

The Standard Bearer

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Jesus or Barabbas

“Therefore when they were gathered together, Pilate said unto them, Whom will ye that I release unto you? Barabbas, or Jesus which is called Christ....”

Matthew 27:17-23

How our Savior suffered! What awful reproach He bore! Following His agony in Gethsemane, Christ had been captured in the garden. He had willingly surrendered Himself to His enemies who had come with swords and staves as if Christ were some dangerous criminal. Before the Sanhedrin Christ had been convicted and condemned to death. The Roman governor, Pilate, had heard the accusations of the chief priests and the elders but could find no fault in Christ. Pilate had attempted to escape the responsibility for deciding this case by sending Jesus to Herod. Christ had been subjected to Herod's cruel and cowardly mockery, and then had been sent back to Pilate.

But Pilate was faced with a terrible dilemma. On the one hand, he knew that Christ was innocent; but on the

other hand, he feared the Jews. Again Pilate attempted to evade the issue—he will place the choice of freeing Jesus or Barabbas before the people.

Let us not overlook the fact that our sovereign God was directing all these events. When Christ stands before Pontius Pilate, He stands before the world power that must both declare Him innocent and sentence Him to the death of the cross. But Christ must also be tried by the people! The multitude also must be left without excuse. The deepest intents of the hearts of the people must be exposed. Through the instrumentality of Pilate the multitude is placed before the bar of God's justice. The multitude must also face the question, “What will ye do with Jesus that is called Christ?”

The Shameful Nomination

Pilate was afraid of both the righteous Jesus and the Jews who could jeopardize his relationship with Caesar. God, however, has drawn crowds of people to the Praetorium, the palace of the Roman governor. The clamoring multitude reminds Pilate of a custom of the Passover feast. At the feast it was customary for the governor to release whatever prisoner the people desired.

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The governor would release some prisoner that had been condemned to suffer the extreme penalty. At the same time, Pilate recalls that there is a notable prisoner who had been cast into prison. According to Mark 15:7, "...there was one named Barabbas, which lay bound with them that had made insurrection with him, who had committed murder in the insurrection."

The idea occurs to Pilate that he can let the multitude solve his problem. He will not ask them broadly and generally who it is that they wish him to release. No, Pilate himself will make a nomination of two. He will propose a duo from which the multitude may choose one. Pilate prepares, so to speak, a ballot and gives the people the opportunity to determine by vote whether he should release unto them Jesus or Barabbas.

One name on this nomination is "Barabbas." He was a "notable prisoner." He was a notorious rogue, an infamous rebel. He had instigated a rebellion in Jerusalem against the Roman authorities. During this insurrection Barabbas had committed murder. Clearly, Barabbas had become the off-scouring of society, a notorious criminal, a deadly convict.

The other name on this nomination is "Jesus, which is called Christ." He is the Righteous One, the totally Innocent One! He has lived all His life in perfect obedience to God. Clearly, this Jesus is no criminal, but He has been unjustly accused. This is Jesus of Nazareth whom the multitude knew. Only a few days before this, as He had made His royal entry into Jerusalem, many of these people had shouted, "Hosanna to the Son of David." This Jesus is the Christ, the Anointed One. He is the only begotten Son of God in our flesh.

What a shameful nomination! It was shameful because it implied that Jesus was a criminal. The very fact that Jesus' name was on this nomination implied that He was a notable prisoner. Those who were released on the Passover feast were not innocent citizens but infamous outlaws. Therefore, that Pilate named Jesus a nominee meant that Pilate had already condemned Jesus. This was also a shameful nomination because of the vast contrast between these nominees. In Acts 3:14 Peter asserted, "But ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you." The Holy One and the Just has been paired with a murderer! The Son of God in the flesh allowed Himself to be placed on a par with the

most despicable criminal. Jesus was as widely famous for having done good throughout the land as Barabbas was notorious for his works of darkness. In addition, this was a shameful nomination because of the humiliation heaped upon Jesus. He, more than anyone else, felt keenly the offense of being reckoned with the malefactors! But voluntarily Christ so deeply humbled Himself that He allowed Himself to be numbered with the lowest transgressors! Christ knew that it was the hour of the multitude's trial.

The Trying Question

When the large crowd of Jews was gathered together, Pilate made known unto them his nomination. He asked the question, "Whom will ye that I release unto you? Barabbas, or Jesus which is called Christ?" Pilate felt confident that the choice of the multitude would free the innocent Jesus. He knew that it was because of the envy and jealousy of the leaders of the Jews that Christ had been delivered. Surely the common people could scarcely fail to release Jesus! This question asked by Pilate represented only another of his vain struggles to avoid the ultimate answer to God's question, "What will ye do with My Christ who is so plainly righteous?"

This was a trying question because it must be answered by this multitude. The crowd gathered before the Praetorium was not a tribe of ignorant savages. No, the whole world in all its culture and civilization was present in that multitude. This multitude was gathered in Jerusalem, the center of the world and of history in the year A.D. 33.

This was a trying question because it placed the multitude before the bar of God's justice. The people must not be able to say that they were innocent of this miscarriage of justice. They must not be able to complain that their leaders had rejected Jesus, while they themselves had never been confronted with the critical question. In this question God was sovereignly trying the world. The whole world had to be left without excuse! The world must be tried and exposed as evil through the trial, condemnation, and rejection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Further, this was a trying question because of the *ultimate* question involved here. This question did not lay before them a simple option of choosing a man to be freed. This question did not place before the multitude two men who were equals. But the multitude faced the ultimate question: "What think ye of the Christ?" And

remember that Christ stands before them, not in all His glory, but helpless and bound, and yet as the Christ, the eternal Son of God! They must give an answer as the revelation of their own ethical worth, as a revelation of their own inmost hearts. The question was intended to reveal whether they loved or hated the truth, whether they were good and noble or wicked and corrupt. And give an answer they must and will!

The Self-condemning Answer

In the meantime, the chief priests and elders had been busy while Pilate had been considering the mysterious message from his wife that he should have nothing to do with that just man. They were quick to take advantage of this opportunity given them to prompt the multitude as to the choice they should make. According to verse 20, they “persuaded the multitude that they should ask Barabbas, and destroy Jesus.” The instigation of the Jewish leaders was effective. The leaders of the Jews expertly manipulated the multitude into a passionate mob to be directed as they desired.

When Pilate turned back to the multitude he restated the question. Pilate said unto them, “Whether of the twain will ye that I release unto you?” The Gospels according to Mark and John both have it more boldly stated: “Will ye that I release unto you the King of the Jews?” The answer of the multitude was, “Barabbas.”

Pilate appeared stunned and desperate. It seems as if he is almost willing to think they have misunderstood. He should have declared, “I will pronounce Jesus innocent and release Him.” Instead, he weakly asked, “What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ?” The multitude answered unanimously, “Let him be crucified!” Pilate then descended to the level of arguing with the multitude, “Why, what evil hath he done?” Again Pilate stressed the truth of the innocence of Christ. But the agitated and wild mob repeatedly screamed, “Let him be crucified!”

This answer was self-condemning because the multitude clearly made known its will. There is no excuse. The fact that they were prompted by the chief priests does not take away their responsibility. Who could not see the stark contrast between Jesus and Barabbas? Surely they knew that this choice was between One who was perfectly righteous and a notorious criminal. When

faced with the question, “What think ye of the Christ?” the multitude quite consciously prefers a murderer to Jesus! The multitude should have rejected the shameful nomination made by Pilate. But they have unconsciously recognized themselves in this murderer, and so they chose Barabbas, revealing their own hatred for God and His Christ. The multitude was forced to reveal its desire for an earthly Messiah who would satisfy their carnal lusts.

Still more, this answer was self-condemning because this was the answer of the whole world. Truly in this answer we see the condemnation of the world. Christ said in John 12:31, “Now is the judgment of this world; now shall the prince of this world be cast out.” Understand, when the multitude asked for Barabbas, the whole world asked for Barabbas! When the multitude cried out, “Let him be crucified,” the whole world cried out, “Let him be crucified!” It was God’s sovereign purpose to condemn the world through its own testimony! In giving this answer, the world was exposed in its corruption, hypocrisy, and worthiness of damnation.


But finally, this answer was self-condemning because this was *our* answer. This answer of the multitude is *our* condemnation. We by nature, apart from grace, belong with that profane, scorning, God-reviling multitude that heaped reproach upon Christ. We must confess that we signed, as it were, our own condemnation before the terrible tribunal of God!

Yet we need not despair because of our self-condemning answer! Ultimately, our sovereign God had determined this answer. He had divinely appointed Christ to walk this way of suffering to the cross. He had ordained Christ to be the Head of the church. He had required that the perfect sacrifice be made for the sins of the elect given to Christ.

Don’t you see, this self-condemning answer was necessary for you and for me! Only through the suffering and death of Christ could we be delivered from the bondage of sin! Only through this answer could we, who are by nature enemies of God and His cause, once more be made friends. The very blood that we demanded be shed was the blood that washed away our sins!

Let us stand in awe at the mystery of Calvary! For He “was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification” (Rom. 4:25). For our sakes He bore

this reproach! He was despised, rejected of men that we might be accepted by God and never be forsaken by Him! And now Jesus Christ is our Advocate with the

Father. He works by His Spirit and grace in our hearts so that we count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord! 

EDITORIAL

PROF. BARRETT GRITTERS

What It Means to Be Reformed (14)

The Reformed Christian Life

The Christian life: how vital!

If being Reformed referred only to what a person believed, being Reformed would be hard enough. But being Reformed has to do with one's whole life. That not only makes matters harder, it brings our discussion of "What It Means" into a whole new realm—the realm of Christian living. This explains why, in this series of editorials, instead of asking, "What is the Reformed faith?" we have asked, "What does it mean to be Reformed?" To speak only of the Reformed faith could too easily allow us, in our weakness, to think only about what Scripture requires us to believe. But to speak of being Reformed compels us to realize that the God of Christianity makes demands, not only upon our brains and tongues, but upon the entirety of our lives.

From that point of view, it is not difficult to understand why some ancient fathers, even some Reformed fathers, constructed their "dogmatics" in a very different way than we may be familiar with.

*Previous article in this series:
March 1, 2016, p. 244.*

—WIMTBR—
COVENANTAL
CALVINISTIC
CHURCH
CONFESSIONAL
CHRISTIAN LIFE

We are accustomed to the formulation and order of our "Essentials of Reformed Doctrine" catechism book, which treats doctrines in this order: God, Man, Christ, Salvation, Church, and the Last Things. And though that is the order of our Belgic Confession, it is not the order of the Heidelberg Catechism. Nor was it Calvin's approach in his exposition of Christianity in his *Institutes*, where he treated prayer before predestination, and described the doctrine of the Christian *life* as one of the essential elements of his work. Calvin integrated the teaching of the Christian life—seamlessly—into his whole system explaining Christianity.

One very different way in which some church fathers wrote their manuals of doctrine was to use the outline of the three Christian graces of Faith, Hope, and Love. In the

first part (Faith), they explained the doctrines found in the Apostles' Creed. In the second (Hope), they expounded the Lord's Prayer and the biblical call to meditate on the future life. In the third (Love), they explained the Ten Commandments as how the Christian must love God and the neighbor. I am not proposing here that Reformed Christians follow that order in writing their systems of doctrine, although that would be a good way to test whether our understanding of Christianity is balanced. But I am suggesting that if a Christian does not give a significant place to "the Christian life" in his understanding of "What It Means to Be Reformed," he both misses something our fathers did not miss and he forgets that the Christian faith cannot be separated from the Christian life.

"What It Means to Be Reformed" includes a proper understanding of and a genuine living out of the Christian life.¹

¹ This understanding of the closest relationship between doctrine and life also explains why, in the history of Reformed seminary education, ethics was taught by the professor of dogmatics.

A variety of approaches

There is more than one right way to consider the Reformed view of the Christian life. We could follow the approach of the Heidelberg Catechism in its third section, and thus explain conversion, good works, the Ten Commandments, and prayer. Or we could use Calvin's description of a half dozen or so elements that he considers to be essential aspects of the Christian life. Luther also had his own unique and important emphases. There are probably as many ways of looking at all of the "indispensable elements" of the Christian life as there are people looking at them.

It would be most consistent in these editorials on "being Reformed" to describe the Christian life in terms of everything that we have already said about being Reformed. I mean that the Christian life must be explained from the Reformed confessions (Reformed is being "Confessional"). I mean that our explanation must be tested with the Scripture (*sola Scriptura*). I mean that we are to ask whether there may be depths or dimensions of the Christian life that the fathers before us missed, or that we have lost (*semper reformanda*). And so forth. But, in my judgment, we may not start describing the Christian life except in terms of living before the face of God, our Friend (Reformed is being "Covenantal").

I use an analogy to describe the Reformed view of the Christian life. Finding our way in our Father's world can be compared to using a GPS to find our way in a car. A Global Positioning System does a

number of things: it fixes our present location; it finds "home;" and then, most importantly, it directs us where we need to go. At times it even warns us when we have taken a wrong turn. The GPS functions by receiving radio signals beamed down from a whole system of stationary satellites, all of the signals working together to guide us on our way.

So I suggest eight truths that, like synchronized satellites, beam down their signals to the believer's heart and mind to guide him both in understanding and in living the Christian life. Of course, the mature Christian may launch other satellites—factor in any essential element that he judges to be missing. But I trust that these eight will give the kind of biblical guidance that will not allow the Christian to go too far off course, and direct him on paths where he will find the footsteps of his ancestors:

1. Union with Christ—the Covenant
2. The Law of God as Standard
3. The Glory of God as Goal
4. A Spiritual Attitude: Humility, Willingness, Gratitude
5. An Awareness of Space: Existence in both Church and World
6. A Sense of Time: Knowledge of both Past and Future
7. An "all things" Reach
8. A Desire for "more and more"

1. Union with Christ—the Covenant

To find our way in the Christian life, our "north star" is the reality of the covenant. We return to the beginning of our discussion of what

it means to be Reformed. Reformed Christianity is "covenantal." Christians are God's friends and members of His family. As a Christian lives his life, he lives it as a friend of God.

This first satellite governs all the others. Without this one, none of the others can function. Through this, all the others give the right signals.

To start with the teaching of the covenant is biblical. From Adam to Noah, and Enoch to Abraham, the saints walked with God as His friends. This is the life of God's people—to walk with Him. God's determination has always been to walk with us. So when His people became a nation, He placed His tent at their center, as close as He could get, to show that He was their Friend. At times, God would speak in family terms: "I am your Father, and you my children" (Deut. 32:6; Mal. 2:10; etc.) Other times, as a husband to his wife: "I am married to you" (Jer. 3:14). As our Friend, God tells us the "secrets" of His covenant (Ps. 25:14). When He does, the Christian responds, "I am my beloved's and his desire is toward me" (Song of Songs 7:10).

Christians live so close to God that they say, "For me to live is Christ" (Phil. 1:21). In a very real way, we may identify our life with Christ Himself. "I live," we exclaim, "yet not I, but Christ liveth in me...." So Paul reminds us: "Know ye not that...ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: ...in your body, and in your spirit [ye] are God's" (I Cor. 6:19, 20). And he comforts us with the astounding

testimony that “all things are ours” because “we are Christ’s...” (I Cor. 3:21-23).

To start with “covenant” in describing the Christian life is also Reformed, that is, it is confessional. The Heidelberg Catechism will not launch into its exposition of man’s misery, redemption, and way of living in gratitude, until it first has the believer confess: “...I, in body and soul, both in life and death, am not my own but belong to my faithful Savior Jesus Christ.” Before anything else, we say: “I belong to Christ.” Sincerely and willingly I will “live unto him.”

In a very real sense, which is not to be taken as hyperbole, *everything* about the Christian life is found in that simple, but profound confession: I belong to Jesus; I am not my own. *Nothing* about the Christian life is to be understood apart from that.

Covenant friendship explains why we pray without ceasing, study His Word regularly, attend public worship, and offer our lives as sacrifices of praise. “For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live, therefore, or die, we are the Lord’s” (Rom. 14:7, 8). We are the Lord’s!

If a Christian would begin every day making that confession, letting that truth sink down deeply into his soul, it would be all he needed. Everything else flows out of that. Everything. We are God’s. And He is ours. That is the covenant.

2. *The Law of God as Standard for Christian Living*

The second “satellite” that guides Christians in their life is God’s law. Any life may be examined by the law to determine whether it is Christian. Hold up a life to the standard of the law, and if it meets that standard, it is Christian. If it fails to measure up, to that extent it is not Christian.

But Christians are interested, not first of all in judging whether or not their lives or someone else’s life are Christian, but in asking, “How is this covenant life *with God* to be lived? What pleases my God who so loved me that He did not spare His own Son for my life? How must I conduct myself so that my life shows that I truly am His bride?”

Sometimes we think we give the law a very important place in our lives by saying, “Keeping the law is how a Christian shows gratitude for God’s covenant salvation.” Or, “If you know God’s covenant, you will obey the commandments to love God and to love your neighbor.” And that is something.

But it is not everything. To put it only that way is to risk thinking that “living in covenant salvation with God,” and “obeying God’s commandments,” are two separate realities. In fact, they are one.

Obedying God’s law is not how we *respond* to covenant life with God; it is how we *live* covenant life. Imagine your non-Christian neighbor asking, “How would you describe the Christian life? What does covenant life with God look like? How does the Christian life take shape?” To put the question in more intelligible, Christian form,

we might ask: “When the Covenant Husband (Christ) draws His dear bride to Himself and loves her, what would you see in the privacy of their home?” The best way to answer those questions is: Read the Law of God. Open the “book of the covenant” (Ex. 24:7) to read the “words of the covenant” (Ex. 34:28). These words describe the relationship itself of covenant love between God and His friends. Again, obedience to the law is not a *response* to the covenant; it *is* covenant life.

God’s friends *have God as their God, and no other* (the First Commandment). They love Him and serve Him. They know, trust, and submit to Him. They expect all good things from Him only. They love, fear, and glorify Him. All this is how our Reformed confession puts it. This is what it means to live like a Christian. This is not merely a *response* to some *other* covenant salvation; this *is* covenant salvation: I have God as my God!


God’s friends *worship God spiritually* (the Second Commandment). Their relationship with Him is not outward and formal, but inward and spiritual. Of course, graven images cannot represent God. But neither do they serve any purpose at all for spiritual fellowship with Him. They that worship Him, Jesus said, must worship Him spiritually. So God fellowships with us, the Heidelberg Catechism says, and teaches us, “not by dumb images, but by the lively preaching of His Word.” This is what it means to live Christianly. Once more, this is not merely a *response* to some *other* covenant salvation; this *is* covenant

salvation: I live with my Friend spiritually—by the Spirit of His Son sent so that He would always be *with* me (John 14:16-18).

God's beloved bride *loves His name* (the Third Commandment). God's name and reputation mean the world to Christians. They not

only refuse to take His name in vain, they use His name—reflect on His works and worth. That's "life" for them. Even in everyday life among friends, we love to use the names of the ones we love.

And so it goes with the Fourth Commandment, as God's beloved people *rest* securely in His bosom,

hear His gospel of peace and grace to them. We have a whole day devoted to worship of the One we love. But devotion to Him and rest in His bosom takes place not only on the special day of rest but all the days of their lives. This *is* covenant. This *is* the Christian life. 

Note from the Editors:

On the cover of the February 1, 2016 issue of this magazine (Vol. 92, No. 9) we mistakenly gave the title to a letter to the editors, "Same Sex Marriage Vote in Northern Ireland." The vote took place in the *Republic of Ireland*, not in Northern Ireland, as the writer of the letter plainly stated. Our apologies for the error.

ALL AROUND US

REV. DANIEL HOLSTEGE

■ Protestant Reformed Mission Work in the Philippines

One of the events occurring in the world "all around us" is mission work. When looking for items to address for this rubric, I usually consult magazines such as *Time*, *Christianity Today*, and several others. I often focus on the big stories reported in the news, both in the churches and in society. The events reported there are certainly important as signs of the times. But the most important event occurring "all around us" today often goes unnoticed, certainly by the reporters of the world. It is the preaching of the gospel of the kingdom in all the world for a witness to all nations (Matt. 24:14).

This past January I had the privilege of visiting our Protestant Reformed mission field in the Philippines. My wife accompanied me for the first week of the trip. We witnessed firsthand what it means in practice to go into all the world and teach all nations (Matt. 28:19). I also had the privilege of participating in the work through preaching and teaching. I can report, as a writer for this rubric who has seen it for himself, that there is a tremendous amount of work going on in the Philippines and a remarkable opportunity for us to preach the gospel there as the Protestant Reformed Churches in America.

Rev. Holstege is pastor of the First Protestant Reformed Church of Holland, Michigan.

In fact, over the course of our journey, it became exceedingly clear to me from the plenteousness of the harvest there that the Lord is beckoning us to seek a second missionary, and perhaps more besides.

Some self-styled missionaries in the Philippines do not see the importance of teaching and preaching. They see the widespread, systemic poverty (which we also saw), and consider it a higher priority to alleviate the economic woes of the poor in the Philippines than to instruct them in the truth of God's Word. They claim that most Filipinos are already Christians. Most are Roman Catholics. Others are Mormons, or members of the Iglesia Ni Cristo, or Seventh-Day Adventists, or various other sects. You see? They are Christians! They don't need doctrine. We need to focus rather on social work and financial aid.

But this way of thinking is mistaken. To be sure, we have the calling to do good to all men, especially those of the household of faith, as we have opportunity (Gal. 6:10); and we must do that. But we must also maintain that our primary calling as the church is to teach all nations the truth of the gospel of Christ. Those who are members of the above-mentioned groups, which includes the vast majority of Filipinos, we dare not assume to be Christians. That is not to say there are no true Christians in these groups. But we dare not assume that they are Christians when they are members of cults

and false churches. Thus, they need the preaching and teaching of sound doctrine. As the PRCA, therefore, we have something to bring, something to say, and God is calling us to bring it and say it. God is opening doors for us in the Philippines. God has given us a rich heritage as the PRCA, a treasury of the truths of the gospel, a good knowledge of the biblical and Reformed faith, and an experience of those truths as believers with our seed in the covenant of grace. We members of the PRCA and our children have received and continue to receive from the pulpit the truth that saves us and glorifies our God. God calls us to make known that truth to others near and far who do not have it as we do: "...shew forth his salvation from day to day. Declare his glory among the heathen, his wonders among all people" (Ps. 96:2-3). "...Among whom ye shine as lights in the world; holding forth the word of life" (Phil. 2:15-16).

This is being done by our faithful missionary, Rev. Daniel Kleyn, with the help of his wife Sharon, in the Philippines. It is being done by faithful Filipino pastors too, such as Rev. Vernon Ibe, Rev. John Flores, and Rev. Leovino Trinidad. It is being done on the island of Luzon, in the area known as Metro Manila, the huge and dense home of some 22 million people; on Negros, another island of the Philippine archipelago, in Bacolod City and Sipalay; also to many other contacts throughout the Philippines. Like most of you who read the *Standard Bearer*, saints in the Philippines too are hearing sermons on the Heidelberg Catechism, receiving lessons in the Essentials of Reformed Doctrine, reading the *Standard Bearer*, and devouring the books published by the RFPA. Many pastors throughout the Philippines are eager to grow in their knowledge of the Reformed faith and life and to practice biblical church government. Let us continue to remember this work, give freely to it, and pray earnestly for the cause of PRC missions.

*Many pastors
throughout the Philippines
are eager to grow
in their knowledge
of the Reformed faith and life
and to practice
biblical church government.*

■ Anglicans Discipline Episcopalians over Homosexual Marriage

After 13 years of rancor over conflicting views on homosexuality, the archbishops of the Anglican Communion have voted to impose sanctions for three years on the Episcopal Church, the American branch of the Communion, for its decision last summer to allow clergy to perform same-sex marriages, church officials said Thursday.¹

The Episcopal Church, sometimes called the church of American presidents because so many presidents were members of it, has been historically the church of the Anglican Communion in America. The Anglican Communion is a body of churches with some 85 million members in 165 countries (1.8 million of them in the United States), the third largest in the world after the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Churches. In 2003 the Episcopal Church, its American branch, consecrated an openly homosexual bishop. Since then, over the last thirteen years, there has been heated conflict within the de-

nomination worldwide. This past January 14 in Canterbury, England, the Anglican Church took disciplinary action against the Episcopal Church. The sanctions will cut off the Episcopal Church from participation in decision-making within the Anglican community.

For the next three years, the Episcopal leaders will not be allowed to represent the Anglican Communion at meetings with other churches or other faiths, will not be appointed or elected to internal committees and will not be allowed to participate in decisions in the Anglican Communion "relating to doctrine or polity."²

Some conservative archbishops thought it did not go far enough; that a call to repentance should have been issued to those provinces in the Episcopal Church that

¹ Laurie Goodstein and Kimiko De Freytas-Tamura, "Anglican Church Disciplines U.S. Episcopalians Over Gay Marriages," *New York Times*, January 14, 2016, <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/01/15/world/europe/anglican-archbishops-sanction-us-episcopal-church-over-gay-marriages.html>.

² Goodstein and DeFreytas-Tamura, "Anglican Church."

have allowed same-sex marriage. Others thought the Episcopal Church should be entirely cut off from the Anglican Communion. Interestingly, many if not most of these conservative bishops who oppose same-sex marriage do not reside in the Western world but in Africa. In a statement, the Anglican archbishops said, “Recent developments in the Episcopal Church with respect to a change in their canon on marriage represent a fundamental departure from the faith and teaching held by the majority of our provinces on the doctrine of marriage....” Traditional Anglican doctrine, continued the statement, “upholds marriage as between a man and a woman in faithful, lifelong union.”³ But some in the Episcopalian Church shot back. For example,

The Rev. Susan Russell, a senior associate rector at All Saints Church in Pasadena, CA, was among the Episcopalians who said sanctions would not change their position: “As a lifelong Episcopalian and a married lesbian priest, I think it’s not only an acceptable cost, it’s a badge of honor in some ways.”⁴

The days are evil. Are we encouraged that the Anglican Church is disciplining the Episcopal Church? It is certainly a positive note. But with the Anglican conservatives we would agree that it does not go far enough. Where is the call to repentance? Where is the admonition to renounce the false doctrine of same-sex marriage?! It strikes me that not the European Anglicans, but the African ones, are the conservatives in that denomination. The Western world is everywhere given over to the devilish idea of tolerance in all things. The churches of Europe and America, where Christianity spread and flourished throughout so many past centuries, have largely apostatized. Only a few glimmerings of light, like this bit of news, can still be seen here and there. And even then, the glimmerings come primarily from churchmen in Africa, rather than those in England or America.

Let us all beware of deceivers, for we in the PRCA can fall too. May the Lord preserve us in the face of the winds of lawlessness that blow steadily. May He

strengthen us to maintain the third mark of the true church, “If church discipline is exercised in punishing of sin” (Belgic Confession, Art. 29). May He also preserve our sister churches throughout the world and give us the courage to keep each other accountable to teach and practice the truth of the Word of God.

■ Worldwide Persecution of Christians up from Last Year

2015 surpassed 2014 as the worst year of persecution in modern times for Christians, according to the World Watch List put out by Open Doors.

More than 7,000 Christians were killed for their faith last year, up drastically from 4,344 in 2014 and 2,123 in 2013. Those numbers don’t include North Korea or parts of Iraq and Syria, where accurate numbers are hard to obtain, Open Doors said. All three of those countries are among the WWL’s top five persecutors.⁵

North Korea is still the number one *country* persecuting Christians. It is estimated that up to 70,000 Christians are in labor camps there. But Islamic terrorism is the main *force* behind persecution of Christians throughout the world. In 2015, thousands of Christians were persecuted and killed for their faith in the Middle East and Africa by Islamic terrorist organizations such as ISIS and Boko Haram. Also in India, where Hindu extremists have been emboldened by the new government of Narendra Modi, persecution of Christians has risen.

For those who became martyrs for Christ last year, there was a crown of life when they opened their eyes in heaven. For us believers who learn of the increase of persecution, there is not fear, but a steady peace of mind rooted in the knowledge that these things must come to pass; there is a watchful readiness to join the sufferers, if the Lord wills; and above all, there is a hopeful looking up in the knowledge that Christ will soon appear on the clouds with power and great glory, to grant heavenly rewards for us who “fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ” (Col. 1:24). ☞

³ Daniel Burke, “Anglicans suspend Episcopal Church over same-sex marriage,” *CNN.com*, January 14, 2016, <http://edition.cnn.com/2016/01/14/world/episcopal-church-suspended/index.html>.

⁴ Goodstein and DeFreytas-Tamura, “Anglican Church.”

⁵ Sarah Eekhof Zylstra, “North Korea Gets Competition: The Top 50 Countries Where It’s Now Hardest to Be a Christian,” *Christianity Today*, January 13, 2016, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/gleanings/2016/january/top-50-countries-hardest-christian-world-watch-list-2016.html>.

Of God, His Unity and Trinity

(Second Helvetic Confession, Chapter 3, A)

God Is One

We believe and teach that God is one in essence or nature, subsisting in himself, all sufficient in himself, invisible, incorporeal, immense, eternal, Creator of all things both visible and invisible, the greatest good, living, quickening and preserving all things, omnipotent and supremely wise, kind and merciful, just and true. Truly we detest many gods because it is expressly written: "The Lord your God is one Lord" (Deut. 6:4). "I am the Lord your God. You shall have no other gods before me" (Ex. 20:2-3). "I am the Lord, and there is no other god besides me. Am I not the Lord, and there is no other God beside me? A righteous God and a Savior; there is none besides me" (Isa. 45:5, 21). "The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness" (Ex. 34:6).

In the first two articles of the Second Helvetic Confession (SHC), the Reformed Christian confesses what he believes concerning Holy Scripture. This is crucial. Since everything that he believes as well as the way in which he is called to live is set forth in Holy Scripture, what we believe about Scripture itself is foundational. For this reason, the SHC began with the doctrine of Holy Scripture. It treated what Scripture is, "the true Word of God," in Article 1. And it treated in Article 2 the proper interpretation of Scripture, as well as the authority of the church fathers, ecclesiastical assemblies, and human traditions in comparison to the Scriptures.

The first great truth revealed in Scripture is the truth concerning God Himself. Scripture reveals God to us. This is God's purpose in giving the Bible to us. And because this is His purpose, He gave us the Bible by infallible inspiration. His purpose is that through the Scriptures we might come to know God, whom to know is life eternal (John 17:3). In every book, every chapter, every verse we must see God. Scripture reveals God to us truly, that is, as He really is. It is true that Scripture does not

reveal everything that there is to know about God. God is infinite and incomprehensible; human language cannot fully describe God to us. But what Scripture does reveal of God to us is accurate; it corresponds to who and what God actually is.

The first great truth concerning God revealed in Scripture is that *He is one*. He is one in two senses. He is one in the sense that He is one in Himself. In His own divine being, God is simple and undivided. In language used in the next paragraph of this chapter of the SHC, He is "one and indivisible God." He is not composed, made up of pieces or parts. He is, in the language of the Belgic Confession of Faith, "one only simple and spiritual Being" (Art. 1). The oneness of God means that all God's attributes or perfections are one in Him. What this means is that all the persons of the Godhead share equally in the divine attributes. This chapter in the SHC begins by mentioning several of God's attributes. It mentions His self-sufficiency ("all sufficient in himself"), His invisibility or spirituality, His incorporeality (the fact that God does not have a body), His immensity or omnipresence, His eternity or infinity; that He is the "Creator of all things both visible and invisible"; that He is the highest good; that He is the living God who quickens and preserves all things; that He is omnipotent, omniscient ("supremely

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wise"); and that He is "kind and merciful, just and true." All these attributes inhere in the one Being of God. God is self-sufficient. God is invisible. God is immense. And God is all the other attributes as well. The attributes are the perfections of the one divine Being who is God.

Besides being one in Himself, God is also one as the *only Lord God*. He is the one true and living God, and there is no god besides Him. He is the only God in distinction from all the false gods, who although they claim to be God, are no gods at all, but dumb idols of wood and stone or the imagination of wicked men's hearts. God is one God, that is, He is God alone. This is the first, essential component of the doctrine of the Trinity: God is one. The Christian religion condemns all polytheism, all worship of more than one god, the worship of many gods, as is the practice of the heathen and the characteristic of the heathen religions.

That God is the only true God is the teaching of Scripture. "We believe and teach" the doctrine of the Trinity because we know this to be the teaching of Scripture. Immediately in this first article following the two introductory articles on Scripture, the SHC makes plain what it believes about Scripture by appealing to Scripture in support of its teaching. Scripture is the final authority. Appeal is made to the Scriptures in order to support what the confession teaches. Practically, the SHC demonstrates what it has taught about the authority of Scripture as "the true Word of God" (SHC, Chap. 1) and the final authority in the church.

God Is Three

Notwithstanding we believe and teach that the same immense, one and indivisible God is in person inseparably and without confusion distinguished as Father, Son and Holy Spirit so, as the Father has begotten the Son from eternity, the Son is begotten by an ineffable generation, and the Holy Spirit proceeds from them both, and the same from eternity and is to be worshipped with both.

Thus there are not three gods, but three persons, consubstantial, coeternal, and coequal; distinct with respect to hypostases, and with respect to order, the one preceding the other yet without any inequality. For according to the nature or essence they are so joined together that they are one God, and the divine nature is common to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Besides being one, God is also three. At the same time that He is one, God is also three. While He is one, He is also three. This is the biblical and confessional

The SHC supports its teaching of God's oneness by appealing, first of all, to what is known as "the Shema."¹ The Shema is God's Word in Deuteronomy 6:4, "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord." Throughout history the Shema has been appealed to as proof that God is one, the "one Lord." Beside Him there is no other god; He is God alone. In addition to quoting the Shema, the SHC quotes the first commandment of the Decalogue: "I am the Lord your God. You shall have no other gods before me" (Ex. 20:2-3). The first commandment is the foundation of the whole law, the law that calls for love, worship, and obedience to the one true God. For generations these two passages have shaped the Christian belief in the truth of the Trinity.

In addition, the SHC appeals to Isaiah 45, where twice God says through the prophet, "I am the Lord, and there is none else, there is no God beside me." And the confession refers to God's word to Moses at the time when God revealed Himself to Moses in that very special and direct way. We read in Exodus 34:6: "And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth." Jehovah is "The LORD, The LORD God." If He is "The LORD God," and not merely "a LORD God," He is God alone.

¹ Deuteronomy 6:4 is called "the Shema" because this is the first word in the original Hebrew of this verse. That first word is translated in the King James as the imperative, "Hear!"

truth of the Trinity—the doctrine that more than any distinguishes Christianity from every false religion, from the cults and sects, and from liberal and apostate

Christianity. Within the Being of God, there are three distinct persons, three “hypostases.” There are three individuals, all of whom stand in relationship to each other, within God’s Being. Each of them says “I” in relationship to Himself and in relationship to the other persons. The Father says “I;” the Son says “I;” and the Holy Spirit says “I.” At the same time, although there are three who say “I” within the Being of God, the three persons together say “I” in relationship to us men. This is the doctrine of the Trinity, the fruit of centuries of reflection on Scripture by the Christian church.

It is plain that God is three in a different sense than He is one. He is one “in essence or nature.” He is three in “persons.” Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are three distinct persons, but three persons who are “consubstantial, coeternal, and coequal.” They are “distinct with respect to hypostases...yet without any inequality.” For Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are “so joined together that they are one God, and the divine nature is common to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.” Because there is only one divine essence or being, each person of the Trinity shares in all that God is. There is one omnipotence that belongs fully to each of the three divine persons. There is one omniscience that Father, Son, and Holy Spirit together possess. And there is one glory that each of the three persons possesses in all its fullness.

Threeness characterizes the very Being of God. Not sameness, but threeness. God is one, *and* God is three. There is variety in God, not monotony. Oneness, but at the same time distinction. Unity, but also diversity. The three persons within the Being of God are distinguished by name. That they are distinguished by name indicates that they are personally distinct from one another. One of the three is Father. Another of the three is Son. And still another is Holy Spirit. These three share the one Being of God. Together they exist as the one God, “consubstantial, coeternal, and coequal.”

That there are three persons within the Godhead is plain from the distinct property of each of them, as pointed out by the SHC. The property of each of the persons is that “the Father has begotten the Son from eternity, the Son is begotten by an ineffable generation, and the Holy Spirit truly proceeds from them both, and the same from eternity is to be worshipped with both.”

At least three fundamental truths of Scripture com-

pelled the church from the beginning of her existence in the New Testament to confess the truth of the Trinity, the truth that there is plurality of persons within the Godhead. First, there is the truth of the *deity of Christ*. Jesus Christ, the second person of the Trinity in our flesh, is God. Since Jesus Christ is God, there must be plurality of persons in God. Second, *God is Father*. Fatherhood implies sonship. God cannot be Father, if He is not Father to one who is His Son. And since God’s Fatherhood is an everlasting Fatherhood, there must be one who is everlastingly His Son, as there is in the Trinity. And, third, the fact that *God is love* implies plurality within God’s being. God is love, I John 4:8. He does not become a God of love when He elects and saves His people. He is a God of love within Himself before and apart from us; He is a God of love from eternity. Love is not the attribute of a solitary personality. Love demands an object, one who is loved. That God is love demands a Father who loves, a Son who is loved and who responds in love, and the Holy Spirit who is the personal agent through whom this mutual love is expressed.

That Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are really and personally distinct means that the Reformed faith, along with ancient Christianity, rejects the teaching that the three persons are merely three *modes* of existence or *aspects* of the one God. According to this view, God is one in Being and one in person. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are merely three different ways in which the one God relates to His creatures and all that is outside of Himself. Now He manifests Himself as Father; then He manifests Himself as Son; and still another time He manifests Himself as Spirit. This is the ancient error of *modalism* or Sabelianism, which was condemned by the early church.


Regrettably, far and away the most common understanding of the Trinity in our day is a modalistic understanding. That is apparent from the popular analogies that are offered as illustrations of the truth of the Trinity. The Trinity is like an egg: part shell, part egg-white, and part yoke. Or, the Trinity is like water: at one time in liquid form, at another time frozen, and at yet another time in the form of steam. Or, the Trinity is like a man, who is at the same time a father, a son, and a husband. Or, one of the latest analogies to be used is that the Trinity is like 3-in-1 body wash, functioning in three ways, as body wash, as shampoo, and as conditioner. All of these

analogies of the Trinity are erroneous because they all boil down to modalism. They all deny the real distinction between the three persons. They all reduce the three persons to three modes of being or three aspects.

This is not to deny that there is a certain threeness built into the creation. There is, and that fact is striking. These are not proofs of the Trinity, or vestiges of the Trinity, as is sometimes alleged. But they are the stamp, as it were, of God's own threeness on the creation that He has made. There are three basic realities in the universe: matter, time, and space. Each of these in turn is divided in a threefold way. Matter is either solid, liquid, or gas. Time is either past, present, or future. Space is distinguished as height, depth, and width. And even man

consists of body, mind, and soul (spirit). While not being "proofs" in the technical sense of the word, these are nevertheless indications of the threeness that characterizes the Creator God.

The SHC stands on the shoulders of the ancient creeds in its development of the truth of the Trinity. Bullinger and the other Reformers were in agreement with the Athanasian Creed (A.D. 500):

Whosoever will be saved, before all things it is necessary that he hold the catholic faith; which faith except every one do keep whole and undefiled, without doubt he shall perish everlastingly. And the catholic faith is this: That we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity. 

ALL THY WORKS SHALL PRAISE THEE

MR. JOEL MINDERHOUD

Ozone and Its Role in Creation

Previously in this rubric we have examined some of the main characters in the elegant book of creation and examined how they illustrate the wisdom of God as well as other important spiritual truths. Recently, we examined oxygen and considered it from the perspective of its absolute necessity for daily life, not only that of humans, but also that of creatures.

We now turn our attention to oxygen again, but this time from the perspective of a lesser known form of oxygen—ozone. For many of us, our knowledge of ozone is limited by what we learn from the media and amounts to little more than a passing understanding of a hole in the ozone layer. Though there are chemicals that do destroy ozone, few people are aware that there are other naturally occurring reactions that actually rejuvenate it. However, before we can investigate that reality, we need to know more about ozone itself. Therefore, in this article we will examine the crucial role ozone plays in the creation, and

the Lord willing, we will discuss both the breaking down and also the building up of ozone in the stratosphere in our next article.

Ozone—What it is

As we examined in our last set of articles, the element oxygen is commonly found in the creation in its diatomic (two atom) form (O_2). Oxygen gas (O_2) serves us in the way of giving us the necessary chemicals for respiration so that our bodies can burn ingested foods, thus giving us energy for daily life. In addition, oxygen is necessary for combustion so that we can burn fuel to heat our homes, cook our food, move our automobiles, and the many other things that require combustion reactions.

However, the element oxygen is also found in creation in another form—its triatomic (three atom) form (O_3), known as "ozone." Ozone is rare at lower atmospheric altitudes but is far more abundant at higher altitudes. The layer of atmosphere extending from ground level to approximately 20 km in altitude, where most of life-activity occurs (humans and animals live; trees grow; birds soar; airplanes fly), is called the troposphere. In this region of the atmosphere the element oxygen is

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found predominantly in its diatomic form (O_2). The next layer of the atmosphere, extending from 20 km to 85 km, is called the stratosphere. The stratosphere has within itself distinct layers of air—a cooler lower region and a warmer upper region. Ozone is found in large quantities in the lower layer of the stratosphere. Collectively, the ozone molecules in the stratosphere are called the ozone layer. The term “ozone layer,” however, is a bit misleading as it implies that the atmosphere consists of a thick layer of pure ozone molecules. In reality, however, ozone molecule concentrations in the stratosphere are rather low—approximately 10 ppm (parts per million). If it were possible to collect all the ozone in the stratosphere into a concentrated layer, it would be only about 3 mm thick.¹

Ozone is a strong oxidizing agent, that is, it easily removes electrons from other substances so that they do not function as they once did. This makes ozone particularly good as a sterilizer and disinfectant, but also very harmful to humans, animals, and plants. In the wisdom of God, ozone is not found naturally in large quantities in the troposphere, thus sparing us and the other creatures from its harmful effects. Ozone, however, is found in much more abundance in the stratosphere and serves a very important role for our benefit.

Ozone—Its Role in the Creation

Ozone’s role in the creation is to filter harmful ultra-violet (UV) light out of the sun’s rays. The manner in which ozone accomplishes this is somewhat complex.

First, we must understand that sunlight is composed of different forms of light with different amounts of energy. The sun’s radiation has various forms: visible light; infra-red (IR) radiation; and ultra-violet (UV) radiation. Approximately 51% of the sun’s rays come to earth as IR radiation, providing sufficient warmth; 47% comes in the form of visible light, illuminating our planet so we can see; and the remaining 2% comes in the form of UV radiation. This UV radiation comes in three different forms, due to their different wavelengths (measured in nanometers (nm), which are one billionth of a meter). UV-A is UV light with a wavelength of approximately 400 to 315 nm;

UV-B radiation has wavelengths between 315 nm and 280 nm; while UV-C radiation has wavelengths between 280 and 100 nm. Light rays with small wavelength have more energy than light rays with large wavelength. Therefore, UV-C rays have more energy than UV-B rays, and UV-B more than UV-A.

Secondly, we must understand that the bonds that hold atoms together as a molecule can be broken. In order for such a bond to be broken, a molecule must absorb a specific amount of energy. For example, the energy to break the bonds found in diatomic oxygen is different from the energy to break the bonds found in ozone, because the kinds of bonds in those molecules are different. Since the bonds found in diatomic oxygen are stronger than the bonds found in ozone, more energy is needed to break the bonds in diatomic oxygen molecules than is needed to break ozone molecular bonds. By God’s marvelous design, UV-C light, which has a small wavelength and therefore a high energy, has the exact level of energy needed to break the diatomic oxygen bonds. Meanwhile, most of the UV-B light has the necessary energy to break ozone molecule bonds. (The benefits of these rays breaking down the O_2 or O_3 will be explained in the next article.) The energy of the light is transformed into heat and serves also to separate the atoms of the molecule from each other. The light’s energy is no longer in the form of light rays, and therefore much of the UV light from the sun is absorbed (filtered out) by our atmosphere (through breaking the bonds of these molecules).

Collectively, the gases of our atmosphere, such as diatomic oxygen gas, nitrogen gas, and ozone effectively prevent all UV-C rays from penetrating to earth’s surface, while ozone molecules virtually alone are responsible for absorbing UV-B rays. Since UV-B rays have a range of wavelengths (280-315 nm) and, consequently, a range of energy, a portion of that range will not be absorbed by ozone. Approximately 10-30% of UV-B rays are not absorbed by ozone molecules, since some of the UV-B rays have wavelengths (and energy) that are beyond the range of energy used to break ozone molecular bonds. Some UV-B rays, therefore, reach ground-level. No atmospheric molecules are able to absorb UV-A rays. Since UV-A and some UV-B rays penetrate all the way to earth’s surface, beach-goers wisely lather up with a sunscreen with UV-A and UV-B ray protection.

¹ http://www.mhhe.com/physsci/chemistry/chang7/ssg/chap17_3sg.html, accessed Jan 19, 2016.

The UV rays that penetrate to earth's surface can have serious effects on plants, animals, and humans. The main effects are these: damaged plant leaves; lower fruit and seed production in plants; damaged photoplankton in the oceans—a major part of the marine food chain and a major organism that removes carbon dioxide from the atmosphere; cataract formation; suppressed immune systems; and skin cancer.

UV-B rays, in particular, can damage DNA molecules in the skin, resulting in skin cancer. Most cases of skin cancer are the non-fatal form (non-melanoma). One in four Americans and three of every four Australians (above whom a large hole in the ozone layer appears each Spring) will sometime in their life be affected by non-melanoma skin cancer due to overexposure to UV-B rays.

Ozone, therefore, is a vital substance in our atmosphere. In the upper atmosphere, ozone serves the important role of filtering out harmful UV-B and UV-C rays. By removing much of the UV-B out of the sun's rays, plants, animals, and humans are protected from the dangerous effects of over-exposure to UV light.

A Marvelous Work of God

God created a marvelous, intricate creation. When one examines any part of the creation, such as the ozone layer, one is again impressed at God's wise design in giving each creature its "being, shape, form and several offices [specific purpose] to serve its Creator; that He doth also still uphold and govern them by His eternal providence and infinite power, for the service of mankind, to the end that man may serve his God" (Belgic Confession, Art. 12). As was illustrated in this article, ozone molecules have been given a unique ability to absorb UV-B rays. God created these ozone molecules with the purpose, in part, of protecting us from the harmful rays of the sun.

Generally, we think of the sun as being important in God's creation for giving us light (visible portion of Electromagnetic Spectrum) so we can see and for providing

us the necessary warmth (Infrared portion of Electromagnetic Spectrum). But the sun also was created to emit UV rays. Some of the UV rays, such as UV-C and UV-B, are high in energy. Their high energy is critical for the necessary role they play in some important chemical reactions in the atmosphere. But their high energy also makes these forms of UV rays harmful to biological tissues (skin, leaves, etc.). Therefore, God wisely created a layer of molecules in the upper atmosphere to remove these high energy UV rays before they interact with biological tissues, while allowing them to energize (catalyze)

necessary chemical reactions in the atmosphere.

Whether great or infinitesimally small, every creature was wisely designed by God to work in harmony. Thus, the entire creation is one unified, organic whole. And each and every day, God sovereignly continues to uphold that creation as all of these marvelous processes work together. "Thy faithfulness is unto all generations: thou hast established the

earth, and it abideth. They continue this day according to thine ordinances: for all are thy servants" (Ps. 119:90-91).

Yet, the fool in his heart says "there is no God" (Ps. 14:1; 53:1). Unbelief sees these glorious works in the creation and refuses to glorify God, but, rather, "change[s] the truth of God into a lie, and worship[s] and serve[s] the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen" (Rom. 1:25). Unbelief and blindness propose that such a beautiful and intricate creation came into existence on its own and gradually became this organized and harmonious creation in which we live. Yet the more we consider and study these processes with the eyes of faith, so far are we from removing God from His creation, that we all the more stand in awe of His majesty and wisdom (Ps. 93:1). God is God—the Creator, who is blessed for ever. This is His work! "Thou are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power; for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created" (Rev. 4:11)!



*Whether great or
infinitesimally small,
every creature was
wisely designed by God
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The Second Coming of Christ and Missions (3)

Biblical missions ought to proclaim the truth of the final appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ at the end of history through the signs of that return. The faithful proclamation of that truth, on the basis of which men are called to repent and believe the promise of the gospel, will serve the coming again of Christ by means of its negative and positive fruits. Christ comes through the preaching of the gospel and thereby sifts out from among the chaff of the nations, tribes, and tongues of the world His elect kernels to repentance and faith. In this way, the final appearing of Christ is served and draws near quickly. That truth instills confidence in a missionary for faithful service in his calling.

Having proper confidence while a missionary labors is a blessed gift—and a necessary one because of disruptions and disappointments of various sorts that are common to missions.

A missionary may wrestle at times with weaknesses in his own labors and abilities. He may struggle with his ability to converse in the local languages and dialects with the people of God, but then struggle even more with his ability to preach in the local dialects and languages, which demands precision in pronunciation and careful word choice for clear, edifying sermons. Because of the demands of the workload and the heartfelt concern for the welfare and good future of the mission work, the missionary may succumb to exhaustion or the feeling of “burn out,” which regular furloughs are meant to address. He may face the changing needs of his family, and the added good work with his family may at times take away from his time and ability for the mission work as he would like. Situations where a missionary comes to terms with his limitations and with the demands of the workload may

disappoint him in varying degrees. What will encourage him to deal with disappointments in his labors?

Many examples can be found in the history of missions in which foreign missionaries struggled with the apparent lack of fruit on their preaching and instruction among those who lived in idolatry. For all the effort and patient labor some missionaries gave, the positive fruit was sometimes very little, or non-existent. It was easy to become somewhat distressed at the very slow pace of conversions. For example, some Reformed missionaries noted that they had labored for four to ten years in their respective fields until their first converts were baptized. Another Reformed missionary, laboring in China in the 1840s, experienced the gathering of only five converts after initially serving in his field of labor for seven years.¹

A major item of discouragement often has been that the amount of work is greater than the supply of laborers. That the workload is greater than the supply of laborers was the analysis regarding the PRCA mission work in the Philippines, as noted in a recent quarterly mission newsletter. After a thorough summary of the workload, the newsletter concluded that:

Another missionary is certainly needed in order to share this workload. But what especially contributes to the need for another missionary is the fact that we are working with so many different churches, groups, and contacts, and find it very difficult to do justice to the work in any one church or area. From our earthly point of view, it seems we could make more progress with the work of establishing solidly Reformed churches and a solidly Reformed denomination, under the Lord's blessing, with at least one other missionary here.²

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Previous article in this series: February 1, 2016, p. 210.

¹ Gerald F. De Jong, *The Reformed Church in China, 1842-1951* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 1992), 40-41.

² Rev. D. Kleyn, “Philippine Mission Field Newsletter” (November 2015), 2.

That situation is actually not new for New Testament missions, including recent Reformed missions. A missionary from the Reformed Church in America, laboring in China in the late 1800s gave a similar evaluation, although with an obvious hint of discouragement:

Our greatest burden, one which at times threatens to make us spiritless, is to see opened doors not entered, opportunities lost, the effort of years wasted, simply from the want of sufficient force to carry out the work.³

Besides those disappointments, there are other things that might hinder a missionary's spiritual ambition in the work. For example, there may be unexpected sickness and/or death of missionaries or family members that interrupt the work. Sometimes opposition to the preaching and instruction may be so hostile in some mission fields that it brings the weekly flow of the work to a standstill. When regular members of an outstation or a newly formed church suddenly leave for various reasons, even after being admonished diligently, there may be great discouragement.

When such things happen in mission work, what is an appropriate response? When it is realized in missions that many are called but only a few actually repent, believe, and are baptized into the church, do we conclude that there is some flaw in the true gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ? Do we begin to question the ability of the Lord of the harvest to manage His work?

In the face of discouragements, faithful missionaries have shown remarkable and exemplary confidence in the coming Lord of the harvest. For example, that confidence is evident from one Reformed missionary's labors in China long ago, the Rev. Daniel Rapalje, who wrote in one of his missionary reports: "Though the laborers are few, the Lord of the harvest will in some way, provide for gathering in the ripening grain."⁴

Another more recent example is a statement by Rev. Daniel Kleyn, also in the November 2015 Philippine Mission Newsletter: "We also remain convinced that the Lord will provide the man He has sovereignly determined to send to this field. We wait patiently and

prayerfully on Him, the Lord of the harvest."⁵

That confidence in the face of disappointment is rooted in the Lord of the harvest, including the truth that He is coming again. It is rooted in the truth that Christ comes through the preaching of the gospel, even through a very difficult way: with much weakness, disappointments, and the humanly distressing reality of the great workload with few laborers.

In light of the humanly impossible way in which the Lord accomplishes His ingathering work, there is legitimate confidence in the Lord because, first of all, the Lord is in sovereign, providential control of the way in which missions progresses through the earth in the New Testament. He guides it to the uttermost parts of the earth in fulfillment of His promise. Our place in that work as His servants and all of our activity in that work does not change the fact that He governs the advance of the gospel through the earth according to the Father's purpose.

In the second place, the Lord guides the progress of missions in this difficult way in order to prevent the church from boasting in herself as the cause or reason, either in whole or even in part, for the ingathering of the elect in Christ. It is a real temptation that we begin to boast in ourselves when the fruit of missions is a substantial gathering of believers and their seed. In order to prevent a church's fall into that temptation, the Lord guides the work usually through difficult ways. This is the lesson that the Lord taught Gideon according to Judges 7:2, "And the LORD said unto Gideon, The people that are with thee are too many for me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel vaunt themselves against me, saying, Mine own hand hath saved me." The way in which the church is gathered must fit the way in which He returns: the way of the wonder of grace and salvation. That alone prevents the church from any boasting in herself, and motivates her to the praise of Jehovah alone.

Although limited laborers and the great workload are often a distressing reality for us, being reminded thereby that Christ is the sovereign, ruling, wise Lord of the harvest, the Lord instills in us confidence that the ingathering of His church for His final appearing will not fail.

While we do our mission work, we may be confident in the Lord with regard to the results of the Word

³ De Jong, 84.

⁴ DeJong, 54.

⁵ Kleyn, 2.

preached. As that Word is faithfully preached and taught, we may be assured that the Word's purpose will always be accomplished (Is. 55:11). We ought not be dismayed when we experience that the Lord uses the Word preached to harden and to soften, to cast away and to gather, and to destroy and to build up. When positive results to the preaching seem to be non-existent, even after many years of faithful labor, still we may find rest and peace in the sovereign Lord of the harvest who brings to pass that result as well as preparation for His final appearing.

There is confidence in the Lord that all those whom He has ordained to eternal life will believe. There is confidence in the Lord that He will bring salvation to believers and their seed according to His counsel of election and His covenant promises. There is confidence that the Lord, with respect to the elect alone, "...is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (II Pet. 3:9). Although the Lord is returning quickly, His final appearing will not take place until all His elect have been gathered to Him in true faith. The burden of whether someone will believe or not believe the gospel faithfully preached is a burden that a faithful missionary

casts on the coming Lord in confidence that He, by His Holy Spirit and Word, will make sure that all those who have been ordained to eternal life will be saved—not even one of them shall perish.

In light of the challenging work of missions, a good confidence in the Lord is nurtured by the Lord through His Word and especially much prayer. The realities of the work itself and the truth that the harvest is the Lord's work, forces us, as missionaries and supporting churches, to pray without ceasing to the Lord for His blessing, guidance, and strength to persevere in the duty of being His submissive and obedient servants with regard to His harvest.

Pray, then, with confidence in the Lord of the harvest that He will grant laborers for the harvest according to His will and good pleasure (Matt. 9:37-38). Pray with confidence in the Lord that He, according to His good pleasure and riches in glory, will provide, sustain, and preserve His faithful laborers unto abundant fruitfulness to His glory alone. Pray with confidence in the Lord who manages His harvest work faithfully and wisely in preparation for His final appearing. ☞

SPECIAL ARTICLE

REVS. DOUG KUIPER/CORY GRIESS

Our Trip to India, December 2015

There is a legend, that the apostles Thomas and Bartholomew carried the gospel to India. But a more credible statement is that the Christian teacher Pantaenus of Alexandria journeyed to that country about 190, and that in the fourth century churches were found there.¹

¹ Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1989 reprint), 1:23.

Revs. Kuiper and Griess are pastors of Edgerton, MN PRC and Calvary PRC in Hull IA, respectively. They are both members of the PRC Foreign Mission Committee.

Although the legend cannot be conclusively proved, it persists. In Chennai (formerly Madras), India, is located the Basilica of the National Shrine of St. Thomas, built over the site of what is purported to be Thomas' tomb.

Whether Thomas did in fact bring the gospel to India, and die there, we do not know with certainty. However, the legend reminds us that in the early centuries of the Christian church, the gospel went east from Jerusalem and Antioch, as well as west. Christianity has come to India. Even so, 80-85% of the 1.3 billion people in India today are Hindu. Only 3-6% are Christian. Most Christians are Pentecostal. The Reformed faith is largely unknown. Reformed believers should count it a privilege to be used

of God to support the spread of the Reformed faith in India!

The legend also relates, because Chennai, the supposed place of Thomas' death, was to be our arrival and departure city.

Our ultimate destination was the city of Vellore, a three-hour drive west of Chennai. Vellore is the name both of a major city and of a district (comparable to a county in the USA). The city's metropolitan area has a population of about half a million, while the district of Vellore has a population of almost 4 million. In the district and near the city lives Pastor Paulraj and his wife Kasturi. In the city is also found the Vellore Protestant Reformed Church (PRCV, Tamil speaking) and the Vellore Christian Church (VCC, English speaking). Prominent in the VCC is Dr. Ronald Carey, who is seriously considering leaving the medical profession to prepare for the gospel ministry. Dr. Carey has a supportive wife, also a practicing physician, and a young son. His desire is to spread the gospel in India under the oversight of a local congregation, and he is prayerfully considering the possibility of coming to the PRC seminary for training.

God's will was different from the plans we had made; we were to fly into Chennai on Thursday morning, but because of major flooding the airport was closed. So on Friday morning we flew into Bangalore, which is more than four hours west of Vellore.

Our itinerary

Following is a brief review of our teaching labors. In addition to teaching, we made several visits with Paulraj to individuals—three to men in the area, not part of the PRCV, who are involved in gospel outreach, and at least five pastoral visits to members of the PRCV or frequent visitors of the congregation. Also, we spent parts of Monday and Wednesday preparing for our upcoming conferences, and had profitable meetings on Wednesday with Dr. Carey and on Friday with the officebearers of the PRCV.

Friday evening, December 4, we met with the saints of the Vellore Protestant Reformed Church (PRCV) at a special Bible study. "Bible study" means a time of prayer, singing, and exposition of Scripture. Rev. Griess spoke from Revelation 1. The PRCV consists of approximately 120 people, about 50 of whom are the chil-

dren of the Grace Foster Home (GFH). We noted that the congregation contains members of all age groups, and a goodly number of men as well as women. Some understand English, but Tamil is the mother tongue, so Pastor Paulraj always translated into Tamil. The PRCV is an instituted church with one pastor, two elders, and one deacon. Two other men are being trained to be officebearers.

On Sunday, Rev. Griess preached in the PRCV from Revelation 1:12-17, while Rev. Kuiper preached in the Vellore Christian Church (VCC) from I Timothy 2:6, pertaining to limited atonement. The VCC is smaller than the PRCV; it consists of about 20 members. Men and women again are equally represented; but most are adults who teach or study at the Christian Medical College, or are affiliated with the CMC's hospital in Vellore. Two of the families have a small child. This group is not officially organized, but is as committed to the Reformed faith as is the PRCV. On occasion the PRCV and VCC combine services; and once a month Pastor Paulraj preaches for the VCC. But its distance from the PRCV warrants it being a separate group.

After the services were over, we gave lectures to the members of the VCC. Rev. Kuiper lectured on unconditional election, after which Rev. Griess lectured on total depravity. Sunday evening we visited two poorer, outlying villages, bringing the gospel briefly to each. These villages were two of several village outreaches that Paulraj and the PRCV regularly visit.

Tuesday we traveled two hours north to Pakala for a conference with area pastors on the subject of TULIP. About 54 attended, many hearing these Reformed distinctives for the first time. The speeches were translated into Telugu. Afterwards Paulraj explained that the substance of our messages was not new, but was as old as John Calvin and Martin Luther; and he explained the five solas of the Reformation. A visible evidence of the interest of some 8 or 10 of these attendees was that they resolved to come to our conference in Vellore on Thursday.

On Thursday, December 10, we conducted a conference at GFH. Rev. Kuiper spoke on the covenant, and Rev. Griess on Reformed worship. In the evening, we had a Bible study with the VCC at Dr. Carey's house, on the subject of the church visible and invisible.

On Sunday Rev. Kuiper preached in the PRCV from Luke 22:31-32. At the service several young adults made confession of faith, and the sacrament of Lord's Supper was administered. Late Sunday afternoon we had to leave for Chennai, because our plane departed at 1:50 Monday morning.

Why we went and what we found

Paulraj was trained by Rev. Kortering when the latter was in Singapore in the 1990s, so he is not a new contact to us. When the denomination of the Evangelical Reformed Churches in Singapore dissolved, the 2007 Synod of the PRCA designated monies from the Myanmar Special Projects Fund to "be given to a PR church for the support of the work in Myanmar, Rajastephen in India, or Paul Raj in India, when a church agrees to take up this work" (*Acts of Synod 2007*, Art. 42). The churches that agreed to take up this work were Hope (Myanmar), Byron Center (Rajastephen), and Georgetown (Paulraj).

Georgetown PRC assists the PRCV primarily in its work of preaching the gospel and church extension. More on that in a moment.

Secondary to this primary assistance is Georgetown's help in maintaining the Grace Foster Home (GFH), which houses approximately 50 orphans and fatherless children. Pastor Paulraj's wife Kasturi supervises the GFH, under the oversight of a board of directors. This is to say that the GFH is the private endeavor of a member of the PRCV, and not the work of the PRCV as such.

We are not denying any connection between the PRCV and GFH, but we are saying that the connection is organic, not institutional. In the GFH, the children are taught the Scriptures and the Heidelberg Catechism; they all attend the worship services of the PRCV; and several now have, upon reaching years of discretion, been baptized and/or made confession of faith in the PRCV. But the GFH is not a mission of the PRCV.

Any visitor to the PRCV will inevitably visit the GFH. Evident to us was the Christian compassion and benevolence shown to the widows, fatherless, and orphans. In its care of such, and its Christian compassion toward such, the GFH stands nearly alone in Vellore, and has attracted both the hatred of some Hindus, and the admiration of others. Hinduism provides no foundation to care for widows and orphans. Until two hundred years ago in India,

widows would have been burned. Even today, widows and orphans are often shunned by their Hindu relatives.

We return to the primary assistance that Georgetown gives the PRCV. The PRCV not only preaches the gospel in its own worship service, but has several village outreaches, and Paulraj has numerous contacts with other pastors whom he instructs in the basics of the Reformed faith. To support this work, Georgetown has sent its own annual delegation to Vellore for several years now. Rev. and Mary Haak were there for much of November 2015, and Deane and Donna Wassink arrived in late November and returned to the USA when we did. Georgetown asked the Foreign Mission Committee (FMC) to begin becoming familiar with the work they are doing, and to assess whether and when, to send a missionary there. This visit was important to begin answering the questions. What follows, then, is a preliminary evaluation of two men, not a final conclusion of the FMC. More visits and more work will be necessary before a final conclusion and recommendations to synod can be made.

First, the need for a missionary of the Reformed faith in India is obvious, for two reasons. One, Hindus make up 80-85% of the population, whereas about 3-6% are Muslim, with the same percent Christian. But, as Dr. Carey said, some Indian people are realizing that Hinduism does not provide solid answers to life's questions and struggles. Consequently, there are many opportunities to bring the gospel. We know that God will cause every elect Hindu to come to the knowledge of Christ as only Savior, and recognize that this will happen through the proclamation of the pure gospel. The second reason is that the work Paulraj is doing in village outreach and in instructing other Christian pastors about the Reformed faith is impressive, covers a large geographic area, and has laid good groundwork. But we sense that he is spread too thin—more work could be done if more men were there.

Second, it appears to us that a Western missionary and his family could live relatively safely in southern India. For one thing, the government gives its people freedom of religious preference. For another, in the south more than in the north, the crime rate is relatively low due to a greater Christian influence and higher level of education. The area is democratic, and has a rising middle class and a fast-growing economy. The man and his family would have to realize that Indian standards of living are differ-

ent than Western standards, and would have to adjust accordingly. As far as education of children is concerned, an English-speaking Christian school is available in Velore.

Yet third, while we believe Georgetown has done good work toward preparing the field for full-time PRC missionaries, and Georgetown and the PRC through the FMC should continue working towards that end, the FMC will not be recommending to Synod 2016 that we call missionaries. We believe that more groundwork must be laid, possibly by having PRC ministers or missionaries travel to India for several months, at regular intervals, to give more consistent instruction to area pastors and interested groups, and to help pave the way for a full-time missionary. In the past, especially in our domestic mission work, we found the approach of sending a man “part time” to be not helpful. The situation is different in India at the moment, especially with the fact that Paulraj is continually engaged in the work.

What you can do

Keep watching. That is, keep watching for Christ’s return, and keep noting that the signs of His coming are being fulfilled. Specifically for our purpose, to watch is to note that the gospel continues to be proclaimed in all the nations (Matt. 24:14), and is to be ready to support the faithful church in her work of foreign missions.

Keep praying, or begin praying, if you have not yet. Paul beseeched the churches to pray for him, as he brought the gospel (Eph. 6:19; Col. 4:3). So ought we to pray for those in India who are busy in spreading the gospel. Pray also that the Lord of the harvest raise up and send forth laborers (Matt. 9:37ff.). Pray for Pastor Paulraj and his wife, as well as for all of the saints there, that they be faithful to Him who called them. Pray for Georgetown PRC, that God will give them wisdom and grace to aim for His glory in the work they do. And pray for the FMC, as it continues to look for places where we can bring the gospel.

And keep remembering, that to whom much is given, much shall be required (Luke 12:48). This parable applies the principle to material goods. This application can be made to members of the PRC, who, as a whole, are wealthy in the things of this world (even the poorest among us has far more than most inhabitants of the world today). And collectively, the PRC has the financial resources to do mission work. But the principle can also be applied to the spiritual treasures we have—the gospel of grace, the knowledge of the Reformed faith, a more specific understanding of sovereign grace, particular grace, and an unconditional covenant. We have much! Let us be ready to use what we have as good stewards, that we can answer to our Lord when He returns regarding how we have used His possessions and opportunities.



NEWS FROM OUR CHURCHES

MR. PERRY VAN EGDOM

School Activities

The Ladies’ School Circle of Faith Christian School in Randolph, WI recently held their annual “Across the Border” supper. We are told the name was used early in the history of the event as the menu began as a Mexican-style supper. Even though the menu is

not always Mexican any more, the name has stuck and is a favorite annual event.

The eighth-grade class of the Protestant Reformed Christian School in Dyer, IN hosted their eleventh annual bean bag tournament recently. Just over \$3,000 was raised for the class ski trip and class gift to the school, to be presented at graduation. Friendly competition and good fellowship was enjoyed by all in attendance.

The Loveland, CO Protestant Reformed Christian School Fundraisers hosted their first ever “Game Night” recently. Everyone post-high and older was invited to a fun night that included appetizers, refreshments, dessert, and games in the church basement. Some of the games included Clue, Chess, Euchre, Boggle, Spoons, Pictionary, Scattergories, Balderdash, and Dutch Blitz. There were also sign-up sheets for Bible Trivia, Rook, and the arm wrestling

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

contest, with all proceeds going to support the school. Everything sounds like great fun! Hopefully, the arm wrestling contest didn't get "out of hand."

Eastside Christian School welcomed all to their Pizza Night recently. Delicious pizza was served to eat in, or it could be taken to go, with those to-go orders available baked or unbaked. An open gym was available for use during the evening also. Hope School Circle made their appealing Pig-in-the-Blankets; the Adams School Mother's Club and the Ladies' Circle of the Northwest Iowa PR School in Doon both hosted their annual soup suppers; and the Covenant Christian High annual Taste of Covenant VIII is planned for March 17. Good to see the various school groups planning and hosting delicious events that also promote vital fellowship around our schools!

Minister Activities

Rev. Audred Spriensma, pastor of Byron Center, MI PRC, will have opportunity for a few weeks in March and April to travel to the land of the Philippines where he served as missionary until 2007. It will be good for Rev. Spriensma and his wife Alva to reacquaint themselves with the saints and churches there, as they help missionary-pastor Rev. Daniel Kleyn in the work.

Every second summer our Philippine missionaries are granted a furlough. This allows them to use up to six weeks to travel back to the United States for refreshment and relaxation. They also use about half of this time visiting various churches giving presentations and meeting with the Council of the calling church and the Foreign Mission Committee. Our

missionary-pastor also attends the meeting of synod (to convene June 14, 2016 in Hull, IA PRC). To enable Rev. Daniel Kleyn and his wife to travel to the USA on furlough, Rev. Richard Smit will be traveling to the Philippines over the four Sundays of June 19 through July 10. To help make this possible, emeritus pastor Rev. James Slopsema has agreed to supply the pulpit of First PRC in Grand Rapids in the place of Rev. Smit. For Rev. Smit, it will be a reacquainting with many he came to know as missionary-pastor in the Metro Manila area for approximately six years. And for Rev. Kleyn, perhaps an opportunity to enjoy another meal at the Doon Steakhouse! Ah, yes.

Mission Activities

Plans are proceeding to have the Philippine churches' joint-family outing in Bulacan on March 25, D.V. The event will be held at Barangay San Vicente, Sta Maria, with details still being finalized.

Young People's Activities

Grace PRC (Standale, MI) Young People's Society hosted their "Night of Music" on February 27 as a fundraiser for those attending the 2016 Young People's Convention.

The Southeast PRC (Grand Rapids, MI) young people are planning a Talent Program in April with a collection to be taken to defray expenses for attendance at this summer's convention.

Sister-Church Activities


Rev. Ken Koole and Mr. Dave Kregel and their wives traveled to Singapore over the Sundays of February 21 and 28 on behalf of the Contact

Committee of the PRC. Church visitation was conducted with the Session of the Covenant Evangelical Reformed Church and Rev. Koole preached at a couple of the CERC worship services.

Congregation Activities

The Protestant Reformed churches in Edmonton and Lacombe, Alberta observed Family Day on February 15, the same day as President's Day in the United States. Family Day is observed in the Canadian provinces of Alberta, Ontario, and Saskatchewan on the third Monday of February. This holiday celebrates the importance of families and family life to people and their communities. On Family Day, many people plan and take part in activities designed for their whole family. These include visiting art exhibitions, skating on outdoor ice rinks, playing board games, and taking part in craft activities. Some communities plan special public events, and art galleries and museums may have reduced price or free entry.

Since this is a statutory holiday, most people have the day off work, so it is a great opportunity to have something like a pancake breakfast to gather with church family. The Young People's Society of First PRC of Edmonton sponsored exactly that. There was an excellent turnout for the delectable meal. Of particular delight was seeing the various members in fellowship well beyond the time that it took to eat—"How good and how pleasant it is when brethren dwell together in unity."

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

Standard Bearer

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

Resolution of Sympathy

■ The Council and congregation of the Grandville PRC extends its sympathy to Rich and Jane VanTil and to John and Lori Schipper in the death of their father,

HAROLD SCHIPPER.

May they find comfort from the words of Revelation 2:17 "... To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written...."

Rev. Kenneth Koole, Pres.
David Kregel, Ass't. Clerk

Resolution of Sympathy

■ The Council and congregation of Hull PRC express their sincere sympathy to Mrs. Wilma Vogel in the death of her husband,

NORMAN VOGEL.

May she and her family find comfort in the Word of God which assures us that "precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints" (Psalm 116:15).

Rev. James Laning, President
Gene Van Bommel,
Clerk of Records

Synod

■ All standing and special committees of the synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches, as well as individuals who wish to address Synod 2016, are hereby notified that all material for this year's synod should be in the hands of the stated clerk no later than April 15. Please send material to:

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

Teacher needed

■ Covenant Christian High School is accepting applications from members of the Protestant Reformed Churches for several positions. With the ability to adjust within the current staff, we would consider those certified in the areas of English, Mathematics, Religion, Social Studies, and Spanish. Any interested person with Secondary Teacher Certification is encouraged to contact Mr. Rick Noorman for more information. Email ricknoorman@gmail.com or call 616-453-5048.

Lecture

Topic

*The Necessity of Membership
in a True Church of Jesus Christ*

Speaker

Prof. David Engelsma

Date/Time

Friday April 22, 2016 at 7:30 P.M.

Place

First Jenison CRC
8360 Cottonwood Dr.
Jenison MI

Sponsor

Reformed Witness Committee
of Hope PRC

Will be lived-streamed on SermonAudio

1916-2016

CELEBRATING THE
100th Anniversary
OF HOPE PROTESTANT REFORMED CHURCH
Walker, MI

1 Peter 2:4-5
"To whom coming as unto a living stone, disallowed of God, and precious, 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."

"A Spiritual House Acceptable to God"

The congregation of
Hope Protestant Reformed Church
cordially invites you to attend a
commemorative program and celebrate with us
a century of God's preserving grace.

JUNE 10, 2016, 7:00 P.M.

First Jenison Christian Reformed Church
8360 Cottonwood Dr.

www.hopeprchurch.org

The commemorative program will be live-streamed at www.sermonaudio.com/hopeprc