in the service of the sovereign Christ and His beloved church.

So, let's start praying, shall we! Praying from congregation to congregation, Lord's Day by Lord's Day, and family by family. We are not suggesting that this is not being done by many; but perhaps, because there was a dozen young men (at one point) attending seminary a couple of years back, we imagined the need (not to say crisis) was taken care of and, as a result, the regularity of these prayers with their urgency diminished somewhat.

Perhaps?

It is exactly the earnest prayers of His church that moves Almighty God to answer our needs, and it is exactly petitions made publicly in worship and at family gatherings that Christ's Spirit uses to impress upon certain young men the need to consider seriously the call to prepare for the gospel ministry.

*Importunity in prayer* with specific petitions that have to do with Christ's kingdom carry certain power with God, if I read my Scriptures aright.

The pressing need for students

is a matter that elders should remember to raise at family visitations where boys and young men are present, "Young man, have you considered the gospel ministry and preparing yourself for it?" And when it comes to young men who have discernable gifts, a persistence in reminding them of this calling and the churches' present need here and abroad.

As well, we would enlist the help of our school teachers, those who know their students well, to place this 'career' calling before young men of high-school age, reminding young men that the gospel ministry is a life of service, service of the highest sort, to be pursued not simply for their own benefit and gain, but for the sake of the immortal souls of the whole range of God's people, from the youngest child to the oldest saint.

And every member of our congregations can single out a suitable young man or two, reminding them of this ongoing, not to say crying need, of Christ's kingdom and church.

To be sure, God will provide. He always has, in His own way and according to His own timing. But He is a God who will have us recognize that it is He and He alone who can supply our need, especially when it comes to preachers and preaching. And that spirit of depending on the Almighty comes to expression exactly through persistent supplication and prayer.

Jehovah God will have us as *churches* express that. Not just a few members here and there, but, as in Old Testament times, congrega-

tions of people coming before the LORD, a people who have known the joyful sound now for well-nigh 100 years, a people who assemble together to beseech the LORD to show us mercy and to continue to raise up young men qualified to preach the gospel, lest there be, if not a famine of the word, still a shortage of pastors and preachers.


When our hundredth-year anniversary rolls around, who can deny it would be reason for much gratitude and joy if our seminary were well supplied with a goodly number of godly young aspirants to the gospel ministry!

That would be a most tangible token of God's covenant faithfulness indeed.

Truly, it would be gratifying to see on the horizon a cloud the size of a man's hand arising over the sea in answer to these prayers.

Let us be praying for a shower of blessing arising out of the Great Sea of God's covenant faithfulness and grace.

This is a kingdom cause.

The need is great. 

## LETTERS

### Christ's Submission, a Model for Marriage?

I am writing for clarification on Rev. McGeown's article regarding the theological error of EFS ("Eternal Functional Subordination"). Rev. McGeown writes,

Grudem [Wayne Grudem, Phoenix Seminary], for example, presents the Son's submission to the Father as "the role-model for a woman's submission to her husband." (Of course, the pattern for a woman's submission to her husband is *not* the Son's eternal, functional submission or subordination to the Father, but the church's submission to Christ!)

While I would not use the term "role-model" as Grudem does, I am seeking further explanation on why the pattern of the Son's submission cannot be used to model the wife's submission in marriage.

The fact that the Father and Son are co-equal in eternity does not eliminate using the Son's submission on earth to the Father as a picture of wives' submission in marriage. Wives always have the calling to submit to their husbands, just as the Father planned in eternity the "fullness of time" at which Christ would become a man, obey, and die willingly. I am trying to understand how one's belief that the wife's submission can be modelled by the Son's submission results in a false doctrine regarding the Father's relationship to the Son. We should start with God's being (His perfect love and unity), leading us to confess with Paul that marriage is "a great mystery."

Many Christians today struggle with male headship, yet the truth of Christ's perfect submission models beautifully how there can be a seeming "contradiction"

involving spiritual equality between husband and wife, yet a difference in authority. The creation of marriage is ultimately to picture Christ and the church, but the church today, especially our young people, need to be equipped to answer the skeptics of God's design in marriage. They (and all of us) need to be ready to answer the accusation that our churches teach that men are better than women. How appropriate, then, for us to use our Savior as a beautiful example in His finished work on the cross, making it possible for us to have a relationship with Him as members of His church.

Kyle Bruinooge  
Jenison, Michigan

### RESPONSE:

I thank Mr. Bruinooge for his letter.

He asks, "Why [cannot] the pattern of the Son's submission be used to model the wife's submission in marriage?" The issue in the article, "The Error of Eternal Functional Subordination" is that the Son is *not* eternally subordinate to the Father. Grudem and others contend that the Son's *being Son* implies subordination—that is, since all sons are subordinate to their fathers, the eternal Son is eternally subordinate to His Father. If I had written, "Grudem, for example, presents the Son's *eternal, functional* submission to the Father as 'the role model for a woman's submission to her husband,'" I might have been clearer.

My point is that the Son's eternal, functional submission to the Father *cannot* be a role model for a woman's submission to her husband because such submission

within the Trinity *does not exist*. The “Son’s submission on earth to the Father” is a separate issue entirely—do not confuse that orthodox teaching with the heterodox teaching of an eternal, functional subordination of the Son to the Father within the being of the triune God.

But Mr. Bruinooge has a different question: can the Son’s voluntary submission *in the human nature as the Mediator* be considered an analogy for the wife’s submission to her husband in marriage? My answer is that the Bible never presents the truth of the Incarnation, Christ’s voluntary sufferings, and death as an analogy for the wife’s submission in marriage.

While I do not believe that the idea that the wife’s submission can be modelled after the Son’s (voluntary) submission (in the human nature) results in a false doctrine regarding the Father’s relationship to the Son, I believe that it is always better to use Scripture’s analogies

in the way that Scripture presents them. In Ephesians 5, for example, Paul compares the wife’s submission to her husband to the church’s submission to Christ, and he compares the husband’s love for his wife to Christ’s love for His church. There is enough instruction in that chapter to satisfy the curiosity of our young people and to answer the objections of the skeptics.

When Paul teaches the church something about Christ’s voluntary submission to the Father in Philippians 2, he does so not to teach wives how to submit to their husbands, but to teach how all believers should display humility toward one another.

We would be wisest, I believe, if we followed Paul’s inspired example on this matter.

Cordially,  
Rev. M. McGeown 

## ALL AROUND US

## REV. ERIK GUICHELAAR

### ■ Playing God with Human DNA

Within the last few years, significant advances have been made in the ability to edit the genes of human sperm, eggs, and early-stage embryos in petri dishes. Earlier this year, a report came out from within the United States recommending the use of the advances being made. For the *New York Times*, Amy Harmon writes the following:

An influential science advisory group formed by the National Academy of Sciences and the National Academy of Medicine on Tuesday [February 14] lent its support to a once-unthinkable proposition: the modification of human embryos to create genetic traits that can be passed down to future generations.<sup>1</sup>

What is so significant about this kind of gene-editing is the fact that the changes made to the DNA are changes

that will be passed down to future generations. As a report from the *Wall Street Journal* makes clear,

Gene editing offers the possibility of treating many diseases, and there are already trials or advanced research under way to use the techniques to try to cure individuals with HIV, sickle cell anemia and cancer. But adjustments made to the human germ line—eggs, sperm and embryos—don’t just change the health of a single person; they can be passed on to any future offspring.<sup>2</sup>

What is the motivation behind so-called “germ-line engineering”? The *New York Times* article explains:

The advisory group endorsed only alternations designed to prevent babies from acquiring genes known to cause “serious diseases and disability,” and only when there is no “reasonable alternative.”... So-called germ line engineering might allow people to have biological children without fear that they have passed on the genes for diseases like Huntington’s, Tay-Sachs and beta thalassemia, and without

<sup>1</sup> Amy Harmon, “Human Gene Editing Receives Science Panel’s Support,” *New York Times*, February 14, 2017, <https://nyti.ms/2lfSovz>.

Rev. Guichelaar is pastor of the Protestant Reformed Church in Randolph, Wisconsin.

<sup>2</sup> Amy Dockser Marcus, “Door Opens to Gene Editing in Embryos,” *Wall Street Journal*, February 14, 2017, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/gene-editing-could-be-permitted-under-certain-conditions-report-says>.

discarding embryos carrying the disease-causing mutations, as is often done now.<sup>3</sup>

Not only could cancer-causing genes and disease-causing genes be taken out of the DNA, but such gene-editing could also make people struggling with infertility able to have biological children.

What is involved in germ-line engineering? “The advent of a powerful gene-editing tool called Crispr-Cas9 allows researchers to snip, insert and delete genetic material with increasing precision.”<sup>4</sup> However, “While Crispr is generally precise, it can have ‘off-target’ effects, cutting DNA at places where it is not meant to.”<sup>5</sup> Using tools like Crispr to snip, insert, and delete genetic material in sperms, eggs, and embryos is already taking place in other countries, such as Sweden and China.<sup>6</sup>

From the scientific community itself there are many concerns raised about this type of practice:

This type of human gene editing has long been seen as an ethical minefield. Researchers fear that the techniques used to prevent genetic diseases might also be used to enhance intelligence, for example, or to create people physically suited to particular tasks, like serving as soldiers.<sup>7</sup>

In an article from *World* on a related issue, we find the following comment: “We are accelerating down a slippery slope now when we are going to manufacture children in the laboratory to specific genetic characteristics,”

said David Prentice, a bioethicist and the vice president and research director at the Charlotte Lozier Institute.”<sup>8</sup>

The ethics behind such experimentation are obviously to be condemned. The fact is, many human beings (embryos) are killed in the process of doing all these things. We simply may not treat the creation and destruction of human life as a kind of science experiment. But other questions come to my mind: what if there are children born with dangerous, unintended results? Will they and all their offspring have to be exterminated so as to preserve the DNA of the human race?

Furthermore, to say that this kind of experimentation is leading down a slippery slope is legitimate. After all, *World* reports that on the issue of euthanasia, a Canadian study is already mentioning the cost benefits associated with killing off those who are a burden to society:

*No matter what my  
DNA may look like,  
this is what I know by faith:  
“...I am fearfully  
and wonderfully made:  
marvelous are thy works;  
and that my soul knoweth  
right well” (Ps. 139:14b).*

Canada legalized euthanasia in June 2016, declaring assisted suicide a humane way to end the suffering of already dying patients. Opponents warned it wouldn't be a far jump from legalizing euthanasia to manipulating patients into believing they have an obligation to die and stop draining medical system resources. Eight months later, researchers at the University of Calgary have released a

study extolling assisted suicide's cost benefits: “If Canadians adopt medical assistance in dying in a manner and extent similar to those of the Netherlands and Belgium, we can expect a reduction in healthcare spending in the range of tens of millions of dollars per year.” The authors of the study denied any suggestion cost should factor into end-of-life decisions, despite the obvious connection.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Harmon, “Human Gene Editing.”

<sup>4</sup> Harmon.

<sup>5</sup> Harmon.

<sup>6</sup> See, for example, the following article from 2016: Rob Stein, “Breaking Taboo, Swedish Scientist Seeks to Edit DNA of Healthy Human Embryos, *NPR*, September 22, 2016, <http://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2016/09/22/494591738/breaking-taboo-swedish-scientist-seeks-to-edit-dna-of-healthy-human-embryos>.

<sup>7</sup> Harmon.

<sup>8</sup> Julie Borg, “First baby girl born with three parents,” *World*, January 26, 2017, [https://world.wng.org/2017/01/first\\_baby\\_girl\\_born\\_with\\_three\\_parents](https://world.wng.org/2017/01/first_baby_girl_born_with_three_parents). This article speaks of a baby girl that was born with DNA from three parents—two women and one man.

<sup>9</sup> Julie Borg, “Canadian Study touts euthanasia's cost ‘benefit,’” *World*, February 2, 2017, [https://world.wng.org/2017/02/canadian\\_study\\_touts\\_euthanasia\\_s\\_cost\\_benefit](https://world.wng.org/2017/02/canadian_study_touts_euthanasia_s_cost_benefit).

As scientists and nations attempt to discuss such significant ethical issues that have such far-reaching consequences, it is disturbing to consider that their standard for morality is simply the consensus of the majority. Truly, there is no fear of God before their eyes. No matter what my DNA may look like, this is what I know by faith: "...I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvelous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well" (Ps. 139:14b).

### ■ Disney's *Beauty and the Beast*

Disney is coming out with a live-action version of *Beauty and the Beast*, which means that the story of *Beauty and the Beast* will be played by real human characters. But as the movie gets redone, Disney will use the opportunity once again to push its liberal agenda on those who watch it. In the new version of the movie, Gaston's sidekick, LeFou, has a subplot in which he wrestles with his sexuality. In an interview with *Attitude Magazine*, director Bill Condon stated the following:

LeFou is somebody who on one day wants to be Gaston and on another day wants to kiss Gaston.... He's confused about what he wants. It's somebody who's just realizing that he has these feelings. And Josh [the actor playing LeFou] makes something really subtle and delicious out of it. And that's what has its payoff at the end, which I don't want to give away. But it is a nice, exclusively gay moment in a Disney movie.<sup>10</sup>

The editor of *Attitude Magazine* expressed his thoughts as follows:

It may have been a long time coming but this is a watershed moment for Disney.... By representing same-sex attraction in this short but explicitly gay scene, the studio is sending out a message that this is normal and natural—and this is a message that will be heard in every country of the world, even countries where it's still socially unacceptable or even illegal to be gay.... It's only a first step towards creating a cinematic world that reflects the one in which many of us are now proud to live. But it's a step in the right direction and I applaud Disney for being brave

<sup>10</sup> "'Beauty and the Beast' Set to Make Disney History with Gay Character," *Attitude Magazine*, March 1, 2017, <http://attitude.co.uk/world-exclusive-beauty-and-the-beast-set-to-make-disney-history-with-gay-character>.

enough to make it—and in doing so hopefully helping to change attitudes and bring about real social progress.<sup>11</sup>

As Denny Burk, professor of Biblical studies at Boyce College, comments, "This news is not surprising for anyone familiar with Disney's pro-gay stance in its corporate practices. Increasingly, these themes have been detected in the content of its films."<sup>12</sup>

How should Christians respond to something like this? I share a few points that Nancy Leigh DeMoss makes concerning entertainment in her book *Lies Women Believe: And the Truth That Sets Them Free*:

We entertain ourselves with reading material, movies, TV programs, and music that reflect worldly philosophies and legitimize profanity, immodesty, and immoral behavior, never stopping to contemplate that in so doing...

- we are desensitizing our conscience and developing a tolerance for sin;
- we are increasing our appetite for sin and diminishing our hunger for holiness;
- we are erecting a barrier in our fellowship with God;
- we are programming our minds to think the world's way (and how we think ultimately determines how we live);
- we are increasing the likelihood that we will actually act out the things we are seeing and hearing;
- we are developing an unbiblical view of sexuality that may ultimately rob us of our virginity or destroy our marriage;
- we are increasing the likelihood that our children and grandchildren will become profane and immoral.<sup>13</sup>

The attitude of the child of God is this: "I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes: I hate the work of them that turn aside; it shall not cleave to me" (Ps. 101:3). ☞

<sup>11</sup> *Attitude*.

<sup>12</sup> Denny Burk, "'Beauty and the Beast' to feature an 'exclusively gay moment,'" March 1, 2017, <http://www.dennyburk.com/beauty-and-the-beast-to-feature-an-exclusively-gay-moment>.

<sup>13</sup> Nancy Leigh DeMoss, *Lies Women Believe: And the Truth That Sets Them Free* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2001), 93-94.

# Re-

The celebration of our redemption and resurrection in Jesus is a good time to remember the wonderful aspect of the gospel indicated by the prefix *re-* of these two words. *Re-* basically means “again” and denotes something repeated, returned back, or done intensely. Redemption, therefore, means “to be bought back” and resurrection “to be raised again.” And *re-* is one of the most common prefixes in Scripture, which shows the rich significance of “again” to the holy gospel. The gospel is the good news of *re-*.

Our Father has nurtured, raised, and stretched out His hand to rebellious (to war again) children, children who refused (give back as unwanted) to keep His covenant, hear His word, and obey His law, and who rejected (to throw back) even His Christ (Dan. 9:9; Ps. 78:10; Hos. 4:6; Is. 53:3). He came unto His own, but His own received (to take back) Him not (John 1:11). But the stone the builders reject and refuse, God makes the head of the corner (Ps. 118:22).

Through Christ, God gives us, therefore, the ministry of reconciliation (to bring together again)—that while we were still enemies, we were reconciled to God by His death and assured salvation by His life (Rom. 5:10, Ps. 118:22). Although sheep going astray, we are returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls and received back into His favor (Heidelberg Catechism, Q&A 12; I Pet. 2:25).


The gospel is that the Lord remembers (takes to mind again) His covenant forever, but remembers our sins no more (Ps. 105:8; Heb. 10:17). Although He be high, He has respect for the lowly (Ps. 138:6). He regards the crying of His children (Ps. 106:44). He releases the captives from prison and feeds those who cannot recompense (to pay back) Him again (Luke 14:14). The Lord removes our sins, restores our soul, revives and renews our spirit, repairs our broken hearts, and regenerates (to be born again) us by the incorruptible seed of the Word unto

a lively hope that always remains in us (I Pet. 1:3, 23; I John 3:9).

Preaching and discipline of Christ must rebuke (to beat back) with all authority because it causes sin to dry up, the devil to flee, and the sick to be healed (Matt. 8:26, 17:18; Tit. 2:15). The Lord still sends prophets saying, “Return ye now every man from his evil way, and amend your doings” (Jer. 35:15). We are told the ungodly do not like to retain (to hold back) God in their knowledge and will die, while the God-fearing retain His Word in their heart and live (Rom. 1:28; Prov. 4:4). And he that believes not, makes God a liar because he believes not the record (take to heart again, that is, witness) that God gave of His Son (I John. 5:10).

God, who is our exceeding great reward (to give back), shall reward everyone according to his works, and rewards them that diligently seek Him (Gen. 15:1; Matt. 16:27; Heb. 11:6). The Lord reserves (to keep back) the unjust to be punished in the day of judgment, but reserves the just to an inheritance incorruptible in heaven (I Pet. 1:4; 2:9). Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither has entered into the heart of man, the things which God has revealed (to pull the cover back) unto us by His Spirit; and the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us (I Cor. 2:9-10; Rom. 8:18).

The gospel of *re-*, of redemption and resurrection. The good news that Jesus obtained for us an eternal redemption, body and soul, from all iniquity, death, and power of the grave—He has redeemed our life from destruction (Rom. 8:23; Ps. 49:8; Heb. 9:12). The good news that Jesus is the resurrection and the life; that since by man came death, so also by man came the resurrection of the dead; and the children of God are children of the resurrection (I Cor. 15:21; Luke 20:36).

So receive this word. Repent of sin and unbelief. Return, if you have strayed. Remember what you have heard. And rejoice. For the day of our redemption draws nigh. The Lord has commanded His covenant forever; holy and reverend is His name (Ps. 119:9). 

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# Of Idols or Images of God, Christ, and the Saints

(Second Helvetic Confession, Chapter 4B)

## The Scriptures of the Laity

*Furthermore, wherever we turn our eyes, we see the living and true creatures of God which, if they be observed, as is proper, make a much more vivid impression on the beholders than all the images or vain, motionless, feeble and dead pictures made by men, of which the prophet truly said: "They have eyes, but do not see" (Ps. 115:5).*

Chapter 4 of the Second Helvetic Confession (SHC) develops the biblical and Reformed objection to the use of images in the worship of God. The first three paragraphs of the chapter set forth the prohibition against the making and worship of images of God, since God neither *can* nor *may* be represented by an image. The SHC extends the application of the prohibition against the making and worship of images to Christ: "Although Christ assumed human nature, yet he did not on that account assume it in order to provide a model for carvers and painters." Included in the prohibition of images in worship is the making of the image of any creature, saint, angel, or otherwise, for the purpose of veneration: "...the heavenly saints and angels are [not] pleased with their own images before which men kneel, uncover their heads, and bestow other honors."

Instead of the use of images "to instruct men in religion and to remind them of divine things and of salvation," the Lord has rather "commanded the preaching of the Gospel." The church, therefore, ought "not to paint and

to teach the laity by means of pictures," but rather, to use the language of the Heidelberg Catechism, "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" (Lord's Day 35, Q&A 98). To His audible word in the preaching, Christ has indeed added a visible word. But that visible word is not that of a carved or painted image. It is rather His visible word in the sacraments that He has instituted in the New Testament church: "Moreover, he instituted sacraments, but nowhere did he set up images."

This, then, is the Reformed response to the hankering after images. Included in this hankering after images, and the vivid impression that the visible has on the mind and emotions, are many of the embellishments of modern worship: clerical vestments, involved liturgies, impressive ceremonies, art and dance, banners hung from church walls and ceilings, or paraded down the isles during worship, and more besides. Over against all these human inventions and additions, Reformed worship is characterized by *simplicity*. And make no mistake, there is beauty in simplicity. Essentially, the simplicity of Reformed worship is the simplicity of the reading and exposition of the Word of God—lively preaching that contrasts with images, which are dead and lifeless.

To the lively preaching of the Word as the chief means by which God makes Himself known to His people, the SHC makes a significant addition in the fourth paragraph of Chapter 4. In contrast to the Roman Catholic justification of images as "books of the laity," the SHC speaks of God's revelation in the creation as "Scriptures of the Laity." "Furthermore, wherever we turn our eyes [in the creation], we see the living and true creatures of God which, if they be observed, as is proper, make a much more vivid

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impression on the beholders than all the images or vain, motionless, feeble and dead pictures made by men....”

The SHC presents a very significant perspective on God’s general revelation, that is, His revelation in the creation. First of all, the perspective of the SHC is that in the creatures that God has made, one can behold something of the God who made them. More than “feeble and dead pictures made by men,” the living creatures that have come forth from the hand of God are a vivid and visible testimony to the God who has made them all. You would see God? You would see a representation of the God who has made all things and ought to be worshipped by us? Look around you at the creatures in His creation. See God in all that He has made. Not in what a man may make, either by carving or painting, but in what God Himself has made; behold an image, as it were, of God the Creator.

Secondly, the SHC makes plain that this view of God in the things that are made is not a view of God shared by all men. It is not the teaching of the SHC at this point that every man is able to behold the image of God in the things that are made. Rather, it is clearly its teaching that this view of the image of God in the things that are made, this beholding of God in that which has come forth from His hand, is a beholding by believers alone. The fourth paragraph is entitled, “The Scriptures of the Laity.” The laity are the members of the church. Here they are those who are truly members of the church. To genuine church members the creation about them functions as a kind of “scripture” to reveal God to them. That is supported by the pronouns that are used throughout this paragraph: “we.” “We turn our eyes” to the creation and “we see the living and true creatures of God.” We are the “beholders” upon whom these creatures “make a more vivid impression...than all the images or vain, motionless, feeble and dead pictures made by men....” “We” are regenerated children of God, in whom the Spirit dwells and upon whom the grace of God is at work. Our eyes have been opened, our ears have been unstopped, and our minds have been enlightened, so that in the light of Scripture and through the spectacles of Scripture, we are able to see the things of God in that which He has made.

## Lactantius, Epiphanius, and Augustine

*Therefore we approved the judgment of Lactantius, an ancient writer, who says: “Undoubtedly no religion exists where there is an image.” We also assert that the blessed bishop Epiphanius did right when, finding on the doors of a church a veil on which was painted a picture supposedly of Christ or some saint, he ripped it down and took it away, because to see a picture of a man hanging in the Church of Christ was contrary to the authority of Scripture. Wherefore he charged that from henceforth no such veils, which were contrary to our religion, should be hung in the Church of Christ, and that rather such questionable things, unworthy of the Church of Christ and the faithful people, should be removed. Moreover, we approve of this opinion of St. Augustine concerning true religion: “Let not the worship of the works of men be a religion for us. For the artists themselves who make such things are better; yet we ought not to worship them” (“De Vera Religione,” cap. 55).*

Although they represent what one writer refers to as a “thin stream of opposition,” there were those from the time of the early church who opposed the use of images in the worship of the church. Three representatives of this “thin stream” are cited by the SHC in the last paragraph of Chapter 4: Lactantius, Epiphanius of Salamis, and St. Augustine, bishop of Hippo in North Africa.

Lactantius (c. A.D. 250-c. 325), whose full name was Lucius Caecilius Firmianus Lactantius, was an early Christian educator, theologian, and writer. He was an advisor to the first Christian Roman emperor, Constantine I, and was a tutor of his son. He was born in North Africa and began a successful public career there. At the request of the Roman emperor, Diocletian, he became a professor of rhetoric in Nicomedia. There he came into contact with important fellow educators and officials of the imperial court. Here he met the pagan philosopher Porphyry and first came into contact with Constantine. After converting to Christianity, he resigned his post in the Roman Empire. With the outbreak of persecution, Lactantius was forced to flee Nicomedia for a time and lived for a couple of years in relative obscurity and on the edge of poverty, until Constantine became his patron. Constantine appointed the now elderly Lactantius to

be the Latin tutor of his son, Crispus. Lactantius wrote apologetic works that explained the teachings of Christianity to the educated class of Romans who practiced the traditional religions of the Roman Empire. He also wrote *Divinae Institutiones*, which was a systematic setting forth of Christianity, in which he advocated a literal millennial kingdom that would be established by Christ at His second coming.

Among other things, Lactantius is also known for his opposition to the use of images in the worship of God, something that was becoming more and more widespread in his day. He was not the only one voicing opposition to the growing practice. Among those who opposed the growing cult of images were Tertullian, Cyprian, and Eusebius of Caesarea, the early church historian. Asterius of Amasia, in a sermon on the rich man and Lazarus, said: “Do not paint pictures of Christ, who humbled himself enough by becoming a man.” Lactantius is said to have written: “Undoubtedly no religion [that is, true religion] exists where there is an image.”

The SHC also cites a memorable incident involving Epiphanius, bishop of Salamis, Cyprus, whose dates are c. A.D. 320-403. He gained a reputation as a strong defender of orthodoxy. He was an early churchman who made an issue of the use of images in Christian worship, and became known as a vocal opponent of the use of icons and images. He is remembered for what became known as “the curtain incident.” This incident is reported approvingly by Jerome in his letters. He reports that Epiphanius, seeing a curtain hanging on the doors of a certain church that he was inspecting, a kind of

veil on which was painted a picture supposedly of Christ or some saint, he ripped it down and took it away, because to see a picture of a man hanging in the Church of Christ was contrary to the authority of Scripture. Wherefore he charged that from henceforth no such veils, which were contrary to our religion, should be hung in the Church of Christ, and that rather such questionable things, un-


worthy of the Church of Christ and the faithful people, should be removed.

Epiphanius’ actions are indicative of an early and significant opposition to the use of images in the worship of the New Testament church.

The third reference to the opposition in the church to the use of images is to Augustine, the bishop of Hippo in North Africa. Augustine, whose dates are A.D. 354-430, and who was the father of the Western church, opposed the use of images in worship. The Protestant Reformation

was in so many respects a return to Augustine. It was in its view of Scripture. It was in its view of salvation by grace and by grace alone. It was in its teaching on original sin, total depravity, and the rejection of the free will of the sinner. So was it also in its opposition to the use of images and icons. Writing in his work *De Vera Religione* (*The True Religion*), Augustine says: “Let not the worship of the works of men be a religion for us. For the artists themselves who make such things are better; yet we ought not to worship them.” The artists who make the images and icons “are better” than the images that they make because they at least are alive,

whereas their images are dead and altogether lifeless. Thus, Augustine forbids the use of images in worship, as both contrary to the will of God and as foolish: “We ought not to worship them,” is his verdict.

On the basis of the express teaching of Scripture, as well as the tradition of the church, images and icons have no place in the worship of the people of God. They do not rightly instruct God’s people, nor do they properly represent God or Christ. Rather than to be a help to worship, they are a hindrance. Rather than to be a means for better worship, they are an instrument by which false worship is promoted. Not by means of images, but by the lively preaching of His Word God is pleased to be worshiped. That which represents God to the people of God is His Word, supplemented by the signs and seals of the sacraments. 

*Not by means of images,  
but by the lively preaching  
of His Word God is pleased  
to be worshiped.  
That which represents God  
to the people of God  
is His Word, supplemented  
by the signs and seals  
of the sacraments.*

# Cancer

“And Jesus answering said unto them, They that are whole need not a physician; but they that are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.”

Luke 5:31,32

I recall a conversation I had with a certain Dr. John Marcus when I was a college student learning how to do cancer research. And yes, this is the same man who is now serving as pastor of First PRC of Edmonton. At the time we talked, Rev. Marcus was working as a research scientist at the Van Andel Institute in Grand Rapids. Over lunch we conversed about our future career plans, and I expressed my surprise to him regarding his pursuit of the ministry after having invested nearly a decade in scientific training. He simply smiled and said that he felt called to help fight a different kind of disease than the one he was currently working on as a scientist.

At the time, I understood what he meant. Somewhat. Clearly, the future Rev. Marcus was referring to diseases of the soul, the kind that need the Great Physician and not a human doctor. But, at the same time, I do not think I really understood the depth of his analogy. In part, this was because I was young and naïve regarding this world and its sins; but it was also because I had only just begun the work of researching the disease we call cancer.

Looking back at that conversation today, I can see how very insightful this analogy truly is. Like many of the symbolic relationships presented in Scripture, the representation of sin as a disease has far more depth than most of the simple analogies we draw from our own experience. Both diseases and sins come in a bewildering variety of forms that are more or less evident in the lives

of the afflicted. Some sins are acute, heat-of-the-moment sins that we realize and repent of almost as soon as we commit them—like a quick bout of flu that comes and goes in just a few hours. Other sins are more like chronic infectious diseases. These symbolize the besetting sins that plague us for a lifetime, needing constant spiritual attention and repentance on a near daily basis. Some sins are like blindness, dimming our view of Christ and the glory of our Father in heaven. Others are like dementia, causing us to forget the promises of the gospel and the hope of life eternal. No matter the sin, we find pain and misery that only has one true cure—the cross—and the only physician—our Lord Jesus Christ.

I have no doubt that an entire book could be written on how each disease of the body has unique similarities to a specific sin, especially since Scripture mentions quite a wide range of different maladies, each of which is its own picture of sin. From my own experience, however, I especially see *cancer* as a remarkable representation for sin. Not only are the specific features of cancer applicable here, but so too are the therapies used to treat this dreadful disease. Furthermore, our collective experience with this disease is vast—almost every reader of this article has likely been touched by cancer, sometimes very directly. We know friends, family members, and other loved ones who have suffered from or succumbed to cancer, and it is an all-too-fearful fact that many of us will face this disease personally.

Cancer takes on an especially personal dimension in comparison to other diseases because it emerges from the cells of a patient's own body. Cells that become cancerous arise progressively from normal tissues that accumulate genetic damage from a variety of sources, including those external to the body (UV light, chemicals) and those internal to it (metabolic byproducts of oxygen). We will return to the *progressive* nature of cancer later, but here I would point readers to the fact that cancer arises from an *internal* process of corruption within the body. As such, it is a disease that is unique to each

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person at the genetic level, which has led to the realization that each patient really needs to be evaluated and treated according to his or her own unique cancer.<sup>1</sup>

The *intrinsic*—or personal—aspect of cancer provides an especially good comparison to sin if we think of the analogy in terms of the threefold enemy of believers. In this context cancer best represents sin that arises from our own fallen nature rather than that which arises from the external work of Satan and the world upon our souls. In many ways our individual besetting sins are so personal because they seem to emerge out of the very fiber of our character. Consider, for instance, the man to whom God has given the gift of leadership. He may serve confidently and wisely in church office, or perhaps as a member of school boards and other committees doing kingdom work. For such a man—gifted and confident—the sin of pride is an ever-present foe, tempting him to turn God’s providence into an occasion for personal glory. This is not the only example that we can envision, since our greatest personal gifts often become the conduit to our worst spiritual liabilities. Our sins flow out of our nature, each individual believer battling the depravity clinging to his or her own unique character.

Just as physicians have to be able to diagnose the kind of cancer they are treating in order to know what they should expect during the treatment process, so we have to be aware of our own God-given personality to realize the sorts of besetting sins to which we are most liable. Doing a regular “spiritual diagnosis” through Scripture study and prayer is key to our recognition of what we need to confess before God, and for what we should seek His forgiveness (Ps. 139:23, 24; II Cor. 13:5). When we know what we are fighting at the spiritual level, we are better able to respond to the treatments that God has prepared to root the cancer of sin out of our souls.

The predictive ability of a physician to know what sort of cancer a patient is at risk for developing is an important aspect of treatment, but so too is the work of medical pathologists who use visual images of cancer biopsies to diagnose the type and severity of tumors. Patholo-

gists often describe cancer with words that are chillingly descriptive of how awful this disease can be for patients. These words are worth noting because they can just as easily be used to describe how sin works on our souls. Understand that this is not just dramatic language meant to overemphasize the analogy between cancer and sin. The awful nature of this disease should remind us that sin is not some benign weakness or temporary inconvenience to our spiritual life—it is truly a life-threatening corruption that, if left untreated, can kill us spiritually.

Cancer is often described as an *insidious* disease, one that almost imperceptibly begins to grow within the body before the patient realizes something is wrong. Quite often the process of cancerous growth begins slowly, *progressing* over a long period of time during which a patient has few—if any—symptoms that would suggest something is wrong. Much of the routine screening done in modern healthcare is aimed at catching cancers early in their progression, before they develop into a *malignant* and destructive tumor. Tumors that have begun to extend finger-like projections of cells into the normal tissue environment surrounding them—a process called invasion—are defined as being *malignant*, whereas tumors that remain clearly separated from normal tissue are considered *benign*. It is, in fact, the claw-like *invasive* features of this disease that lead to it being called cancer, the Latin word for “crab.”<sup>2</sup> Invasive tumors are far more difficult to remove than most benign tumors, and worst of all, they may not stay in their original tissue location. Invasion of cancer cells into the bloodstream or lymph nodes allows them to spread to distant locations in the body in a process called *metastasis*. It is quite often these secondary tumors that cause the biggest problem for cancer patients, as they are much harder to find and treat than the original tumor. While the actual cause of death for patients can vary widely, cancerous tumors tend to be metabolically *parasitic*, slowly draining patients of the energy and nutrients they need to remain healthy.

Each of the words italicized in the preceding paragraph can equally be used to describe sin. Sin is *insidious* in

<sup>1</sup> In this context it is important to realize that cancer is not really a single disease, but a spectrum of diseases—each with its own unique causes and features. The National Cancer Institute lists about 180 different cancers known to scientists (<https://www.cancer.gov/types>), although this is still an underestimate since many of these cancers have distinct subtypes with their own prognoses.

<sup>2</sup> Long before the origin of cancer was known, the Greek physician Hippocrates noticed that tumors often formed claw-like tendrils that invaded into normal tissue and described the malignancy as *karkinos*, the Greek word for “crab.” Rediscovery and translation of Hippocrates’ works at the advent of modern medicine are the basis for our calling the disease by the Latin word “cancer.”

character; we often do not even realize its seriousness because the consequences early on may be few, and the sin is hidden to others around us. Sin is also *progressive* in our lives. Very rarely does sin begin as a single, massive event. More often it emerges slowly as a gradual—and perhaps unnoticeable—moral slide. An extra look at the sidebar ad on an otherwise decent website. One click. Then another. And so on. How often is this not the pathway to a fall into the sin of pornographic addiction, or gambling, or gossip—or a whole list of other sins? Sin is deceptively insidious and progressive as it emerges from our fallen nature to entangle us.

Once it has its hold, sin becomes progressively *malignant* in our lives. All sins can be addictive to our fallen human nature, capable of capturing our minds and bodies in such a way that our souls too become completely ensnared. In the absence of Spirit-led intervention, sin inevitably *invades* into our life, slowly choking out the desire for God's Word and progressively stealing time away from the activities that should characterize the life of a believer. Prayer? Scripture reading? Meditation? Service to family and church? There is no time left for these vital activities when a sin has its hold on us. Like an invasive cancer, it spreads to our every thought and motivation, draining away our spiritual energy so that nothing is left of our covenant relationship with God. Such is the way of terminal sin—it is like a *parasitic* organism growing within us, slowly choking away our spiritual life.

And it is not only the spiritual health of individual believers that is at risk to the malignancy of sin; so too is the health of a much larger organism—the *church*. The apostle Paul often described the church as a body made up of distinct parts with distinct functions (I Cor. 12; Eph. 1:20-23). Within this symbolic language we understand that the church is the figurative body of Christ, united to its Lord by faith through His work on the cross. Until the final resurrection, however, this body is still susceptible to the ravages of sin. It should not escape our notice that many of the New Testament epistles were specifically written to combat sins that were creeping into the early church. Though Paul used a different biological analogy to describe sin in Galatians 5:9 (growth of yeast in bread dough), his point is abundantly clear. Sins—in particular false teachings—have a way of

spreading through the body of Christ like a *metastatic* cancer, threatening to choke out the life of congregations once committed to the truth of Scripture. Sin is not just a personal threat; it is a danger to the entire body of Christ on earth.

But take heart, believer, because there is *treatment* for the spiritual cancer of sin! In His grace God has provided a way out of every sin and temptation, and a treatment that is fitting to the disease that has invaded your soul. In this respect, we can continue to use cancer as an analogy for sin, but now from the point of view of how a physician would prescribe treatment for cancer. So now we turn to the *therapies* for cancer, and how they point us to the work of the Great Physician who operates—as it were—by the work of His Holy Spirit.

*Surgery* is the first line of treatment for many cancers. The goal of surgical treatment is to cut cancer out, removing it entirely from the body. Such is the purpose of *God's Word* relative to sin in our lives. The author of Hebrews even compares the Word of God to something like a surgeon's scalpel, "sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow...a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Heb. 4:12). Like a scalpel in the hand of the Spirit, the Word exposes and cuts away the sins of our soul. Thank God for this tool, for without it we would be unable to escape the spiritually deadly growth of sin in our fallen flesh.

A similar mode of treatment is prescribed by Scripture for the cancer of sin that threatens to metastasize more broadly into the body of Christ (Matt. 18:15-18; I Cor. 5:1-13). In this case, Christ gives the power of the scalpel to His church to remove from itself one who walks impenitently in sin, refusing to be admonished (Matt. 16:19). This is the tool of *excommunication*, which is intended to turn a sinner from his sin, but also to preserve the spiritual health of the broader body of believers in a church. As explained in Lord's Day 31 (Q&A 83-85) of the Heidelberg Catechism, excommunication prevents the spread of sinful doctrines or practices, effectively removing this disease before it can produce broader sickness in Christ's spiritual body. Thankfully, it is a tool that is used in sparing measure, but one that is nonetheless presented as a remedy for sin in the church.

Despite their clear power against cancer, scalpels are

not the only instruments in the Great Physician's hand. Especially when the deadly growth of sin has spread into our lives like an invasive cancer, a harsher therapy may be needed in addition to the Word. Chemotherapy and radiation therapy are radically harsh, painful, and even destructive means to treat a cancer patient. They involve the use of toxic chemicals and damaging energy beams to essentially poison or burn away surgically inaccessible cancer cells. We know the side effects of this treatment: nausea, hair loss, burns, and other more long-term effects. But we count these effects worth bearing when they mean life for the patient.

So too the tool of *chastisement* in the hand of God. When applied to the sinning believer, chastisement is never pleasant, or even free of "side effects" in our lives. We feel pain acutely under such circumstances, but that pain is necessary to treat a life-threatening disease. Sin may not be left to relapse; it must be removed at all costs! Our Lord must have shocked His audience when He told them it would be better to amputate a limb or gouge out an eye than to allow that organ to lead them into deadly sin (Matt. 18:8,9). Such is the effect of chastisement in our lives. It may come with permanent scars or life-long disability—physical or spiritual—but for the sparing of life it is worth bearing. When such a chastisement is the tool God chooses to expunge the lingering sin from your soul, say with David "let [me] fall now into the hand of the Lord; for his mercies are great" (II Sam. 24:14).

The three therapies for cancer described above are external sources of treatment for cancer that require the application of a completely foreign device or drug to patients. Though effective in many ways, these forms of treatment often fail in especially aggressive cancers that have metastasized throughout the body. In the last few years a new form of cancer treatment called *immunotherapy* has become a standard weapon in the fight against cancer. This approach is revolutionizing the field of oncology because it works remarkably well for late-stage cancer patients. As its name implies, this form of treatment harnesses a patient's own immune system to fight cancer, but with little of the toxicity associated with more traditional treatments of chemicals and radiation. And though this form of therapy takes a variety of forms, they all share the common purpose of rousing a robust

immune response that can seek and destroy single cancer cells throughout the entire body.

Like the other treatments for cancer, immunotherapy has a clear parallel to God's treatment of our sins. Just as this form of therapy seeks to rouse in the patient an *internal* response to the presence of disease, so too does the Holy Spirit quicken in God's children the "new man" in Christ (Col. 3:10; Eph. 3:16). But rather than using a therapeutic drug to stimulate the new man, the Spirit applies the means of grace as His treatment for an ailing sinner. This making alive of the mind and spirit in a redeemed believer not only enables him to recognize his sins (Eph. 4:22-24), it also creates in him the ability to fight sin and temptation by actively pursuing the will of God (I Pet. 4:2). The quickening of the new man, therefore, seeks and destroys sin in our lives, making us alive in Christ rather than dead in sin (II Cor. 5:17). What a power, that God can rouse in us the ability to fight the deadly disease of sin, clearing it from our souls so that we can again experience a healthy covenant life with Him!

Which therapy is the one you need in your life, believer? What cancer lurks in your soul, needing to be rooted out and destroyed by the work of the Spirit? I do not know and perhaps you do not either—but the Lord does! As the Great Physician, He has an entire collection of specialized scalpels and therapies that can be used to heal you of sin. As we noted earlier, no cancer is the same, which has led to the recognition by modern physicians that what we really need to treat this disease is "personalized medicine." This is what our gracious Lord uses to treat our weaknesses and besetting sins (Heb. 12:1; Ps. 139:23, 24). Thank God that He knows our individual constitutions as our Creator, and pities us like a father pities his children (Ps. 103:13, 14). For each temptation we face with our fallen nature, God provides a gracious means of escape that is uniquely fit for us (I Cor. 10:13). He is the ultimate provider of "personalized medicine" for sin. What a Great Physician!

**"Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies."**

**Psalms 103: 2-4** 

*Called to Watch for Christ's Return*, by Martyn McGeown. Jenison, MI: Reformed Free Publishing Association, 2016. Pp. 286. \$14.95. Paper. [Reviewed by Rev. Ryan Barnhill.]

*Called to Watch for Christ's Return* began as a series of sermons preached by the author on the Olivet Discourse, a speech in which "Jesus proclaims his second coming, an event with which history will come to a dramatic and sudden close" (ix). These sermons covered Matthew 24:1-31, dealing with the signs of Christ's coming—deceivers, the preaching of the gospel, the great tribulation, and more. These sermons also dealt with Matthew 24:32-25:46, treating the subject of watching for Christ's return—the unknown time of His return, Christ's coming as in the days of Noah, parables associated with His coming, and more. These sermons comprise the content of the book. We are thankful that these fine sermons have reached a wider audience through their publication in book form.

McGeown's work is a needed and timely contribution to the study of eschatology (the end times) for two reasons. First, there are so many today teaching unbiblical ideas about the end of the world. *Called to Watch for Christ's Return* interacts with these systems of thought, dismantles them, and plainly sets forth the biblical, Reformed amillennial position. Second, we live in the last days, and that alone makes this book important. We must know what to expect in these last and evil days; we must be admonished to watch for the coming of our Lord; and we must be comforted.

The main strength of *Called to Watch for Christ's Return* is its exegetical precision and richness. The material is always mined from the text. Concepts are carefully defined and developed, and difficult passages are lucidly explained. Especially does this clarity of exegesis become important in passages that deal with such matters as the abomination of desolation (Matt. 24:15-20) and the unknown time of Christ's return (Matt. 24:36). Such passages are often misinterpreted, leading to a host of errors. Thus, proper, sober interpretation is critical in these kinds of difficult passages.

McGeown's work is necessarily polemical. That is, it is a work that exposes and refutes the errors. Advocates of both postmillennialism and premillennial dispensationalism seek to find evidence for their views in Matthew 24 and 25. Postmillennialism teaches that the Olivet Discourse—at least *some* of

it, if not *all* of it—is a reference exclusively to the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. This interpretation is fundamental to the postmillennial position, lest the events of which Jesus speaks interfere with postmillennialism's future golden age. In contrast, premillennial dispensationalists claim that the Olivet Discourse refers exclusively to the future—not to AD 70, but to a future Jerusalem and a future temple. Negatively, the author exposes these errors, and demonstrates how a sober interpretation of Jesus' teaching "pulls the rug out" from under these millennial systems. Positively, McGeown sees Matthew 24 and 25 as a *blending* of the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70, on the one hand, and Jesus' second coming, on the other hand. The destruction of Jerusalem is a *type* or *picture* of Jesus' second coming. This view, the amillennial view, and this view alone, does justice to Jesus' words.

In a book on watching for Christ's return, one would expect not only polemics, but also pointed instruction and warning for believers. After all, we are all prone to spiritual slumber instead of watching for Christ's return. The command of Scripture to watch for our Lord's coming is a weighty command, and the author conveys it well: "Watch! Christ is coming. Let us not be found sleeping when he returns, but looking for his return. Let that watchfulness begin today if it has not been our habit before, so whether he comes on the clouds or calls us in death, we will be ready to meet him" (214). *Called to Watch* is a stirring call to stay vigilant in these last and evil days.


The book is also comforting and warm, an approach that arises from the author's pastoral heart for God's people who live in the perilous days prior to Jesus' coming. This warm tone characterizes the entirety of the book, and climaxes in the last chapter; any reader's heart will *thrill* in reading this last chapter, which explains, in part, the glories of the new heavens and the new earth. Read and meditate upon this breathtaking description of heaven:

Death, sin, and the curse will be absent—forever banished from the new creation. We will enjoy spiritual joy and satisfaction in abundance, for we will enter into the fullness of our inheritance. Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit! That is life, eternal life, life that lasts forever and has no end. Life with Christ. Life in the presence of God, fellowship with him. That is blessedness and joy! That is worth waiting for! Do not fear the judgment day. Do not be weary with watching and waiting. But pray, even for that great day [280].

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Rev. Barnhill is pastor of the Peace Protestant Reformed Church in Lansing, Illinois.

Our Lord is coming. Watch. Watch—by *reading*. *Called to Watch*, as a faithful exposition of Jesus' words, will instruct you, arm you against the errors, comfort

you, and quicken your hope. Come, Lord Jesus, yea, come quickly. 

## CLASSIS WEST REPORT

## REV. DOUGLAS KUIPER

Classis West met on Wednesday, March 1, in Redlands, CA. Visiting Redlands for Classis in early March is a nice break for many of the delegates. Delegates who live in colder climates enjoy a break from winter's cold, and all enjoy a break from the normal routine of work. The fellowship was warm, both in temperature and in spirit.

Attended by two delegates from each church, and chaired by Rev. Kuiper, Classis treated both routine and weighty matters.

Weighty were two matters of discipline regarding which a consistory sought Classis' advice. After hearing of the extensive work of the consistory regarding the two baptized members, Classis advised the consistory to proceed to erasure in both cases.

Routine were the reports of the stated clerk, classical committee, church visitors, and reading sermon committee. The church visitors reported using the text Deuteronomy 17:18-20 and the theme "An Officebearer's Dependence on the Word of God" for their visits. They testified to finding "unity, peace, and love prevailing in our congregations," with the officebearers "faithfully carrying out the duties of their offices according to their abilities." Carrying out this aspect of mutual oversight, the visitors incurred expenses of \$6,430.75.

Not routine, and also weighty, were two requests from ministers, coming through their consistories, to be declared emeritus. Rev. T. Miersma, presently serving Immanuel PRC in Lacombe, AB, requested emeritation due to age (66) and increasing physical limitations and infirmities. Classis granted this request and will forward it to synod for final approval. Rev. R. Hanko, presently serving our congregation in Lynden, WA, also requested emeritation. His stated reason for his request was neither age nor health, but his desire to be closer to his son Neal who lives in Spokane. Most of us are aware that Neal has special needs that require him to live in an institution. Classis rejected Rev. Hanko's request as not satisfying the requirements of Article 13 of our Church Order. Classis also advised Rev. Hanko and Lynden's consistory regarding several specific issues that any future request for early emeritation must address.

Routine, for the March meeting, was the treatment of subsidy requests. Six churches requested subsidy for 2018, for a total of \$276,055. Two churches asked for the same amount of subsidy as in 2017; two asked for more than 2017, explaining their reasons; two asked for less. Each church submitted financial documents supporting its request, as well as a letter explaining what efforts it was making to reduce the amount of subsidy it needs. All six requests were approved and forwarded to synod.


Also routine was the task of voting for various classical functionaries. For three-year terms, Rev. C. Griess was appointed to the classical committee, Rev. D. Kuiper as stated clerk, and Rev. J. Marcus as assistant stated clerk. Revs. A. Brummel, S. Key, R. Kleyn, and D. Kuiper were appointed church visitors for the coming year, with Revs. J. Laning and T. Miersma as alternates. Classis appointed Revs. S. Key and N. Langerak to three-year terms as *primus* and *secundus* synodical deputy, which appointment requires the final approval of synod before going into effect.

Ministers delegated to synod were Revs. B. Huizinga, S. Key, R. Kleyn, D. Kuiper, and J. Laning, with Revs. A. Brummel, J. Engelsma, C. Griess, N. Langerak, and J. Marcus as their alternates. Elder delegates are Robert Brands (Loveland), Keith Bruinsma (Peace), Henry Ferguson (Edmonton), Chester Hunter (Edgerton), and Alan Meurer (Bethel). Should they be unable to attend, they will call on their alternates, who are Rod Griess (Loveland), Loren Gritters (Hull), Steve Huizenga (Crete), Ed Stouwie (Crete), and Ed VanEgdom (Heritage).

The expenses of this meeting totaled \$10,985.41.

The fall meeting of Classis is scheduled for September 27, 2017, hosted by Hull PRC.

We thank God for the traveling mercies He gave the delegates and for the brotherly spirit that prevailed at the meeting. And we—delegates not only, but all members of the PRC—now earnestly beseech Him to use the decisions that were made for the good of our churches, and to give those affected by these decisions the grace to receive them in a humble and willing spirit.

Rev. Douglas Kuiper,  
Stated Clerk 

### Trivia Question

The 2016 PRC *Acts of Synod* lists five current PRC ministers whose last name begins with the letter "K." Can you name them? Answers later in this column.

### Congregational Activities

The sanctuary at Heritage PRC in Sioux Falls, SD gets filled up once a year. That's the Sunday evening before President's Day when the congregation there hosts an annual singspiration for the five Siouxland churches. That date is chosen because there is no school the next day, making it more conducive to a larger crowd. This year the temperature was a balmy 55 degrees (F) on a February night, about 25 degrees above normal, making it even more favorable for a great gathering! And sing they did! The area young people contributed some enjoyable special numbers, and refreshments concluded the evening. Many are looking forward to next year in Dakota!

### Minister Activities

Zion PRC formed the trio of Rev. G. Eriks, Rev. C. Haak, and Rev. R. Kleyn. Rev. Haak received the call on March 7 to serve as their first pastor.

Byron Center PRC formed a new trio from which to call a home missionary. This trio included Rev.

C. Haak, Rev. S. Key, and Rev. W. Langerak. On February 26 the call was extended to Rev. Langerak. May God grant him a clear indication of His will in this matter.

The Council of Southwest PRC in Wyoming, MI formed a new trio from which to call their next pastor. The men included Rev. Steven Key, Rev. William Langerak, and Rev. Jon Mahtani, with the call issued to Rev. Key on March 8. The congregation also approved a list of improvements to their parsonage.

### Sister-Church Activities

The Family Support Ministry group of the Covenant Evangelical Reformed Church in Singapore has chosen to discuss the book *Leaving Father and Mother* by C. Hanko beginning March 19.

### School Activities

The Covenant Christian High School Robotics Team hosted the Second Annual Grand Rapids Invitational FTC Tournament on March 11. More than ten teams from all over the Midwest competed with matches running throughout the day. Some of the robots were made available to be run by the public. Imagine the fun! Speaking of robotics...the team from Trinity Christian High in Hull, IA competed in the Iowa State Robotics championships recently and did very well.

The freshmen and sophomore classes of Trinity Christian High School in Hull, IA invited those from the five Siouxland area

churches to their annual Volleyball Tournament/Pasta Feed. Tournaments were also held in Rook and Bean Bag Toss. A lasagna and bread supper was provided for a free-will offering.

### Evangelism Activities

The Evangelism Committee of Byron Center, MI PRC provided an opportunity for each of its members to invite friends, neighbors, and members of the community to a special worship service on March 19. The topic "Wonder of Holy Scripture" was to be taken from II Timothy 3:16-17. Flyers were available for handout and refreshments were served after the service.

### Young People's Activities

The young people of Heritage PRC in Sioux Falls, SD held an interesting fundraiser in late February. A Pinewood Derby racing event took place, with weigh-in for the 36 registered cars at 11:00 A.M. and racing to follow into the afternoon. Derby car kits had been made available sometime in advance so racers young and old could prepare and refine their machines to top performance! The young people served grilled cheese sandwiches and soup for a free-will donation. A grand time was had by participants and spectators alike. For a short time some of the men thought they were boys again.

The YPS of Randolph, WI PRC planned a fundraiser at the Pizza Ranch in Waupun recently.

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

## Mission Activities

The Classis of the Protestant Reformed Churches of the Philippines met Saturday, February 15 in the Maranatha PRC of Valenzuela City with all the business being normal and routine. We have noted before concerning different church bodies that when all business is normal and routine there is something to be thankful for. That means difficulties and calamities are not occurring, for which we praise God.

## Denominational Activities

Classis West of the PRCA met March 1 in Hope PRC of Redlands, CA. Classis approved a request from Lacombe, AB, Canada for the emer-


itation of Rev. Thomas Miersma. Subsidy requests were approved and synodical delegates selected. Classis West will meet next on September 27 in Hull, IA PRC, D.V.

Classis East will meet on May 10, 2017 at Byron Center church. On May 9, at 7:00 P.M., the Byron Center PRC Council invites all past and current officebearers to hear a timely speech regarding an increasingly important issue in the world around us, but also behavior that has found its way into God's church. Professor David J. Engelsma has agreed to speak on "Pastoral Treatment of Spousal (wife) Abuse in the PRC." This officebearer's conference will be held at Byron Center PRC. A time for Q&A and fellow-

ship will follow the speech. All men desiring to serve in God's church are also welcome, regardless of having previously served.

## Trivia Answers

The five PRC ministers whose last names begin with the letter "K" are: Rev. Steven Key in Loveland, CO; Rev. Daniel Kleyn, missionary to the Philippines; Rev. Rodney Kleyn in Spokane, WA; Rev. Ken Koole in Grandville, MI; and Rev. Doug Kuiper from Edgerton, MN. More trivia next time.

"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 Georgetown PRC express their sincere sympathy to Isaac (Ike) Kuiper in the death of his wife,

#### JANE KUIPER.

It is our prayer that he and his extended family may receive comfort from the Holy Spirit 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

### Resolution of Sympathy

■ The Council and congregation of First PRC of Holland extend our Christian sympathy to Mrs. Genevieve Warner, Jack and Kim Warner, grandchildren, and great grandchildren in the death of

#### VIRGIL WARNER,

on February 12, 2017. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him" (I Corinthians 2:9).

Wesley Koops, Assistant Clerk

### Classis East

■ Classis East will meet in regular session on Wednesday, May 10, 2017 at the Byron Center Protestant Reformed Church. Material to be treated at this session must be in the hands of the stated clerk by April 10, 2017.

Gary Boverhof, Stated Clerk

■ The Byron Center PRC Council cordially invites past and current officebearers, along with men who aspire to the offices in God's church, to a speech by Professor David J. Engelsma on the evening of May 9, 2017. He will speak concerning the increasingly disturbing reality of spousal abuse in the world, but especially within God's church. Insight will be offered regarding how pastors (and elders) might react in these difficult situations. A time for questions and answers will follow and then a time of fellowship over coffee. We hope to see you there.

Time: 7:00 P.M.

Place: Byron Center PRC

### Synod

■ All standing and special committees of the synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches, as well as individuals who wish to address Synod 2017 are hereby notified that all material for this year's synod should be in the hands of the stated clerk no later than April 15. Please send material to:

Rev. Ron VanOverloop  
O-11243 8th Ave. NW  
Grand Rapids, MI 49534  
(rvanoverloop22@gmail.com)

### NOTICE

■ The Building Expansion Finance Committee of the Trinity Protestant Reformed Church of Hudsonville, MI is soliciting for private, unsecured 5-year loans to fund the proposed construction of their new sanctuary addition. These notes will bear interest at a rate of 3% per annum with interest paid annually and with principle due in full at maturity. Interested parties should contact either Tom Holstege (616-802-7751 / Tom@miedemaconcrete.com) or Marc Velthouse (616-890-6332 / marc.velthouse@yahoo.com) for further details.

## Gospel Truth of Justification

by David J. Engelsma

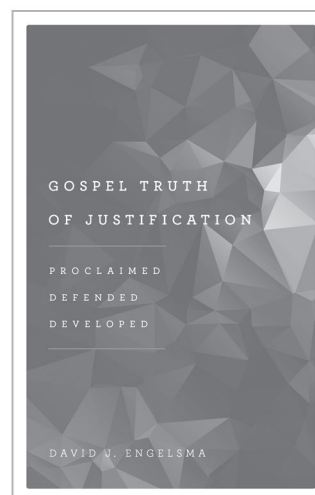
AD 2017 marks the five-hundredth anniversary of the Reformation of the church of Jesus Christ. In 1517 the Reformer Martin Luther affixed the ninety-five theses to the door of the church in Wittenberg, Germany, the act by which Jesus Christ began his reformation of his church. Essential to this Reformation was the gospel-truth of justification by faith alone. This book on justification is intended by the Reformed Free Publishing Association and the author to celebrate that glorious work of Christ.

But the purpose is more than a celebration of the beginning of the Reformation. It is to maintain, defend, and promote the Reformation in the perilous times for the church at present. The doctrine of justification by faith alone is so fundamental to the gospel of grace that an exposition and defense of this truth are in order always. The true church of Christ in the world simply cannot keep silent about this doctrine. To keep silent about justification by faith alone would be to silence the gospel.



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### Reformed Witness Hour

April 2017

Rev. Rodney Kleyn

Date	Topic	Text
April 2	"Christian Stewardship"	Exodus 20:15
April 9	"Messiah Must Suffer"	Mark 8:32, 32
April 16	"Risen According to the Scriptures"	I Corinthians 15:4
April 23	"The Taming of the Tongue"	Exodus 20:16
April 30	"Obedience from the Heart"	Exodus 20:17