

The Standard Bearer

A Reformed Semi-Monthly Magazine • June 2016

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Jesus Is Head over All to His Body

“And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.”

Ephesians 1:22, 23

Our text arises out of Paul's prayer for the Christians at Ephesus. Paul always assured those to whom he wrote that he was praying for them. This is what it means to be a pastor! And this is a wonderful expression of the communion of saints!

Paul told the Ephesian Christians that he was asking God to give them the spirit of wisdom and revelation so they might better understand what is the hope of those whom God calls, what is the riches of the glory of the hoped-for inheritance promised them, and what is the exceeding greatness of God's power that is working in them to bring them to that inheritance (vv. 16-19). Paul gave a reassuring example of the exceeding greatness of God's power when he described the power of God that exalted Jesus, first out of death and then to the position

of sitting at God's right hand, which itself is the position of greatest authority and power (vv. 20, 21).

Jesus' Headship

This text declares that Jesus has two exalted positions of greatest authority and power. One is over all the universe, and the other is over the church.

Jesus is Lord of all! God exalted Him to the supreme position of having *all things* under Him. He assured His disciples of this very fact when He gave them the great commission at His ascension: “All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth” (Matt. 28:18). Consider three other passages that detail Jesus' position of greatest authority and power. “Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth” (Phil. 2:9, 10). At God's right hand “angels and authorities and powers [are] made subject unto him” (I Pet. 3:22). Everything in the entire universe was “created by him, and for him” (Col. 1:16, 17).

In addition to being Lord of *all*, Jesus is also Lord of the *church*. This relationship is described in the text as

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

The Standard Bearer (ISSN 0362-4692 [print], 2372-9813 [online]) is a semi-monthly periodical, except monthly during June, July, and August, published by the Reformed Free Publishing Association, Inc.: 1894 Georgetown Center Dr., Jenison, MI 49428-7137.

Postmaster: Send address changes to the *Standard Bearer*, 1894 Georgetown Center Dr., Jenison, MI 49428-7137.

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Editorial Office

Prof. Barrett Gritters
4949 Ivanrest Ave. SW
Wyoming, MI 49418
gritters@prca.org

Business Office

Standard Bearer
Mr. Timothy Pipe
1894 Georgetown Center Dr.
Jenison, MI 49428-7137
PH: 616-457-5970
tim@rfpa.org

Church News Editor

Mr. Perry Van Egdom
2324 Fir Ave.
Doon, IA 51235
vanegdoms@gmail.com

United Kingdom Office

c/o Mrs. Alison Graham
27 Woodside Road
Ballymena, BT42 4HX
Northern Ireland
alisongraham2006@hotmail.co.uk

Rep. of Ireland Office

c/o Rev. Martyn McGeown
38 Abbeyvale
Corbally
Co Limerick, Ireland

Subscription Price

\$23.00 per year in the US, \$35.00 elsewhere
New eSubscription: \$23.00
eSubscription for current hardcopy subscribers: \$11.50.

Advertising Policy

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Website for RFPA: www.rfpa.org
Website for PRC: www.prc.org

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His being the Head of “the church, which is his body.” There are two implications that we draw from this expression.

The use of this figure of speech teaches us that the relationship between Jesus and the church is the closest possible relationship. Together they are a spiritual *organism*; they have the same life. It is Christ’s Spirit that gives the life of the Head to each member of the body. Jesus is the Head in the sense that He is the source and center of the church’s life. Further, as the Head Jesus loves and cares for every member of the church, even as the head controls and cares for its body. Each member of Jesus’ body is dear to Him. He is always caring for and protecting every member of His body.

The second implication from this figure is that Jesus is the *legal* Head of the church. He is her King, ruling over her and governing her throughout history. He protects her from the devil and from all the powers of this present evil world, both of which are striving mightily to destroy her. Jesus’ power assures us that the gates of hell cannot prevail against His church (Matt. 16:18). At the same time, Jesus rules His church by His grace, making the members ready and willing to serve Him.

Jesus Fills and Is Filled

Our text declares that Jesus fills “all in all.” Jesus fills everything in the sense that He gives purpose and meaning to everything. He is first before all things and for Him all things were created (Col. 1:16, 17). “In the dispensation of the fulness of times” God is gathering “together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him” (Eph. 1:10). This means that everything takes place *by Him*, and the purpose and meaning of all things is that they take place *for Him*. Everything in the universe is dependent on Jesus for the supply of its every need. Also everything and every event in the history of the world, from the smallest to the greatest, are made to serve Him and His cause. His virtue of sovereign control of all things radiates perfect and beautiful glory in all things!

That the time of Jesus’ birth is identified as “the fulness of times” shows that all of time centers on Jesus’ birth and life. He fills time. He is the center of the world, filling all in all as an on-going activity. The operation of filling all things is not a work of a single moment, but Jesus’ con-

stant activity as Lord of all. Just as the sun keeps filling the earth with light, so Jesus Christ is continually filling all in all.

While Jesus’ glory fills everything in the world, His focus is on the church. She is dearest of all to Him. Therefore, we may say that Jesus rules and governs everything in the interest of Himself and His church. He rules over all “to the church.” God gave Jesus to the church as her Head, and He gave the church to Him as His body. He and His body cannot be separated. For this reason, all things exist and all things take place not only for Jesus’ glory and enjoyment, but for the redemption of the church.

Jesus fills the whole church and everyone in the church, from the least to the greatest member. He fills each one according to his/her capacity. The good present in each member of the church is, by the grace of God, the good of the Head. Altogether, all the attributes and graces of the Lord Jesus are distributed and displayed in the church so that the full glory of Jesus is seen in the church as a whole.

While the full perfection of Christ’s filling of the church will be seen clearly in heaven, it is true already now, for Jesus dwells in each member by His Spirit and grace. He fills each member with the light of the knowledge of Him and of spiritual things. This is in part what is meant by the expression: “blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ” (1:3). The tense of the verbs used in 2:5, 6 shows that it is already true that the members of Jesus’ body not only have been made alive together with Him, but also have been raised up together and made to sit together in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus.

On the other hand, the relationship that God has established between Christ and His church is such that the church fills Christ. The church is the instrument through which the many riches of God’s perfections in Christ shine. Thus the elect church fills Christ, without which Christ would not be complete. This does not mean that the church is anything in herself, as if the church adds something to Christ. The meaning is that the church is Christ’s complement, completing Him. As He in us fills us, so we in Him fill Him. Those who fill Christ are those given Him of the Father. God is pleased so to unite Jesus to the church that as the head needs the body, as the shepherd needs his sheep, as the bridegroom needs his


bride, as the vine needs the branches, so Christ needs the church. In this sense, the church fills Christ.

Implications and Conclusions

The privilege and the honor of being in Christ is greater than any other privilege and honor in this world. What is true of Christ is true of the church and of each elect. As we were in Adam, so now we are in Christ. We have been crucified with Him. And we were risen with Him. So now, in Him, we are dead to sin and alive unto God (Rom. 6:11).

Abide in Christ. He abides in you (John 15:4). Live

the life that is yours in Him. Exercise the power of the life of Christ that is in you. Use your spiritual muscles to mortify the members of your body that are instruments of sin. Do all you can with all your spiritual might.

Realize that the power of every member of Christ's body is to be measured by the power Jesus has at God's right hand (cf. 21, 22). Put Christ's power over against your every weakness. Put Christ's power over against all the forces against the church and each elect. Be assured that nothing happens to you apart from Him who works all things for your spiritual and eternal good. 

EDITORIAL

PROF. RUSSELL DYKSTRA

The Pillar and Ground of the Truth

But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.

I Timothy 3:15

The Bible describes the church of Jesus Christ with many striking figures. Among other things the church is called the body of Christ, the temple of God, the bride of Christ, the sheepfold of Christ, Mt. Zion, and Jerusalem.

One of the more unusual descriptions of the church is found in Paul's first epistle to Timothy. Paul describes the church as "the pillar and ground of the truth." The Spirit leads Paul to draw for us a graphic picture in order to bring out important truths about the nature and calling of the church. What is the idea of this figure?

A pillar is the part of a building that is designed to support the structure. Often it supports the roof of the building. Think of the huge Greek temples of Paul's day with the massive pillars supporting the entire temple. Or think of Samson in the temple of the Philistines' idol Dagon, taking "hold of the two middle pillars upon which the house stood, and on which it was borne up" (Judges 16:29), with that last miraculous strength that God gave him to pull down the entire temple upon the Philistines. The church is that kind of a pillar—the pillar of the truth.

But, Paul adds, the church is also a "ground." The ground is the foundation of the building. It is upon the ground that the pillar rests, and the entire building. The importance of the foundation cannot be overstated. Jesus' parable of the wise and the foolish builders (Matt.

7:24-27) illustrates that the quality and stability of the foundation will determine whether or not the building stands. Build your house on the rock, and it will stand firm in storm and flood. Build your house on sand, and the winds and floods will tear it apart. If the ground or foundation of a building is unstable, the building will not last. It must be firm and secure.

Scripture applies that figure to the church, calling the church the pillar and ground "of the truth." In this figure, the truth is pictured as the roof, as it were. As the pillar of the truth, the church holds up the truth. As the ground, the church is that on which the truth rests. The picture reveals that the church on this earth acts as the support of the truth. Without the church, the truth would come crashing down.

That is, initially, a surprising figure. We might think that the

relationship of the church and the truth is the other way around. Does not the Bible teach that the church is built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ being the chief cornerstone (Eph. 2:19-21)? And is it not so, that if the church loses the truth, then the church is soon destroyed? Does not the truth, then, support the church? All that is true; yet the Spirit also identifies the church as the pillar and ground of the truth.

In what sense is that true, and how does the church become the support of the truth?

First, and negatively, it is not that the church determines the truth. Rome used this passage in its attack on the Reformers. For Rome, the members who come to worship do not constitute the church. Rather the church is the magisterium, that is, the priests, bishops, archbishops, cardinals, and on up to the pope. From that mistaken view of the church developed the serious error that only the church could determine what is truth. Rome maintained that the Bible is under the magisterium—only the church can interpret the Bible. So, if the pope says, “This is truth,” then it is truth. The opposite is also true: what the Pope condemns is not truth.

The Reformers rejected that view of the church and its relationship to truth. They pointed to John 17:17—“Thy word is truth.” The church does not determine the truth—the Bible does. The church must study the truth and set it forth clearly, but always subject to the Bible.

What then must the church do to

be faithful to this description, to this calling? In a word, the church must defend, maintain, and promote the truth. What a glorious calling God has given the church! The truth is a treasure beyond compare, for it is the revelation of God Himself, the sovereign Creator and Preserver of the entire creation. It is the truth of the Holy One, far exalted above all that He has made, infinite in His perfections. It is the truth about Jehovah, the Triune, covenant God.

That truth is set forth in God’s beloved Son, Jesus, who is the way, the truth, and the life. This Jesus is the very Word of God. When God speaks, He reveals Himself to His people. That speech is always in and through Jesus Christ, for “grace and truth came by Jesus Christ” (John 1:17). To His people, God’s speech expresses His love for them, manifested concretely in the cross of Jesus.

What a glorious possession is God’s truth! Because God is unchanging, His truth is unchanging. God’s truth reaches “unto the clouds” (Ps. 57:10). All His “works are truth” (Dan. 4:37) and He “keepeth truth for ever” (Ps. 146:6). Thus, His “truth endureth to all generations” (Ps. 100:5), even “for ever” (Ps. 117:2).

Truth is a vitally important gift. “Mercy and truth preserve the king” (Prov. 20:28); it is the believer’s “shield and buckler” (Ps. 91:4). God “begat...us with the word of truth” (James 1:18). Jesus promised all His disciples that they will “know the truth, and the truth shall make [them] free” (John 8:32). And He commanded that “they that worship

[God] must worship him in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24).

The church is the pillar and ground of that truth. She is called to set forth that truth in all its beauty. The church studies the Bible with the desire to grow in understanding of God’s truth. She develops the doctrines of Scripture so that the truth is ever more clearly and precisely maintained. This happens weekly as the minister of the Word searches the Scriptures and preaches the truth to his congregation. This happens as believers expound the truth in articles, pamphlets, and books. The truth is being held up, sharpened, and displayed.

The church displays this glorious truth through the spread of the gospel. As missionaries go forth, they spread the truth of God. As those books and articles traverse the globe, the truth is spread. The church zealous for missions is a church faithful to her calling to be the pillar and ground of the truth. The desire to send forth the gospel is not only a desire that the church be gathered, but also that the truth of God be known throughout the world. And as the church is gathered, and new congregations established, those churches likewise stand as the pillar and ground of the truth.

A vital part of her calling as pillar and ground of truth is that the church defend the truth against heresy. The truth must be kept pure. The necessity of defending the truth is due simply to the reality that God’s revelation always faces opposition in this sinful world. Jesus indicates Satan’s steadfast op-

position to truth: He “abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him;...he is a liar, and the father of it [the lie]” (John 8:44).

Not only that, but the world of the ungodly actively opposes that truth. Romans 1 teaches that unbelievers “hold [i.e., hold down, suppress] the truth in unrighteousness” (v. 18). Hence, they have “changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen” (v. 25).

With all that opposition, if God were simply to send His Word into the earth, it would soon be twisted beyond recognition. God’s truth would quickly be completely obscured, hidden from the sight of men. Even in the church that can happen. If the church fails vigorously to proclaim and to defend the truth, false prophets oppose it, and soon the truth is unknown in the sphere of the church. The prophet Hosea’s rebuke to the Old Testament church confirms this: “Hear the word of the LORD, ye children of Israel: for the LORD hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, *because there is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land*” (4:1).

Knowing the depravity of man, God determined to preserve His revelation by making the church the pillar and ground of the truth.

There are, conceivably, other options. God could periodically appear on the earth to keep His truth pure. Or, perhaps God could have chosen to send angels to oversee the preservation of His

truth among men—striking fear into the hearts of unbelievers, and correcting any errors that crept into the doctrines. God might have continued the Old Testament method of revelation, sending prophets who were not allowed to interpret the Word, only repeat God’s message word for word. Or, perhaps God could have determined to send a new revelation every few decades, say, a Bible with a new revelation of the truth.

But God chose none of those methods. He chose rather to have a church on earth from the beginning to the end of time having the right and the privilege of being the pillar and ground of the truth.

In his commentary on I Timothy 3:15, Calvin writes:

Accordingly in reference to men, the Church maintains the truth, because by preaching the Church proclaims it, because she keeps it pure and entire, because she transmits it to posterity. And if the instruction of the gospel be not proclaimed, if there are no godly ministers who, by their preaching, rescue truth from darkness and forgetfulness, instantly falsehoods, errors, impostures, superstitions, and every kind of corruption, will reign. In short, silence in the Church is the banishment and crushing of the truth.

In the last while, I was again reminded of how easily the truth can be lost. The first reminder was an entire semester of teaching medieval church history, a graphic reminder of how the church of Jesus Christ on the earth neglected, ignored, and

eventually despised and violently opposed the truth. The second reminder was through two significant lectures given at the PRC Seminary by Rev. Tom Reid on the history of the French Reformed churches.¹ These churches failed completely to root out the error of a conditional covenant theology, and they eventually lost the truth. Though there were other factors involved in their demise, that failure was the beginning of the decline. The church in the land of John Calvin, the Reformed church at one time numbering many thousands, today is reduced virtually to nothing.

No wonder, then, that the inspired apostle writes an entire epistle to instruct the church concerning proper behavior in the church. If the church is not faithful in her offices, worship, and walk of life, she will neglect the great treasure God has entrusted to her—the truth. Proper behavior is the good order that God requires in His church. God is not the God of confusion, but of peace and order. It may never be as in Israel when there was no king, and every man did what was right in his own eyes. When that happens in the church, decisions are based on the minister’s or consistory’s fancy, without proper and biblical grounds.

History has shown the disastrous effects on truth when there is not good order. Consistories, classes,

¹ Rev. Tom Reid is the head librarian in the Reformed Presbyterian Theological Seminary in Pittsburgh. His speeches are available online through the PRC Seminary website (www.prca.org). They will be printed in future issues of the *Protestant Reformed Theological Journal*.


and synods make decisions that are unjust, for they are not well-grounded in Scripture, but rather decisions swayed by public opinion. The truth is sold for a mess of pottage. There is strife, bitterness, and schism. And the truth suffers.

Again, Calvin zeros in on the importance:

By holding out to pastors the greatness of the office, he undoubtedly intended to remind them with

what fidelity, and industry, and reverence they ought to discharge it. How dreadful is the vengeance that awaits them, if, through their fault, that truth which is the image of the Divine glory, the light of the world, and the salvation of men, shall be allowed to fall! This consideration ought undoubtedly to lead pastors to tremble continually, not to deprive them of all energy, but to excite them to greater vigilance.

With all that is in us, let us hold fast

the truth God has entrusted to our care. In the office of minister, in the seminary, in the ecclesiastical gatherings, as well as in our homes and in their extensions, our schools. And let this description of the church be an encouragement, not to look about to see who in our judgment might not be holding to the truth. Rather, let this be a personal encouragement to every believer and officebearer to be faithful in the position God has given. 

ALL AROUND US

REV. CLAYTON SPRONK

■ Brief Highlights from the CRCNA's 2016 Agenda for Synod

The Christian Reformed Church in America's 669-page agenda has been posted on the Internet. Below are some of the interesting items on the 2016 Synod's agenda.

- The Synod will receive recommendations from the Board of Trustees to adopt "Research Methodology Guidelines for Synodical Committees and Task Forces."

The paragraph that introduces the "Methodology Guidelines" is a noteworthy and candid admission that the CRC does not use Scripture alone as the foundation for its faith and life. It reads,

Nearly every year synod appoints study committees and task forces. In the past, the mandate of such committees has often been focused on scriptural interpretation to make recommendations for ecclesiastical positions and practice. However, more recently, the methods of social science have been called upon, as the scope of tasks has broadened. Surveys are conducted, case studies are elicited, and personal stories are recorded—all in service of synodical study assignments.

- The Synod will spend much time dealing with social issues.

Through its Office of Social Justice the CRC is seeking to "address the root causes of hunger, poverty, and op-

pression around the world." The Office of Social Justice reports that some of its work includes:

- Providing a workshop that "walks participants through the history of relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Canada and the United States."

- Responding "to a request from Nigeria to explore the possibilities of a peace process to resolve economic and religious conflicts in the nations' Middle Belt region."

- The Office of Social Justice along with the CRC's World Renew Committee has also been involved in dealing with "climate change."

- Synod will treat a report from its "Committee to Provide Pastoral Guidance of Same-sex Marriage." Synod will receive a minority report along with the majority report.

The majority report is an open attack on the biblical truth about marriage and a thinly-veiled effort to push the CRC toward fully embracing homosexuality. Regarding the origin of marriage, the report expresses doubt about whether God created and instituted marriage on the sixth day of creation. It states, "Marriage is an ancient institution, and if one is speaking biblically, the adjective might be *primordial*." This is an unbiblical statement that can only be made by an individual or a committee that believes marriage is a man-made institution. And if the CRC adopts the perspective that marriage is a man-made institution, then it will inevitably adopt the position that man may define marriage in a way that sanctions homosexual unions.

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

The minority report is also severely flawed. It is basically an attempt to hold to the CRC's 1973 decision that condemns homosexual behavior but does not condemn homosexual orientation. The CRC allows one to have homosexual desires but does not allow one to act on them. The position outlined by the CRC in 1973 is confusing and untenable. The confusion caused by the 1973 decision is evident in the minority report. For example, the report argues that it would be sinful for two who are Christians to enter into a "celibate same-sex marriage," but it would not necessarily be wrong for two people to remain in a "celibate same-sex marriage" if they were married prior to their conversion. What confusion!

- The Synod will treat 37 overtures.

By my count, nine of them encourage synod to reject the majority report on pastoral guidance for dealing with homosexuality, and two of them encourage synod to adopt the minority report. One overture encourages synod to adopt the practice of appointing homosexuals as advisors to synod. One overture urges synod to require the website of its radio ministry to remove articles that endorse homosexual marriage (!). Another overture desires the adoption of the Belhar Confession as a fourth creed for the CRC.

■ Michigan Church Responds to the Bullying Tactics of a Homosexual Activist

Many Jenison, MI area churches were subjected to slander during a June 2015 gay-rights rally. Signs were used with the names of the churches, without their consent, proclaiming that they "believe in love." One sign read, "Faith Protestant Reformed Church Believes In Love." The words may sound innocent, but since the sign was being held up by a gay-rights activist during a pro-gay rally, the message conveyed by the sign is that Faith PRC, and the other churches, support and approve of the homosexual lifestyle. The gay-rights activists were suggesting that condemning homosexuality is hateful, and that any church that truly "believes in love" must accept homosexuality. One church has decided to respond to the use of its name this way by suing the individual, a Daniel Vanderley, who is responsible for the signs. No, it is not Faith PRC that is suing, but Jenison Bible Church.

On *MLive.com* Matt Vande Bunte reports¹ on Jenison Bible Church's lawsuit:

The suit states that the church's ministry was harmed because the sign suggested the church is "opposed to the biblical definition of marriage and in favor of 'same-sex marriage.'" The complaint seeks a public apology from Vanderley.

"Jenison Bible Church, and any other church for that matter, has the right to teach and hold fast to its Biblical beliefs and teaching and to defend against having those beliefs intentionally and falsely misrepresented to the public," said Jim Wierenga, an attorney for the church.

"Vanderley tried to bully Jenison Bible Church, and other local churches, by threatening that, if they did not hold a sign conveying that their church believes in so-called 'same sex marriage,' that he would make sure that someone of his choosing held such a sign and misrepresented the church's position to the media and the public at large. Vanderley knew that he did not have Jenison Bible's permission to associate the church with his message. Yet he did so anyway."

Jenison Bible Church has good reason to be appalled by the use of its name in support of homosexuality. The church's suit states, "Any intentional and public distortion of Jenison Bible's position on marriage and sexual immorality negatively impacts Jenison Bible's ability to effectively share the gospel." The gospel is indeed at stake. Daniel Vanderley's actions are part of the large-scale attack on the gospel by the homosexual movement today. And churches that desire to be faithful pillars of the truth of Scripture must publicly and courageously defend and declare the truth concerning marriage and sexual immorality. To do this the churches must receive and pray for much wisdom from God.

It is not always so easy to know how to respond to the slanderers. I dare guess that many readers of the *SB* have different reactions to Jenison Bible Church's lawsuit. Some probably think it is a great idea, and wonder why Faith PRC has not also actively sought a public apology from Mr. Vanderley in order to clear the church's name from any hint of support for homosexuality. I do not see anything wrong with the Jenison Bible Church's lawsuit. However, a church is not compelled to respond to every bit of slander hurled its way in order to give a clear wit-

¹ http://www.mlive.com/news/grand-rapids/index.ssf/2016/05/michigan_church_suing_gay_acti.html.

ness to the truth. For one thing, the homosexual activists want to provoke responses so as to paint an even bigger target on the backs of their enemies. Responding often seems to play into their hands. But more importantly, the church has better ways to give her testimony and protect it from slander. I refer chiefly to the preaching of the gospel, but also to other means the church has to proclaim her faith, such as lectures, pamphlets, articles, webpages, and more—means that allow us to control the content and tone of the message we wish to convey.

As long as the PRC maintain and support the preaching, teaching, and practicing of the truth concerning marriage and human sexuality, there is no reason to respond to every particular slander of the enemy. No one can complain that Faith PRC or any other PRC has failed to provide a public testimony about the truth of Scripture concerning marriage and human sexuality. If anyone wants to know what Faith PRC or any other PRC believes concerning these issues, there are plenty of resources available for their enlightenment. The target is already on us, and the enemy will see it soon enough. May God give us the courage to continue to testify to the truth.


■ Sunday and Sports

Members of the church today face increasing pressure to participate in sports on Sunday. Often it is simply a matter of scheduling: the powers that be schedule games on Sunday. Sometimes these schedulers are willing to accommodate those who do not participate in sports for religious reasons. Other times they are not, and then the Christian faces the temptation to break the fourth commandment in order to participate. In a day when many who carry the name “Christian” play sports or allow their children to play sports on Sunday, I am happy to report about Covenant College’s decision “to forfeit the women’s tennis conference title match rather than to play on Sunday.”²

Covenant College is an agency of the Presbyterian Church in America. The decision of the college not to play on Sunday stands in contrast with other “Christian” universities in their league. In the semi-finals Covenant defeated North Carolina Wesleyan, whose coach ques-

tioned why Covenant even participated in the tournament knowing that the women would not compete for the championship.³ Evidently, the Wesleyan institution planned to participate in the finals had they won the semi-finals. The team that left the tournament with the championship because of Covenant’s forfeit was from Methodist University—they were also willing to participate on Sunday.

Covenant joined the USA South Conference in 2013 knowing that the league holds sporting events on Sundays. However, the South Conference accepted Covenant’s membership knowing College’s policy of not participating in sports on Sunday. As it has done in the past, Covenant submitted the proper paperwork to request a change of date for the finals before the tournament. The USA South Conference denied the request. At the tournament, the women’s team won the semi-final and qualified for the championship. Many Christian institutions would have caved in to the pressure of this situation (many already have!). Covenant withstood the temptation.

What about the women who missed the opportunity to compete for a championship? Should we feel sorry for them? The USA South Conference certainly could have been more reasonable and simply switched the date for the finals. Apparently, the conference’s fall and winter championships occur on Saturdays. But the women probably joined the Covenant team knowing the policy of non-participation on Sundays and its possible repercussions. If winning tennis championships meant more to them than the Sabbath Day, they could have attended other colleges. They and their parents should be thankful that they attend a college where decisions are made based on the Scriptures. And if the women and their coaches missed out on possibly winning the conference championship because they used the day instead to attend divine worship services, hear the preaching of the Word, and rest in the finished work of Jesus Christ, then there is no reason to feel sorry for them. God’s blessings, which are far richer than a tennis championship, flow to them who gather with their fellow saints for worship on the Lord’s Day (Ps. 84:4, 10). 

² <http://athletics.covenant.edu/sports/wten/2015-16/releases/20160416lk10yh>.

³ www.rockymounttelegram.com/College/2016/04/17/WAL-FISH-USA-South-Festival-marred-by-women-s-tennis-ending.html.

The Kingdom of God (1)

The Church: God's Kingdom

Since the church is the kingdom of God, wrong views of God's kingdom will go with wrong views of the church. The transformational view of the kingdom taught at some Reformed colleges, the two-kingdom view taught by some Presbyterians, and the dispensational view promoted by the Baptists are all associated with wrong views of the church and its relationship to this world.

With this in mind, we begin to look at what the Scriptures teach about the church as the kingdom of God, contrasting this with the various kingdom views that are being taught in our own day. When we consider and believe what our Father tells us about what His kingdom *is* and what the citizens of His kingdom *do*, we will be on our guard against the false views of the kingdom that would lead us to deviate from the mandate that our God has graciously commissioned us to perform.

To begin, let us consider how Scripture and our confessions identify the kingdom of God.

The Church as God's kingdom

In the days of Moses, God called Israel out of Egypt and declared to them that they were to be a special people, separate from the nations of this world. They would be the one nation on earth that would have God as their King: "And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation" (Ex. 19:6).

They would not be like the other nations. They would be the one nation that was holy, separated from the others and consecrated to their God. Unlike the other kingdoms on this earth, they would be a kingdom of priests, receiving the honor of being both kings and priests under Jehovah their God.

When we consider this promise, as well as God's other promises, we must keep in mind that all God's promises are centrally to Christ. They are to us believers as well,

but solely because we have been chosen in Christ and are united to Him by faith. God promised Christ that He would be both King and Priest forever (Ps. 110:1-4), and that His people would also be royal priests in and under Him.

In the New Testament we find references to this promise. The apostle Peter, inspired by the Spirit of our Lord, tells us that the words that God spoke at Mt. Sinai apply to the church of Jesus Christ. The true church is called "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people" (I Pet. 2:9).

Years before the apostle wrote these words, Christ told Peter that the church was the kingdom of God. Christ told him this after Peter made the confession that he truly believed that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. After Peter made this confession, our Lord said to him:

Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven (Matt. 16:18-19).

Peter was told that Christ holds the keys of God's kingdom, and that He gives these keys to the church that He is building. It is not every group that calls itself a church that has the keys. Rather, it is the church that confesses the truth about Jesus—the truth that Peter had just confessed—that has received the keys of the kingdom of God.

God's kingdom consists of all those who make the same confession that Peter did. By the grace of our God we have become living stones that make up a spiritual structure: "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ" (I Pet. 2:5). Delivered by the irresistible and efficacious power of God's grace, we believers are all priests, a holy priesthood. Together

Rev. Lanning is pastor of Hull Protestant Reformed Church in Hull, Iowa.

we are a kingdom of priests, that one holy nation that is called in Scripture the kingdom of God.

The Reformed Position on the Kingdom

That the church is God's kingdom has been long understood by God's people and is confessed in a number of places in our Reformed creeds. Our Heidelberg Catechism, for example, in answer to question 85 (which is about Christian discipline), says that when someone is excommunicated that person is: "excluded from the Christian church, and by God Himself from the kingdom of Christ." To be outside the church, in other words, is to be outside Christ's kingdom.

Lord's Day 48 of the Heidelberg Catechism teaches the same. There we confess that the petition "thy kingdom come" means: "rule us so by Thy Word and Spirit, that we may submit ourselves more and more to Thee; preserve and increase Thy church." The prayer for the kingdom is a prayer for the church. It is a prayer that

God would preserve and increase us, ruling within us graciously by His Word and Spirit.

The same truth is taught in the Belgic Confession. In Article 27 we declare from the heart,

This church hath been from the beginning of the world, and will be to the end thereof; which is evident from this, that Christ is an eternal King, which without subjects He cannot be.

This article states not only that the church is Christ's kingdom, but also that if the church did not exist, Christ would have no subjects. In other words, the church is not a subset of the kingdom. Rather, the church is *exclusively* Christ's kingdom. Without the church, Christ would have no kingdom.

But what, then, does it mean when Scripture speaks of God or of Christ as the King over all the earth? Does that not imply that His rule extends beyond the boundaries of the church? That, Lord willing, we will consider next. ☞

O COME LET US WORSHIP

REV. CORY GRIESS

God Judges the Church's Worship (11c)

Offer unto God thanksgiving; and pay thy vows unto the most High: And call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me. These things hast thou done, and I kept silence; thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself: but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes. Now consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver. Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me: and to him that ordereth his conversation aright will I shew the salvation of God.

Psalm 50:14-15, 21-23

Introduction

In this series of articles on the public corporate worship of the church we have examined three great principles of church worship. First, that church worship is a *covenantal assembly* where God's people meet with

Him. Second, that the covenantal assembly is carried out as a *dialogue* between God and His people. And third, that *God Himself regulates* what takes place in this assembly of holy dialogue.

After expounding these principles, we examined the various elements of worship given to us by God, pointing out that they are called for by the regulative principle, and pointing out how they work in the dialogue of the covenantal assembly of God's people. Having finished treating the elements, we have been concluding this series with an exposition of Psalm 50. God has come to judge His church in their worship. He has brought charges against two different elements within the visible church, the believing and the unbelieving. The charge against the believing element was *formalism*, a going through the motions as though the worship of God was no different from the weekly ritual of taking out the trash. The charge against the unbelieving was hypocrisy, taking the words of God's covenant upon one's lips in worship, while there is

Rev. Griess is pastor of the Calvary Protestant Reformed Church in Hull, Iowa.

Previous article in this series: December 15, 2015, p. 127.

no love at all for Him in the heart. Now God the Judge will render His verdict. With this we conclude this lengthy series of articles.

The Verdict for the Unbelieving Second Group

The Judge's verdict on the unbelieving hypocritical element is, "Have you forgotten who I am?" "These things hast thou done, and I kept silence; thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself: Now consider this, ye that forget God" (vv. 21, 22). That is, God says, you thought that since I have kept silent up to this point about your hypocrisy, that I was a god like unto yourself, that I did not care about sin. You thought that as long as you went through the motions, I would not destroy you, that I am not the Holy God of heaven and earth.

Now, beware, God says, lest I tear you to pieces and there be none to deliver (v. 22). I will not keep silent forever. There is a day of judgment approaching, and if there is no repentance, I will rend you in the day of My fierce wrath as a lion rends its prey. I reprove you now, I call you to repentance and faith (v. 21). You are among My people, but you are currently in unbelief. Turn from your sin, and seek My face, or you will perish. There is forgiving grace in Christ alone, out of which will come true praise, the praise of heartfelt worship, worship that leads to a life of praise in obedience to Me (v. 23). Such is the verdict for the second group, the unbelieving in the church: "Repent and believe, and worship Me in corporate worship and in life, or it will be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for you."¹

The Verdict for the Sinning Righteous

For the first group, the believers who are charged with the sin of formalism, God's verdict is not to speak of the judgment day, but graciously to call them back to true, heart worship. That verdict is found in Psalm 50:14-15: "Offer unto God thanksgiving; and pay thy vows unto the most High: And call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me."

First, "call upon me in the day of trouble: I will de-

¹ This call would, of course, not be grace for the reprobate, it would harden them. But it would be grace for the elect who were yet unbelieving in the visible church.

liver thee, and thou shalt glorify me." Worship is not thinking that God needs us; worship is recognizing how much we need Him. What glorious words are spoken in this verse! The Israelites were to see their own need for the sacrifice they were bringing, not to think that their sacrifice was a work to earn God's favor. What the text is saying is that consciously and experientially realizing one's need for God is worship! Instead of coming to church because we think we are pacifying Him, or earning something from Him by giving our worship, we come to tell Him, "Lord, I have come from a week of trying to obey Thy law, and I have in some points, and even then imperfectly; but I have also failed in so many points. And Lord, I am struggling with the burdens in my life. I am not able to carry on alone. And because of it, I am in my day of trouble. Deliver me from my sins in the blood of Thy Son. Speak to me in Thy gospel. And in this covenantal meeting, receive me on the basis of the One who died for me. Speak peace to me. Convict me, encourage me, that I might carry on." This, God says, is worship.

Why does God say *this* is true worship, to call upon Him like this in the day of the trouble of our sins and burdens? It is because "in the day of trouble we fly to those we love, and those who love us."² When a child is hurt, he runs to his mother. When a child is afraid, he runs to the arms of his father. He goes for help and protection to those he loves and those that love him. "Call upon me in the day of trouble" means, "see your need and come to Me because you know I love you and because you love Me." It is then that we come to Him with an activity of the heart, not just with formal acts. It is then that we come to Him as Father, not as some pagan deity we need to pacify. It is then that we come with hearts seeking covenantal nearness and protection.

To such, God says, "Come that way to worship, with that heart, and I will meet with you and I will deliver you out of your day of trouble. I will speak to you of My Son and His work on your behalf. I will tell you all My promises that have been yours from before the foundations of the world. I will open My arms wide to you in My Word."

And such worship will not just be some formal ritual, but it will truly be a covenantal assembly between a King


² Charles H. Spurgeon, *The Treasury of David*, Comments on Psalm 50:15 (Edinburgh: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1957).

who is Father and His servants who are His sons. This brings God glory. This is what He desires. When we love Him enough to worship Him according to His Word, and when we see our need for Him enough to come seeking the cross and His forgiveness and love and nearness, then He is praised.

Then our songs, prayers, and offerings will be characterized not by heartless ritual, and not by works-righteousness, but by thanksgiving. "Offer unto God thanksgiving; and pay thy vows unto the most High" (v. 14). We will offer praise to Him with thankfulness in our hearts. The motive will be love, gratitude, and service to the Mighty One Jehovah, God. We will still bring offerings, still sing, still follow the regulative principle of worship, but with hearts that are saturated with gospel thankfulness. God's verdict is, "See how much you need Me, My gospel, My Fatherly love, and My goodness? Let us meet together and speak to one another in covenant love."

We Need to Be Reminded!

But there is one last part to God's verdict. Do you not find it striking that God inspired this portion of Scripture as a *psalm*? The Israelites sang this in worship regularly, and so do we. They sang about God judging them for not singing with the proper frame of heart. God was wise to inspire it so. This is part of the verdict. By inspiring this as a psalm God is saying, "You need to keep singing this. And you need to keep singing this because you need to keep remembering this. How I called heaven and earth to witness as I judged your heartless worship, and that I called you back to heartfelt love and covenantal fellowship. You need to be reminded time and again of what true worship is."

They and we need this reminder. How easily the covenantal assembly, this glorious gift of grace, can become little different to us than taking out the trash. We need to remember, so that the worship service becomes the height of our covenant life together, and so that God our Father may be truly worshipped. 

STRENGTH OF YOUTH

REV. BRIAN HUIZINGA

"To Teach Them War"

Knowing War's Origin: In Man's Fall (10)

"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?"

Jeremiah 17:9

Sometimes the biology teacher places a dead animal's organ on the lab table for dissection, and some students squirm and gasp. Or the doctor pulls up an image on the screen showing the break or the tumor, and the patient tucks his head, covers his eyes, and gasps. With the words of Jeremiah 17:9, God removes from natural man his heart and sets it in plain view. Any sensible man would gasp in horror. Has anything so revolting ever passed before his eyes? "Deceitful above all

things!" "Desperately wicked!" "Who can know it?"

The truth is, no man will ever look at his own natural heart and utter those words. No book or teacher will ever give this description of man's heart. The greatest testimony of man's depravity and the deceitfulness of his desperately wicked heart is that he looks at that heart of his and says, "Lovely above all things! Fantastically virtuous! Who can know it?" He calls death life. Only the Bible tells the truth. And the truth concerning man is that he is by nature totally depraved.

As we seek to understand our holy war as soldiers in the kingdom of God, one subject yet remains in our treatment of Adam's Fall as the explanation of the origin of war against God and His kingdom. We have already explained "The Fall" and what happened to Adam when he fell. He died spiritually, becoming in his nature an enemy

Rev. Huizinga is pastor of Hope Protestant Reformed Church in Redlands, California.

Previous article in this series: April 1, 2016, p. 303.

of God. We have already explained “Original Sin,” and that a consequence of Adam’s Fall was the transmission of his corrupt nature to all his posterity. A more complete explanation of that nature in which every human being is conceived remains. Hence the subject at hand is what we in catechism class call “Total Depravity.” It is the “T” of Calvinism’s TULIP.

It belongs to our spiritual warfare to defend the truth of total depravity, a truth despised by the world and denied by nearly all of Protestantism. As knowledgeable catechumens are well aware, the PRC have, from the commencement of her existence as a separate denomination of churches, fought in defense of this truth over against the affirmations and implications of the Three Points of 1924, because they are determined to stand, at all costs, for the glory of the God of sovereign, particular grace. The battle continues on many fronts. If salvation is *all* of God, then salvation is *none* of man. In the accomplishing of salvation God is not great while man is small; God is *everything*, while man is *nothing*. Only the truth of man’s total depravity gives God’s grace in the person of Jesus its due.

The Truth of Total Depravity

Total depravity is a doctrinal term describing the spiritual, moral condition of man as he is by nature, apart from the regenerating grace worked by the Holy Spirit. The term describes the unregenerate man, and the sinful nature or “old man” that the regenerated believer is exhorted to “put off” (Eph. 4:22; Col. 3:8-9). Natural man is completely wicked in his disposition and character. Man not only *does* wickedly in all his deeds, but man *is* wicked in his nature. The noun “depravity” means “so corrupt” (Heidelberg Catechism, Q&As 7-8). The adjective “total” refers to the extent of man’s corruption. It is all pervasive. Corruption extends to and pervades every part of every man, so that when the Almighty searches every nook and cranny of every man’s natural heart, mind, will, emotions, affections, and body, He finds nary a hint of anything pleasing to Him. Total depravity means that all human beings are by nature, all the way depraved in all their parts. If there is anything spiritually and morally good in man—be it even the faintest glow—the gracious work of Jesus Christ, and the gracious work of Jesus Christ *alone* produced that God-pleasing good.

That man is totally depraved means he is wholly incapable of doing any good. He cannot seek the glory of God, or desire to. He cannot love God, or desire to. He cannot commune with God in prayer, or desire to. He cannot love his neighbor for God’s sake, or desire to. He cannot keep any commandment of God, or desire to. He cannot thirst for salvation, he cannot choose or “accept” or “open the door of his heart to” Jesus. He cannot prepare himself to be saved. Spiritually, he is dead in his sins.

That man is totally depraved means more. It means he is inclined toward all wickedness. There is more than the absence of goodness in natural man; there is the presence of willful, active corruption—rebellion. Natural man not only has no love for God, he hates God, hates his neighbor, and hates God’s law. And he not only hates, but is a hater. His nature is sin-ward. He thirsts for sin, hungers for unrighteousness, and pines for fleshly pleasures. When God looks down from heaven on the children of men, He finds no God-seekers, only filthy sin-seekers.

Was not Adam’s Fall serious? Deadly serious! And then to think, there is a God so rich in mercy that He quickens, not one, but many of these dead sinners together with Christ! What power! What love!

The doctrine of total depravity is yours as a confessing Reformed believer. You consciously make it yours at confession of faith. It is the doctrine of the Belgic Confession (see Arts. 14-15), the Heidelberg Catechism (see Lord’s Day 3), and the Canon of Dordt (see Heads III/IV). It is the doctrine of Scripture throughout.³

The Truth of Total Depravity in Jeremiah 17:9

Let’s return to that graphic description of natural man’s heart in Jeremiah 17:9—“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?”

An honest reading of this passage can lead to no other conclusion than that natural man’s spiritual center—his heart (Prov. 4:23)—is totally depraved. If man’s source

³ See Gen. 6:5-6, 8:21; Job 15:14-16; Ps. 14:1-3, 51:5, 58:3; Eccl. 7:20, 9:3; Jer. 13:23, 17:9-10; Matt. 7:15-20; John 1:13, 3:3-5, 5:42, 6:44, 8:34, 15:4-5; Rom. 1:18-32, 3:9-18, 6:16-19, 7:18, 23, 8:7-8, 14:23; I Cor. 2:14, 12:3; Gal. 3:22; Eph. 2:1-10, 4:18; Col. 2:13; II Tim. 3:2-4; Tit. 1:15; Heb. 11:6; James 3:8.

is totally depraved, then so is he and everything that proceeds from him.

The heart is “deceitful.” It cannot be trusted. When from the unregenerate man comes a dozen roses for an anniversary, or the donation of his kidney, or the digging of a well for a poverty-stricken tribe, both the man himself who did the deeds and the Reformed theologian who weighs those deeds have been deceived if they think there is something in those deeds that is pleasing to God. God looks at the heart, and the doer’s heart is deceitful, making his evil look good. Even natural man’s discovering some regard for virtue is a glimmering of natural light that he “in various ways renders wholly polluted, and holds it in unrighteousness” (Canons, III/IV, Art. 4).

The matter is more serious. For, the heart is deceitful “above all things.” There is nothing and no one more capable of deceiving a man than his own natural heart. The heart is deceitful above Satan, above the deceivers waxing worse and worse in these last days, and above the Antichrist himself. So deceitful is the unregenerate heart that it will move the wicked of Judah in Jeremiah’s day to think they are doing God service by conspiring to kill Jeremiah—a foreshadowing of Jesus. More deceitful than young Jacob dressed in animal skins is old Isaac’s sinful nature.

There is still more. The heart is *incurably* wicked. The words “desperately wicked” are the translation of one word that means “incurable.” The condition of man’s heart is a desperate one because the heart desperately searches for satisfaction in sin as a deer exhausted from the chase pants for refreshing streams. Natural man’s heart could not be worse. With the Almighty all things are possible but for man, his heart is beyond cure. He is dead.

The inspired prophet’s climactic description of man’s totally depraved nature comes with the interrogative: “Who can know it?” None! None will ever search out and fully know the infinite God. Nor will any search out and fully know the depraved man. Who knew Adam’s Fall would be so serious? To say nothing of the wickedness of the heathen, who knew that one day Jeremiah would see Zion’s own sacrificing their children to Molech? Who knew that one day Jesus would come as God in the flesh and hear His own nation shouting to Pontius Pilate, “His blood be on us, and on our children!”? Who knew that one day the nominally Christian

church of Bible-holding, “Lord, Lord”-confessing worshippers would dare declare in the name of Jesus that sodomy brings a smile to the face of God? Who knew that one day males would declare themselves females, and females would declare themselves males, and that influential people, businesses, organizations, and government officials and bodies would support such abominable rebellion against the Creator? How wise is Jehovah that He took Adam home after 930 years, lest he live through all this and despair over the bitter fruit he produced by eating the forbidden fruit. Yet, these are merely the displays of wickedness. Who knows how corrupt man’s heart really is? And that question gets personal. What believer knows how desperately wicked his own sinful flesh actually is? Not one. Totally depraved is man.

A Misunderstanding Corrected

There are many misunderstandings of the truth of total depravity. One of them we correct here. Some suppose this doctrine teaches that every human being is as bad as he could possibly be in a fully developed and manifested corruption. The unlearned of the world use in common speech the word “depraved” to refer to the most despicable, hardened, repeat-offending, child-molesting cannibal, for whom death by a firing squad is deemed too dignified. Then, when they hear the true church speak of all men being totally depraved by nature they dismiss it as nonsense, for everyone knows and experiences that the world is full of fine, generous, neighborly folk. Furthermore, for our rejection of common grace, we have been charged with teaching a non-biblical doctrine of “absolute depravity” in which every man is as bad as he could possibly be.

The doctrine of total depravity does not deny there is progression of sin in the individual and in society throughout history. Although no unregenerate man has any good in him, and none is a little better than another, some unregenerate men are worse than others. There are degrees of manifested wickedness and degrees of punishment (Matt. 11:20-24; Luke 12:47-48; II Tim. 3:13).

Providence restrains much iniquity. There is surely a poor, goat-herding, radicalizing Muslim somewhere in Africa who hears various reports of world events, and it gives him an idea he would love to pursue—blowing-up a building in America. He cannot. He lacks the resources. God’s providence set him in poverty, without a network

of accomplices, and an ocean away. His heart could not be more depraved. But he does not live out his depravity to the fullest expression.

Moreover, as, under the providence of God, man develops all the powers in creation, sin develops in intensity throughout history. Although it was in his nature to do so, surely Cain never considered coming in from the field one day to tell father Adam and mother Eve that he struggles as a female imprisoned in a male body, would like to be called Cainsy, is identifying as a female, and is asking the only doctor he knows—either father or mother—to perform a sex-reassignment surgery. In his small and under-developed world such channels of thought had not and never would be formed in his totally depraved mind. Today is different. Sin intensifies in expression. Although it was in his nature to do so, surely no sodomite in Israel, allowed to live in the land during the reigns of various kings, ever considered marching through streets of Jerusalem in support of the “silenced minority” and onward to the steps of the king’s palace, demanding through a petition with 20,000 signatures that Leviticus 20:13 and all similar statements be blotted out of the book of the law; that the high priest announce from the steps of the temple on the day of atonement that God loves sodomites for who they are; and that a stone monument be set up before the gates of Jerusalem declaring Israel is an “all-inclusive nation,” welcoming those of

any sexual preference. Again, such channels of thought were not yet running through men’s depraved minds. Sin develops. Oh, how frightening is the development of sin in society, making way for the manifestation of the man of sin. The most depraved sinner of Adam’s day was not one whit better than the worst depraved sinner today, but many sinners and society today are worse. Total depravity does not deny progression in wickedness.

“The Fall” Concluded

The Fall of Adam is not only a significant doctrine we must know in order to understand that salvation is all of God (to whom be glory forever), but it is also a part of the picture we must have in view in order to understand our spiritual warfare for the cause of Christ. After our thorough treatment of this historical event and the theology of it, we can understand why there is and must be war, and just how serious and far-reaching this war is. What great opposition there is to God! Fallen man in alliance with Satan is *against* God. All praise and honor be to God through Jesus Christ for saving us out of depraved humanity, giving us a new heart, creating channels of sanctified thoughts within our minds, promising deliverance from all the wicked sin within us that remains against our will, and making us soldiers of the cross who fight for His cause until the Man of Holiness be revealed from heaven. ☞

MINISTERING TO THE SAINTS

REV. DOUGLAS KUIPER

The Elder’s Ordination (7)

Laying on of Hands: Considerations in Favor of the Practice

Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery.

I Timothy 4:14

Rev. Kuiper is pastor of the Protestant Reformed Church of Edgerton, Minnesota.

Previous article in this series: April 1, 2016, p. 300.

With this article we conclude our treatment of the ordination of elders.

Our first three articles on this subject explained what ordination is, and why ordination in a public ceremony is significant both for the elder being ordained and for the congregation in which he is ordained.

Next, we examined the various aspects of the ordination ceremony, taking Article 4 of our Church Order as our starting point. Although Article 4 regards the ordination of *ministers*, not specifically of *elders*, the ordination of any officebearer into any office should include the same elements. But..., what about laying on of hands? We do it at the ordination of ministers; why not at the ordination of elders?

Review

In the last two articles, we learned several things about the laying on of hands at the ordination of elders.

First, various Protestant confessions, even some historically Reformed confessions (other than our Three Forms of Unity), make provision for such laying on of hands.

Second, our Reformed confessions (Three Forms of Unity, Church Order, and Form for Ordination of Elders and Deacons) are silent on the matter. This silence does not mean that Reformed churches reject the practice as wrong, but rather that they simply do not practice it.

Third, in the early history of the Reformation, many considered the practice to be unedifying in light of Rome's wrong view that the laying on of hands has sacramental powers, and that many members of Reformed churches early on did not fully understand Reformed distinctives.

Fourth, to explain why it is common practice to lay hands on ministers at their ordination, but not on elders and deacons, some have pointed to the fact that in Reformed churches ministers hold office for life (unless deposed or resigning), while elders and deacons serve terms.

Reasons to continue our current practice, then, would be that it has traditionally been the Reformed approach, and that it preserves this distinction between the office of minister on the one hand, and those of elder and deacon on the other.

In this article, we will spell out reasons why it would be good for Reformed churches to begin, or return to, the practice of laying hands on elders and deacons at their *ordination*—that is, when they are put into office for the first time, and not when they begin a second or subsequent term of office.

The Sign Is Biblical

One reason to use the ceremony of laying on of hands

in the ordination of elders and deacons is that the use of this sign is biblically warranted. We have already mentioned that Acts 6:6, Acts 13:3, I Timothy 4:14, and II Timothy 1:6 indicate that hands were laid on some who were appointed to office in God's covenant.

The argument here is not that the church has always done it. In fact, as noted in previous articles, the Christian church has not always followed the practice; even Reformed churches have not. Nor am I contending that the biblical warrant for the sign *demand*s that we use it today.

The argument is that the sign was used in Bible times. It was used by the apostles themselves, as they functioned in the office to which Christ called them. The inspired Scriptures—which are “profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (II Tim. 3:16)—record their use of this sign, so that we know of it. The argument is that, even if it is not wrong not to follow this biblical practice, we ought be sure our reasons not to use it are compelling.

All of this leads to this question: today, in 2016, is it better to use the sign that the apostles used? Or to continue not using the sign?

Circumstances in the Church Today Warrant It

Historically, Reformed churches did not use the sign because they judged it unedifying. Members of Reformed churches included many recent converts from Roman Catholicism, which viewed this ceremony as a sacrament that imparted grace to the ones inducted into office.

Today, the circumstances are different. They are not different as regards Rome's view and practice; Rome still views the ceremony as having sacramental powers. But the circumstances are different in Reformed churches and among Reformed believers, who, as a whole, understand the errors of Rome's view. Most Reformed churches and believers today are not recent converts from Roman Catholicism and will not stumble at the practice.

At the same time, the danger today is that members of Reformed churches do not hold the ecclesiastical offices in as high esteem as they ought, and do not honor the work of the offices as highly as they ought. In our society individualism is rampant; authority is despised; every man does that which is right in his own eyes. In such a society, Christ's church exists and strives to be

distinct. In such a society, the members of the church must remember that the officebearers, though themselves men—and sinful men at that—are nevertheless *Christ's* representatives, equipped with *Christ's* Spirit, to do *Christ's* work.

The use of the sign of laying on of hands on elders and deacons at their ordination will not change the hearts of men, if those hearts already are stubborn and rebellious toward their church authorities. But it will remind the congregation that these men are called and equipped of God Himself for their work. That was the original intent of the sign, and that purpose would still be well served today.

Duration of Time in Office Is Not the Fundamental Issue

I am grateful for the explanation of some PR ministers, writing in past issues of the *Standard Bearer*, that the reason why Reformed churches lay hands on a minister at his ordination, but not on elders and deacons, is that the former serves for life, while the latter serve for terms. I read their explanations as being not merely their own opinion as to why, but the answer that Reformed churches have given as to why many Reformed churches lay hands on ministers, but not on elders and deacons.

But let us ask the question: what substantial difference does length of time in office make with regard to laying on of hands? Is a relatively short duration of time in office (three years, for example) a substantive reason not to lay hands on elders at ordination? While the elders hold office, is their authority any less, because they hold office for three years? Do they represent Christ in their work any less than does a minister who holds office for life, or less than does an elder in a church that appoints men to the eldership for life? Or, is the need for the congregation clearly to see and understand that the elders and deacons represent Christ any less, because these men serve in office for definite terms? My answer to all of these question is no.

The fact is that, whether one serves for life or for term, every minister, elder, and deacon serves in office only for a specified time. In some instances, the church specifies that time—two years, or three years. In other instances, God specifies the time: one serves until, in

God's providence, he finds himself unable to serve. But either way, while one serves, he serves in God's authority, equipped with God's Spirit. The practice of laying on of hands underscores and symbolizes that.

John Calvin and Samuel Miller

In essence, then, I agree with the comments John Calvin and Samuel Miller make regarding this point. I pick John Calvin because his word is regarded as weighty in Reformed circles. I pick Samuel Miller because, though lesser known to us, his work regarding the offices is considered a classic—and he treats *at length* the matter of the laying on of hands, so that I can quote only a few representative samples of his work.

Calvin wrote:

Although there exists no set precept for the laying on of hands, because we see it in continual use with the apostles, their very careful observance ought to serve in lieu of a precept. And surely it is useful for the dignity of the ministry to be commended to the people by this sort of sign, as also to warn the one ordained that he is no longer a law unto himself, but bound in servitude to God and the church. Moreover, it will be no empty sign if it is restored to its own true origin....¹

Two comments about this quote are in order. First, by his last statement, Calvin means that the sign will not be empty if freed from the superstitious use to which Rome puts it. Second, Calvin writes this in the context of the calling, authorization, and ordination of “ministers,” but one who reads the entire section will realize that by “ministers” he refers to all officebearers in the church of Christ, not only to pastors.

Samuel Miller expressed himself at length regarding the practice of the Presbyterian Church in the United States in the 1830s. He included in the expression of his own sentiments, an investigation into the Scripture passages that speak of the laying on of hands, as well as a historical survey both of the practice itself and of the neglect to lay hands on ruling elders. The point is this: whether you agree or disagree with Miller, his comments are worth reading. I have not the time to quote him in

¹ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 4.3.16, ed. John McNeill, transl. Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1960), 2:1067.

full (the quote itself would take up another article or two), but simply to state his conviction:

...it has been, for many years, my settled conviction, that the Ordination Service in question, in not making the *imposition of hands* a stated constituent part of it, is chargeable with an omission, which, though not *essential*, and therefore, not a matter for which it is proper to interrupt the peace of the Church; yet appears to me incapable of a satisfactory defense; and which it is my earnest hope may not much longer continue to be, as I know it is with many, a matter of serious lamentation.²

Miller proceeds to present the biblical and historical data regarding the use of the practice—again, worth reading.

² Samuel Miller, *An Essay on the Warrant, Nature, and Duties of the Office of the Ruling Elder in the Presbyterian Church* (General Books [www.General-Books.net], 2009), 138-139.

On the basis of that data, he gives six arguments why the practice ought to be restored in conservative Presbyterian churches. Summarized, they are: 1) The frequency and significance of laying on of hands as an Old Testament Jewish rite warrants it. 2) The government of the New Testament church is modeled after the government of the synagogues. 3) The ruling elders of the Jewish synagogues were ordained with the laying on of hands. 4) In every account of ordination to office in the New Testament the ceremony was used. 5) If the first deacons were ordained with the laying on of hands, certainly those ordained to the office of elder ought be. 6) The rite has no “mystical influence,” such as Rome would ascribe to it.³

Good food for thought. But enough about it for now. It is time to get to the meat of the matter—the work of the office of elder. Next time, D.V. ☞

³ Miller, 142-143.

ALL THY WORKS SHALL PRAISE THEE

DR. NATHAN LANNING

Life-Giving Communication

It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.

John 6:63

Living organisms communicate in numerous ways. Humans and animals communicate through spoken language or audible sounds, gestures, postures, and physical contact. Some animals, as well as plants and single-celled organisms, even communicate through secreted chemicals. From a cell biologist's perspective, the individual cells of our bodies are also

constantly engaging in communication. In fact, ‘cell communication’ is a major discipline within the biological sciences, such that tens of millions of dollars are spent each year in the United States alone in order to gain a better understanding of how cells communicate with each other and their environments.

Cell communication can be defined as the cell activity of sending and receiving signals among themselves and their environment. All of us are already familiar with certain forms of cell communication. The warm sensation of wrapping your fingers around a cup of coffee or the icy sting of cold raindrops when you are caught outside without an umbrella are both manifestations of cells communicating with each other. In both cases, your nerve cells are sending information (communicating) in the form of chemically-created electrical impulses at rates of up to 100 meters per second from cells in your skin

Dr. Lanning is Assistant Professor of Cellular and Molecular Biology in California State University, LA and a member of Hope Protestant Reformed Church, Redlands, California.

to your brain cells. In this manner, cell communication between our nerves provides us with our physical feelings of pleasure or pain.

Some of us are intimately familiar with cells communicating through the hormone insulin. Normally, when we eat a meal, the glucose concentration in our bloodstream increases. This is a signal to a special type of cell in the pancreas to release insulin into the bloodstream. Insulin then communicates to the other cells of our body, essentially telling them to allow the glucose in the blood to come inside. In this way, a small group of cells in the pancreas communicates with a huge portion of the body's other cells informing them when to take in their main source of energy (glucose).

At the very beginning of human life, during embryo development, cells are communicating with each other in a complex but highly regulated fashion. Almost every cell is secreting chemicals or other molecules to let neighboring cells know what kind of cell it is and where it is located. Through this cacophony of cellular communication, the intricate processes of development occur. Some cells respond to this communication by changing into another cell type with new functions; some respond by multiplying over and over again. Others respond by beginning long migratory journeys to distant regions within the embryo, while still others respond by remaining exactly as they are and exactly where they are for the duration of the person's life (these are what we call *stem* cells).

One of the most important principles of cell communication is that cells *need* communication in order to remain alive. Cells can only remain alive if they continue to carry out metabolism and, in many cases, cells must also continually repress an internal system that will trigger its own death. One form of cell communication activates a group of 'survival' enzymes whose function is both to maintain cell metabolism and to repress the cell death program. Thus, in the absence of this signal, cells will quickly perish.

In order to study cells, scientists take cells out of their natural environment (the body) and place them in artificial environments (typically a plastic dish) more suitable for manipulation and observation. The scientist can provide these cells with their preferred mixture of nutrients along with the temperature, pH level, and concentrations

of salts and dissolved gasses that replicate those of the human body. However, even with all of these conditions precisely engineered to mimic the cells' natural environment, the cells will rapidly die in the absence of the above-mentioned, life-giving communication that comes in the form of chemical and protein signals from other cells. To keep the cells alive, the scientist must take the place of the other cells in the body, providing the necessary communicative signals—essentially telling the cells to live.

One of the most exciting and at the same time tedious tasks for a cell biologist studying a new type of cell is to determine exactly what communication signals that particular type of cell requires in order to stay alive. Discoveries related to this life-sustaining communication between cells have profound implications in the biomedical sciences. For example, one goal of scientists studying neurodegenerative diseases is to identify communication signals that will *extend* the lifespan of neurons, while a major goal of cancer biologists is to identify how to *disrupt* this type of communication in cancer cells.

In many respects, cellular life-giving communication can be viewed as a reflection of a *spiritual reality*. Communication is absolutely required for the initiation and maintenance of a healthy spiritual life. As mentioned at the outset of this article, people communicate with each other in numerous ways. However, only communication from and with our Creator and Father can provide and sustain spiritual life. Holy Scripture frequently describes this spiritual life-giving communication. At the earliest possible moment in human history, God was already providing life by communicating with man. The first recorded instance of communication between God and man reveals God providing Adam with the commandment of life (Gen. 2:16-17; Belgic Confession [BC], Art. 14). This commandment, while instructing Adam as to how his physical life would be maintained, also clearly laid out God's will for the maintenance of man's spiritual life. We read later that God and man were accustomed to walking and talking with each other in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3:8). How wonderful and rich this life of communication must have been! Surely, no human in our fallen state has experienced such quickening communication.

We now are fallen, and the perfect relationship enjoyed between our first parents and our Creator is no

longer a possibility on this earth. However, our Father revealed His graceful, merciful, and faithful nature during His first conversation with Adam and Eve after the Fall. Genesis 3:15 records the first gospel—through Christ, God’s chosen people will achieve victory over Satan and his kingdom. Following these events recorded in the beginning of Genesis, God continued to reveal His faithful nature by way of communicating His covenant to His chosen people. Throughout the Old Testament, we find Jehovah constantly speaking His covenant to Noah (Gen. 6:18 and Gen. 9), Abraham (Gen. 17:7), Moses and the children of Israel (Ex. 20), David (II Sam. 7), and others, directly or through His servants.

One of the great benefits of being in God’s covenant is His continual communication with us, His redeemed friends. Psalm 25 tells us that, as we confess our sins and petition God for mercy, we are comforted that He will speak His secret, or His counsel and doctrines, to His covenant people. He speaks the peace of salvation to His people (Ps. 85:7-8), and promises that He will guide our steps along the path of life by speaking directions into our ears (Is. 30:21). It is through this communication that true life is provided. The great Shepherd speaks, and we hear and recognize His voice, obtaining eternal life (John 10:27-28). The Word that He speaks to us is the revelation that Jesus is the Christ, the true Bread of life, through which we obtain spiritual life (John 6:24-63).

These Scriptures expressly instruct us about the importance of God speaking to us. However, we know that the entire Scriptures are the real and true Word of God. The same Word that spoke the creation into existence also communicates life to us (John 1). The life-giving Word of the Scriptures is now primarily communicated to us through preaching (Rom. 10:13-14; Canons of Dordt [CD], Head III/IV, Art. 6-11). Through faithful ministers of the Word, the Holy Spirit speaks directly to us (Matt. 10:20), working life-giving faith in the hearts of the elect who hear this Word communicated to them (Rom. 10:17). This communication also fulfills the promise of Christ, who told His disciples that after His death the Holy Spirit would speak, and in doing so, would more clearly reveal God’s plan of salvation (John 16:12-15). Truly, we are blessed through this Spirit-worked, life-giving communication.

When cells communicate with each other, an amazing flurry of activity commences inside them. Typically, only a small handful of communication molecules is required to reach a cell for it to be able to respond to the signal. However, while the initial communication signal may begin with the activation of only a few molecules, within seconds a huge network of molecules becomes active through a series of molecular chain reactions. These reactions, called signaling cascades, can amplify the initial communication signal by up to 1,000 times.¹ The amplified signals inside cells result in hundreds of enzymes becoming active and thousands of molecules being modified, changed, or moved. In response, cells are called into action. The cells of a developing embryo may initiate the restructuring of their internal skeleton, so that they can begin to crawl to a new location. The cells of a taste bud may release millions of calcium ions from internal storehouses in order to stimulate a nearby neuron and communicate that something sweet is being tasted. Immune cells may begin to synthesize biological molecules at a breakneck pace so that they can rapidly reproduce and mount an attack against an intruder. Stomach cells may alter their internal ion concentrations in order to pump acid into the stomach to begin digesting food. Therefore, it is the internal result of cell communication that induces each particular cell in our body to act as it does. Without cell communication, no cells would be active or carry out their particular function. Consequently, in addition to keeping individual cells alive, the process of cell communication is also required for the life of an entire organism.

These life-giving aspects of cell communication are again reflections of a spiritual reality. When God communicates to us through the preaching of the Word, profound changes occur within us. Saving faith is kindled and strengthened (Rom. 10:17). When God communi-

¹ Take a moment to consider the sovereignty of God from the perspective of a cell: The average-sized human consists of about 25 trillion cells. Each of these 25 trillion cells receives dozens of communication signals, resulting in thousands of molecules being activated every moment of every day. The activation of each of these molecules must be precisely regulated in order for each cell to stay alive. Now consider how many living organisms are on the earth, including all the cells of vegetation as well as the single-celled microbes which communicate in the same manner. The number of molecular details that must be coordinated for all the current life on earth to exist for even one second is completely incomprehensible to the human mind. Our God is truly an awesome God!

cates to the unregenerate elect through the preaching of the gospel, He causes a spiritually dead person to become alive through faith (BC, Art. 24; CD, III/IV, Arts. 10-12). This faith, then, keeps us in constant communion with Christ and His benefits, allowing us to grow in sanctification (BC, Art. 22, 24; CD, V). This powerful faith calls regenerated believers into action, exciting them to perform all those good works that God commands in His Word (BC, Art. 24; CD, III/IV, Art. 12; Gal. 5:22-23; II Pet. 1:5-7). The powerful, life-giving communication from our Father never fails to evoke sanctified action in His covenant children.

It must also be mentioned that a primary response to this life-giving communication is that the believer desires to communicate back to God. Our lives, therefore, are characterized by continual praise and prayer (I Thess. 5:16-18) to the One who has transformed us from a spiritually dead state into spiritually thriving beings. The Psalms are replete with calls to communicate praise with

our mouths and our hearts to our Maker and Redeemer. There is real joy for believers who make the praise of the Psalms a regular part of their life. Prayer is engaging in a holy conversation with God, communicating to Him our praise, thankfulness, and petitions. Prayer is the most intimate of communication activities that can be performed on the earth and is a cherished mark of a healthy spiritual life (CD, V, Art. 12).

When we consider the cell communication and its absolute necessity for life, we can reflect on our Father's grace and mercy, thanking Him for His spiritual life-giving communication to us. We can also meditate on the coming joy of communicating with Him face to face. Our lives in heaven will not be an existence of silence; rather, our great God will be speaking His everlasting love to us (Rev. 21:3) and we will join in an innumerable throng returning praise to His worthy Name (Rev. 5:11-13, 19:6).



NEWS FROM OUR CHURCHES

MR. PERRY VAN EGDOM

Denominational Activities

The congregations of the PRCA held Ascension Day services on May 5, marking the glorious entrance into heaven of our Savior. Classis East of the Protestant Reformed Churches met in regular session on May 11 at Providence PRC.

Mission Activities

Most of our readers likely know that the Republic of the Philippines, in which our denomination's missionaries labor, is a tropical country, warm and humid. Those who live there are used to very warm, even hot weather. There is a rainy season, a moderate season, and a hot season. The hot season is now

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

upon them. A recent bulletin of the Maranatha PRC in Valenzuela City stated: "The Church Order lecture will be rescheduled due to the severe heat of our weather." Dear readers, when Filipino residents acknowledge that the weather is hot, you can be sure it is. Members of the churches there were urged to drink plenty of water and to use umbrellas for the sun.

Minister Activities

Rev. Daniel Holstege, former pastor at First PRC of Holland, MI, is preparing, with his family, to take up his labors in the mission field of the Philippines. Rev. Holstege preached his farewell sermon in Holland on May 1, and the congregation there prepared a farewell program for that evening also. The Doon PRC Council has set the

date of Rev. Holstege's installation for Friday, July 1 at 7:00 p.m. Rev. Holstege will preach an inaugural sermon on Sunday, July 3, D.V.

Seminary Activities

The PRC Seminary has now completed the 2015-16 school year, with the last day of classes on May 6 and a week of exams May 9-13. March and April were busy "visitation" months for the Seminary, with visits from the fourth-grade classes at Heritage Christian School (March 30 and April 13), from the fifth-grade class of Adams Christian School (April 20), and from the church history students of Heritage Christian High in Dyer, IN (April 22). On April 1, the seminary faculty and the students attended the Junius Institute Colloquium and on April 15-16, the Philadelphia

Conference on Reformed Theology. On April 28 and 29 the Seminary hosted two lectures by Prof. Tom Reid (Reformed Presbyterian Seminary in Pittsburgh) on the Reformation in France and the French Reformed churches. These lectures were given to the student body, faculty, and area ministers, but were also live-streamed on the Seminary YouTube channel where they are available for viewing. The students are eagerly anticipating their summer internships, which run from July 1-December 31. Once again, those are scheduled as follows: Matt DeBoer in Georgetown PRC (Hudsonville, MI), under Rev. C. Haak; Brian Feenstra to Loveland PRC (Colorado), under Rev. S. Key; Joe Holstege to Calvary PRC (Hull, IA), under Rev. C. Griess; Jonathan Langerak to Edgerton PRC (Minnesota), under Rev. D. Kuiper; David Noorman to Hope PRC (Redlands, CA), under Rev. B. Huizinga; Stephan Regnerus to SE PRC (Grand Rapids, MI), under Rev. W. Langerak; Justin Smidstra to Faith PRC (Jenison, MI) under Rev. C. Spronk.

Congregational Activities

The Spring Ladies League meeting was held at Edgerton, MN PRC on Thursday, April 28. Rev. Douglas Kuiper spoke on “Managerial Martha and Meditative Mary.” Ladies of the five Siouxland area churches attended, with a time of fellowship and dessert after the speech. This annual event is a great time for the women of all ages to enjoy one another’s company around a scriptural theme.

Evangelism Activities

From May 20 into September the Evangelism Committee of the Hope PRC of Redlands, CA will have a Reformed literature booth at Market Night events in Redlands (Thursdays) and Yucaipa (Fridays). They look forward to providing a witness to the community around them, and encouraged members of the congregation to sign up to attend the literature booth for a night or two. “But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear” (1 Pet. 3:15).

Calvary PRC of Hull, IA organizes a summer Bible camp, with this year’s camp to be held every evening from June 6-9. This event, hosted by Calvary’s Evangelism Committee, is an attempt to reach out to the Hispanic population in the area with the truth of the Reformed faith. Last year’s response was very encouraging and anticipation is high for this year’s camp. As personal contact is by far the best way to get visitors, all were encouraged to invite any Hispanic families they knew. The event is also open to children from the Calvary congregation, with the targeted age for the lessons and activities being lower elementary. However, parents may use their discretion to sign up their children who they believe would enjoy attending.

School Activities

Supporters of the Loveland PR Christian School gathered in the school gymnasium on Friday evening, April 29, for the high school’s

biennial Science Night. The students demonstrated the science behind sound with a Newton’s Cradle that they had constructed from 2 x 4s and bowling balls, faced off in robotic tug-of-war, played *Carol of the Bells* on water-filled wine glasses, and delighted children and adults alike with the wonders of liquid nitrogen. For the grand finale, the students (and their teacher) presented a resounding rendition of *The Battle Hymn of the Republic* on a PVC pipe organ they had made, accompanied by their toilet bass and punctuated by “cannon” blasts of liquid-nitrogen-filled plastic bottles.

As if that wasn’t enough excitement for one weekend, even snow didn’t hinder the LPRCS Fundraisers’ “Adventure Quest” the following afternoon. Teams of four to six adults solved riddles in a scavenger race that took them all around town, from the annals of the Loveland Public Library to the Benson Sculpture Garden. Participants earned extra points for completing certain detours along the way—like finding Waldo or purchasing a single beverage and drinking it simultaneously—but everything needed to be photographed for proof! The entire LPRC congregation was invited to join the questers for a delicious Italian beef dinner in the church basement following the event. Reminds one of the Edmonton First PRC Remembrance Day Car Rally! Such fun!

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Wedding Anniversary

■ It is with much joy and thankfulness to God that we rejoiced with our parents and grandparents,

PHILIP and JOYCE KRAIMA,

as they celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary on April 29, 2016. We are thankful to God for the many years He has given them as well as for the godly example God has given to us through them. It is our prayer that God will continue to be with them and bless them in the years to come. "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness." (Lamentations 3:22-23)

Jenison, Michigan

Call to Synod!!

■ Synod 2015 appointed Hull Protestant Reformed Church, Hull, Iowa the calling church for the 2016 Synod.

The consistory hereby notifies our churches that the 2016 Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America will convene, the Lord willing, on Tuesday, June 14, 2016 at 8:30 A.M., in the Hull Protestant Reformed Church, Hull, Iowa.

The Pre-Synodical Service will be held on Monday evening, June 13, at 7:00 P.M. Rev. Key, president of the 2015 Synod, will preach the sermon. Synodical delegates are requested to meet with the consistory before the service.

Delegates in need of lodging should contact Mr. Don Vermeer, phone: (712 725-2505.

Consistory of Hull PR Church
Don Vermeer, Clerk.

A SPIRITUAL HOUSE PRESERVED

A Century in the River's Bend

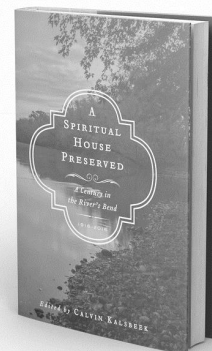
This is the story of a true church of Jesus Christ with very humble beginnings. The congregation of mostly poor farmers faced and survived many challenges, some due to her isolated location in a hook-like bend in the Grand River. But this one-hundredth anniversary book of Hope Protestant Reformed Church is more than a record of Hope's history. More importantly, it reveals the secrets of her continuance as a faithful church today: secrets which if heeded give Hope and like-minded churches hope for tomorrow.

Edited by Calvin Kalsbeek, 752 Pages, Hardcover

Retail: \$44.95, Book Club \$29.22 USA | \$31.46 International

Available for preorder. To place your order call 616-457-5970, or email mail@rfpa.org.

This book will not be automatically sent to Book Club members. However, Book Club discount may be used on this title.



REFORMED
FREE PUBLISHING
ASSOCIATION

Teacher/Aide Needed

■ The Protestant Reformed School of Wingham is in need of a multi-grade teacher or teacher's aide for the 2016-2017 school year. There is flexibility with grade assignment, etc., and the Board is willing to work with an interested individual's preference. Please contact the Board secretary, Brian Hilt, via e-mail at brnhilt@gmail.com for more information and to apply.

Reminder

■ The *Standard Bearer* will be published only once per month for the months of June, July, and August.

Classis West

■ Classis West of the Protestant Reformed Churches will meet in Randolph, WI, on Wednesday, September 28, 2016, at 8:30 A.M., the Lord willing. All delegates in need of lodging or transportation from the airport should notify the clerk of Randolph's consistory.

Rev. D. Kuiper, Stated Clerk

New Bulletin Clerk

Edgerton PRC
Mrs. Ruth Fennema
1211 Main St., Edgerton, MN 56128
(507) 215-5970 rafennema@hotmail.com

Reformed Witness Hour June 2016

Date	Topic	Text
June 5	"The Final Judgment"	Revelation 20:11-15
June 12	"Hell: Everlasting Punishment"	Matthew 25:41, 46
June 19	"The New Heaven and New Earth"	Revelation 21:1-3
June 26	"Watching and Ready for the Return of Christ"	Matthew 25:1-13