

# *The Standard Bearer*

A Reformed Semi-Monthly Magazine • June 2015

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# A Faithful Saying

This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.

1 Timothy 1:15

As every believer faces the burden of his sin, there is one truth that should especially echo in our hearts. This truth is *faithful*; it is absolutely trustworthy. It is *worthy of all acceptance*; we should have no hesitation in making it our confession. We must not doubt it in the least. This truth is at the very heart of the gospel: “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.”

That must be our confession each day of our lives. We are chief sinners deserving eternal damnation. But, Jesus Christ came to save sinners, such as we are.

Two kinds of sinners populate the world: the self-righteous sinner and the self-conscious sinner. How sad is the case of the self-righteous sinner in the church today. He thinks to himself, “I’m actually a pretty good

person when it comes right down to it.” He admits to making a few mistakes in life; but he certainly is not as bad as the person across the aisle. He does not think of himself as an unworthy sinner; therefore, he does not look to Jesus Christ for salvation either.

But how beautiful it is when the self-conscious sinner says from the heart, “I am chief among sinners.” When we see ourselves that way, then we will look outside of ourselves for salvation. Then, and only then, will we look for all our salvation in Jesus Christ. We will say, “Without Jesus Christ, I am lost.” And, we will rejoice in the fact that if Jesus could save a sinner like Saul, He can certainly save sinners such as we are.

What a gracious Savior we serve! “Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners.”

The first thing we need to know about ourselves is that we are sinners. We miss the mark of God’s righteousness. Not merely that we have committed sins, some greater and some smaller, veering slightly to the right or to the left. But that we have corrupt natures that aim in the opposite direction of God’s law, natures that are prone to hate God and the neighbor. We sin when we fail to love God with all our heart, soul, mind,

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and strength, as He has commanded us. We sin when we omit any duty or when we do what God has forbidden us. Greedy thoughts, insincere words, and careless deeds abound. Our self-sacrificing, our kind words, our offerings for the causes of Christ's kingdom, and even our prayers, are tainted with sin. Having sinned and come short of the glory of God, we deserve to pay the wages of sin, which is eternal, spiritual death in hell.

But, thanks be to God, "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners" like us! That truth brings us face to face with God's mercy and grace in Jesus Christ. God did not send Christ into the world to save the righteous. He did not come to save those who dress nicely and go to church, who send their children to the Christian school, who pay tithes, and who hold down good paying jobs. If that were the case, then salvation would be a matter of meriting. Jesus came to save sinners. Salvation, therefore, is a matter of pure mercy and grace.

Mercy is God's great, loving compassion according to which He saves us out of our helpless misery. His mercy did not start when we looked for it. It did not start with us asking for it. It is not something we earned. God simply showered us with mercy according to His undeserved favor towards us in Jesus Christ. That grace towards us is not only abundant, it is *exceeding* abundant. "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound. That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 5:20-21).

"Jesus Christ came into the world." He did not have to come; He could have left us in our misery. He dwelt in heavenly glory as God. But He became poor for our sakes. In His abundant mercy and grace, He chose to come into the world to save sinners. He emptied Himself of His glory and took on the form of a slave, coming in the likeness of men. He came into the world as it now stands under God's curse. His entire life He carried the burden of our sins because God made Him to be sin for us. Carrying the guilt of our sin, He humbled Himself to the death of the cross and made a full payment for our sins.

"This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance." The inspired apostle does not want us to entertain any doubt whatsoever about this. This is absolutely true: Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners....



Of whom I am chief!

With the apostle Paul, this is our confession: "I am the chief of sinners." The holy apostle Paul confessed this! And he was not exaggerating just to make a point; he meant it. Can we say that about ourselves and mean it?

Notice that the apostle does not say, "of whom I *was* chief." Rather, he uses the present tense, "of whom I *am* chief." So too, when we make this confession, we must not talk about the way we were in the past, as though we are not that way any longer. But with the apostle we must say that about ourselves today, "I *am* the chief of sinners." God convicts us of our sins as the Holy Spirit applies His law to our hearts. The self-righteous sinner says, "I am more righteous than others." He spends time finding fault with his wife, or children, or brother or sister in the church. He thinks he is so much better than his neighbor. But when God shows us who we truly are in comparison to His own perfect holiness, we come to the conclusion, "No other sinner can be as bad as I am." By His mighty work in our hearts, God makes us conscious of our sins and humbles us in His presence.

Does that mean we actually think we are more wicked than every other sinner? Worse than Cain who murdered his brother? Worse than Jezebel who influenced Ahab to kill God's prophets? Worse than the Jews who persecuted Jesus? Worse than Judas who betrayed Jesus? No, that is not what the apostle means. We are not confessing that we are more wicked than every other person in the world.

Rather, our confession arises from the fact that God shows us *our own hearts*, while we cannot see anyone else's heart. We can see the wicked thoughts and intents in our own hearts; but all we can know of others is the outward. When we compare our inward, filthy hearts with the outward appearance of others, there is no comparison. In our own hearts we see wicked thoughts we would never dare verbalize. We perceive evil motives arising from pride and selfishness. The inward filth we see in ourselves compared to the outward manifestations of sin in others, tips the scales against us so that we cry out, "I am the chief of sinners."

Secondly, the apostle's declaration, "I am the chief of sinners" has to do with his closeness to God. The truth we have in view is the fact that, as we become conscious of the glory and holiness of God, we will become more

conscious of our own sin. Like Isaiah, when we see the holiness of God we will cry out, "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips..." (Is. 6:5). The more we see the glorious radiance of God's holiness and righteousness, the more we will see the darkness of our sin.

Do we make that confession: "I am the chief of sinners"?

If we do not first see the horror of our sin, we will never rejoice in Jesus Christ our Savior. The inspired apostle saw the horror of his sins and sinfulness; therefore, he rejoiced in the fact he obtained mercy: "Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy..." (I Tim. 1:13). He brings up his sins in the same breath as God's mercy. What a gracious God we serve! He shows us mercy in spite of our great sins and sinfulness.



How can we be assured of God's grace and mercy toward sinners?

First, we must know that our sins, no matter how great they are, cannot separate us from God's love toward us in Christ Jesus. If the apostle sinned so callously against God, even stoning believers to death, and yet he obtained mercy from God, then we must not despair of God's mercy when we call upon Him. We must never think to ourselves, "My sin is too great." If God forgave David for his adultery and murder, He will certainly for-

give us for our adulterous and murderous thoughts and acts when we call upon Him. If God forgave Peter for denying Jesus during His trial, He will certainly forgive us when we ask Him to forgive us for denying Him by our words and actions.

Why did Paul, the notorious sinner, obtain mercy from God? To show God's patience toward His elect people, though we sin against Him so grievously. "Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting" (I Tim. 1:16). God's longsuffering toward Paul demonstrated His glorious grace to others. God's bearing with us and our sins demonstrates to others what a gracious and merciful God we serve.

Not only must we be assured that God's grace is greater than all our sin, but we must also be assured that we are recipients of His abundant grace. How can we know this? If in our hearts we believe that "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief." Do we know our sins and sinfulness? Do we believe that Christ Jesus came to save sinners? Do we hunger and thirst for righteousness? That is the fruit of Christ's great love for sinners. We come to see ourselves more and more as the least of all saints and the chief of sinners, and that salvation is in Jesus Christ alone.

May we ever confess this faithful saying, to the glory of God the Father and Jesus Christ His Son. ☞

EDITORIAL

PROF. RUSSELL DYKSTRA

## Pray the Lord of the Harvest...

### The Agenda for Synod 2015

**T**he church belongs to the Lord. God gave His elect to Jesus Christ in eternity, who in time redeemed each member from sin and death. God rewarded Jesus by lifting Him up to be Head

over all things to the church (Eph. 1:22). We confess that Jesus gathers, defends and preserves His church throughout history by His Word and Spirit (LD 21, Q. & A. 54).

Thus, whenever the church meets

together in her assemblies, she is careful that everything be done in harmony with the Word of Jesus Christ and His Spirit. For the work of the church is the work of Jesus Christ. All the delegates of



the Protestant Reformed Synod who meet the week of June 8 in Faith Protestant Reformed Church (Jenison, MI) are conscious that the work is His. This reality is driven home by the fact that the most pressing need in one of the works the Protestant Reformed Churches carry out in common, a need that is at the very heart of Jesus' command to His church—"go ye into all the world"—only Jesus can fill.

I speak of the need for a missionary to the Philippines. God has called the churches to labor in these islands, given us faithful missionaries, and prospered the work, so that the FMC reports that a denomination of churches has been formed by two congregations that hold to the Reformed confessions and adhere to the same doctrine and walk as the Protestant Reformed Churches! The reports on the work—the FMC, Doon PRC (the calling church), and the missionaries—are overwhelming. The reader is overwhelmed by the work being done, by the opportunities the Lord gives, by the spiritual and theological progress of the believers there, and by the zeal for spreading the gospel in the Philippines.

And, overwhelmed by the *need*. The need arises because the Lord, the King of the church, has called Rev. Smit, one of the two missionaries, to be the pastor of First Protestant Reformed Church (in Grand Rapids, MI). But the need in the Philippines is unspeakably great—the need for ongoing training of ministers; the need for seminary training; the need for guiding (four) consistories, *and* classis *and*

classical committees; the need for preaching; the need for one, preferably, two more missionaries. Some of the work must be curtailed; some stopped. Rev. Kleyn cannot do the work of two men. Only the Lord can fill this need.

Pray the Lord of the harvest that He will send forth laborers into His harvest (Matt. 9:38).

With that same conscious dependence on the *Lord*, may the entire agenda of synod be completed.

The purpose of this editorial is to furnish a brief summary of the agenda (with comments). The report on the Philippines comes from the Foreign Mission Committee, and we take note of only one other item in their report—a significant proposal to revise synodical guidelines for paying the travel cost of "the wives." The FMC argues convincingly that frequently it is very beneficial for the work of the churches that wives of minister/elder delegations accompany their husbands. Currently the guidelines allow reimbursement for the wife's travel costs only when the husband is gone for four Sundays or more. The FMC proposes that synod authorize full reimbursement for "the expenses incurred when a wife accompanies her husband on the business of the churches, when the standing committee:

1. Is convinced of the value of the wives accompanying for that particular trip, considering each trip on a case by case basis, and
2. Stands ready to defend its decision before synod, if synod should so inquire.

These benefits are real, but difficult

to grasp for one who has never gone on such a trip for the churches. The value is not "companionship." Surely a man can live and survive and work well enough without his wife for a few weeks. Rather, the benefits include her observations and her balanced perspective for the man sent. And on the other hand, as regards the people visited, the value is the encouragement and counsel for the *women* there. Should synod agree with this change, the committees will need to be honest and wise in implementation. For those worried this will produce exorbitant costs, believe me, all synodical committees are aware that they and the fellow members of their congregation pay the synodical assessments. There is a natural caution about spending the hard-earned money of the people in the pew.

Next, we turn to another vital work of Christ—missions in *North America*—the Domestic Mission Committee. The only active field of the DMC is in Pittsburgh, PA. Missionary W. Bruinsma reports on the joys and the sorrows of missionary labors, which, he notes, are quite similar to those in established congregations.

Included in the agenda is a special appeal from Rev. Bruinsma for a second missionary to Pittsburgh. He has four main grounds—well fleshed out—for his request. These are (in skeletal form):

1. His present labor as a pastor in our mission in his area of Pittsburgh (Forest Hills) is a full-time labor, demanding nearly all his time.
2. There is demonstrable need

for additional labors in surrounding areas which he is not able to perform.

3. The combined efforts of two missionaries would be advantageous to the fellowship and the present missionary.

4. It would give time to write tracts and study guides for use on the mission field.

The DMC agreed with the principle of two missionaries on a field and with the advantages for this field. The Council of Southwest Protestant Reformed Church, the calling church, disagreed. And the DMC acquiesced to Southwest's decision.

Admittedly, such a weighty matter must be carefully considered and good grounds provided for the decision produced. While conceding that Southwest's consistory is in a much better position than the editor to make a wise judgment in this field, I also have to say that the grounds for rejecting Rev. Bruinsma's request are not overwhelming.

And now to step back a bit, consider that the PRC has money and manpower for a second missionary. The pulpits of all the PRC may well be filled in just a few months. Times are relatively good in the USA, and the PRC are financially able to do more work. Also, consider that a fairly large class is scheduled to graduate from seminary in 2017, D.V.

With as many as nine graduates in two years, we will have a goodly number of graduates with very few openings. What to do? One option is to push ministers in their

low to mid-sixties into early retirement. Another far better option is to look for *opportunities*—that is, pray the Lord of the harvest for open doors.

In Pittsburgh, does not opportunity stare us in the face? We have the opportunity to do work that Rev. Bruinsma is currently not able to do. The concrete advantages to this field are well presented. And add this—this is the opportunity for a younger minister to learn from an experienced missionary by working alongside him for several years. By now, all agree that God has endowed this seasoned missionary (Bruinsma) with wisdom, diligence, zeal, patience, and the ability to work well with consistory, DMC, and mission group. Add to that, he has not only demonstrated his heartfelt commitment to all the truths that the PRC hold dear, but he knows how to teach and preach them in a mission setting. What tremendous profit for a young missionary to learn from him! In my judgment, this is an opportunity that ought not be passed by. My prayer is that the Lord of the harvest will lead synod to agree with Missionary Bruinsma's request.

The Contact Committee reports their conviction that sister church relations with the Covenant Evangelical Reformed Church in Singapore have never been better. Since the Synod of 2014, CERC called and installed Rev. A. Lanning as her pastor. CERC has welcomed church visitors from the PRC for the second year now, to the benefit of both.

Our relation with Covenant

Protestant Reformed Church in Northern Ireland is likewise as firm and vibrant as ever. A CC delegation came for official church visitation to CPRC NI in January and visited the mission fellowship in Limerick as well. The report is true oneness and unity among these saints and steadfastness in the Reformed faith. Another sister to be cherished in these last days.

Both of our sister churches are committed to sending representatives to synod—Deacon Tang from CERCS, and Deacon Hall from CPRC NI.

The CC also reports on a conference on the doctrine of God's covenant held with the Evangelical Presbyterian Church in Australia in July of 2014. The EPC and the CC propose another conference for 2017.

The CC gives a lengthy report on our contact in Giessen, Germany—the BERG. The CC is fulfilling the mandate of Synod 2014 to "identify in their report to next year's synod the differences between the BERG and ourselves and what progress has been made in the discussions." This is a developing contact in the spiritual wasteland of the country of Martin Luther. The report indicates the care with which the CC pursues such contact, subject to synod's approval and direction.

To the synod of 2014 the CC proposed that they be mandated "to study and recommend what guidelines synod would follow to determine whether and how to participate in an ecumenical council of churches, and report their study to synod." However, the CC reports

that they were not able to complete this, and ask for another year.

The CC requests permission for a follow-up trip to Namibia and South Africa in 2016 in response to invitations received. Details will need to be worked out.

The final point in the CC report is that the Free Reformed Churches and the Heritage Reformed Churches are proceeding with preliminary plans for *limited* Psalter revision and desire the PRC to join them in this endeavor. Psalter revision is hardly the CC's area of labor or expertise, and they leave this judgment to synod without recommendation. If synod decides to participate, a more extensive report will be forthcoming.

The Catechism Book Committee returns with a request for reformatting all the catechism material—books and workbooks. It would be quite helpful to synod if they would bring a sample (a finished product) of what they have in mind. They also inform synod that the confessions will soon be available in electronic format free of charge.

The Board of Trustees, in addition to the normal financial reporting, informs synod of the desire of two faithful servants to be replaced. They are the stated clerk, Mr. Don Doezema, and the synodical treasurer, Mr. David Ondersma. Their importance for the smooth and efficient running of the denomination cannot be overstated.

Peace PRC (Lansing, IL) comes with a reasonable request, namely, that if in their search for a new place to build, they find a plot “across the border” in Classis East territory,

they be allowed to remain in Classis West.

The Theological School Committee reports on various details—physical and educational—that they oversee. The most important: a qualified graduate is recommended for examination at synod, namely, Ryan Barnhill. They recommend that the exam be shifted a little from the ordinary. If Seminarian Barnhill gives his sermon specimen Tuesday morning (as per usual), then, with synod's approval, Prof. B. Gritters will examine him in the afternoon in two areas of study. This is recommended because Prof. Gritters is scheduled to speak in the June camp of CERC in Singapore on Monday, June 15. Graduation is scheduled for Thursday, June 11 in Faith PRC. All are welcome to witness the glad event and to hear Prof. R. Cammenga's address.

And there is one appeal to synod. The appeal concerns the church political question of whether a congregation may change the date of a special day set aside by the churches in the church order (in this case Prayer Day), and whether a congregation may do that on its own, that is, without going through classis and synod. Classis East decided that a congregation may. The appeal asks synod to overturn classis' decision.

This appellant deserves to be heard carefully. I suppose from a certain point of view, all appellants deserve to be heard. But some approach the broader assemblies with rancor; some with sarcasm; some casting about unfounded charges. This appellant wrote carefully, in a

most Christian manner. Whether one agrees with him or not, one can appreciate the genuine concern and Christian spirit that his appeal breathes.

The appeal raises an interesting question that deserves a good discussion. On the one hand, the PRC are death to independentism. On the other hand, they have historically and emphatically rejected hierarchy, and the notion that the authority of the synod is higher than that of a congregation. This issue must be worked out between those two extremes.

And the best part is, neither side (whichever Synod adopts) is a denial of Reformed truth. Synod will need to make a judgment as to the proper application of the principles of the church order. But there is no reason for the discussion to be heated or rancorous—though it certainly may be spirited!

There you have the highlights of the agenda. If you can visit, you are most welcome, especially for the examination of Mr. Barnhill. (You can also watch *that* online, since the examination will be live-streamed from Faith PRC—subject to synod's approval.)

The purpose of this editorial is, you understand, not to satisfy curiosity. It is rather that you may know the work Jesus will be doing through the twenty delegates the week of June 8 in Faith Protestant Reformed Church. And knowing that, you can pray with understanding for the work.

Pray, then, to the Lord of the harvest. ☞

### ■ Canadian Reformed Creation Overture

Do the Reformed Confessions, in particular the Three Forms of Unity, leave room for theistic evolution, that is, for the notion that God used a process of evolution to bring the world into being? And do the Reformed Confessions allow for the teaching that Adam had hominid ancestors, who lived and died before sin entered into the world?

And is this a 'gospel issue'?

By God's grace, the Protestant Reformed Churches and her sister churches have *consistently rejected* every form of theistic evolution. Every officebearer affirms the historicity of Genesis 1-11. We have not even had a case in which the historicity of Genesis 1-11 has been *questioned* in our churches, ecclesiastical assemblies, seminary, or Christian schools. Deliberately, this question is asked of seminarians and candidates at the synodical and classical examinations: "Do you affirm the historicity of Genesis 1-11? Do you understand the days of Genesis 1 to be ordinary, 24-hour days? Do you reject the compromise theories of the Gap Theory, Theistic Evolution, Progressive Creationism, and the Framework Hypothesis?" Anything but an unambiguously affirmative answer would disqualify from office. The RFPA has recently republished Homer C. Hoeksema's *In the Beginning God*, a vigorous defense of biblical creationism, while David Engelsma's pamphlet, "Genesis 1-11: Myth or History" and Herman Hanko's pamphlet, "The Framework Hypothesis and Genesis 1," are testimonies to the commitment of our churches to biblical creationism.

For this we offer humble thanksgiving to God, who preserves us in the truth.

We are thankful that in our history no one has even *suggested* that the creeds leave "wriggle room" for theistic evolution in any form.

We wish it were so in other churches and denominations. That there are weaknesses and compromises elsewhere must not be a cause for gloating, but an occasion for mourning. "Tell it not in Gath!"

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

On March 11, Classis Ontario West of the Canadian Reformed Churches received an overture from Providence Canadian Reformed Church in Hamilton to change the wording of Article 14 of the Belgic Confession on "The Creation of Man." The overture, unanimously adopted by the Council of Providence CanRef on January 26, proposes *strengthening* the language of the Belgic Confession explicitly to rule out theistic evolution. The overture, which will be considered at the next Regional Synod East, and then possibly forwarded to Synod 2016, includes the following amendment:

We believe that God created the human race by making and forming Adam from dust (Gen. 2:7) and Eve from Adam's side (Gen. 2:21-22). They were created as the first two humans and the biological ancestors of all other humans. There were no pre-Adamites, whether human or hominid. God made and formed Adam after His own image....<sup>1</sup>

For the sake of comparison, here is the current wording of the Confession:

We believe that God created man out of the dust of the earth, and made and formed him after His own image and likeness....

Apparently, there are some who argue that the simple statement, "God created man out of the dust of the earth," does not rule out all forms of theistic evolution. The proposal (overture) of Providence CanRef will now pass through the ecclesiastical machinery of the broader assemblies. The earliest possible adoption would be at Synod 2016, and, if consultation with sister churches is required, at Synod 2019.

But why is such a proposal (overture) deemed necessary?

Because Providence CanRef sees a clear and present danger!

The proposal itself contains damning evidence that theistic evolution is tolerated in the Canadian Reformed churches. "The Canadian Reformed Churches face a significant doctrinal challenge in the area of origins." "Since

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<sup>1</sup> The proposal, from which many quotations are taken for this article, is available on Providence CanRef's website, <http://providencechurch.ca/> (accessed April 28, 2015).



this teaching [of pre-Adamic hominids] already exists in our churches and has been successfully gaining adherents, it appears that our confessions in their existing state are not sufficiently guarding our churches against this false teaching.” “Theistic evolution is being tolerated in our churches.” “It is disingenuous to suggest that this project does not endeavor to allow this teaching to become a permissible view in our churches.” “This error has already been given too much time and space to grow.” “Official ecclesiastical action is urgently needed.” “We are firmly convinced that the challenge before us is so dire that it calls for action of this momentous nature.”

The proposal names individuals who promote theistic evolution, who write for the “Reformed Academic” blog, and who are involved in “Biologos,” a theistic evolutionist “think tank.” One such man, Dr. Jitse Van der Meer, is quoted:

With respect to all that is included in being created in the image of God, Jesus did not share his nature with a common ancestor of humans and chimpanzees because Adam and Eve were the first humans created in the image of God. But Jesus is also truly human in his material body *and in that respect he like the rest of us shared in this common ancestry.*<sup>2</sup>

“This common ancestry!” According to His human nature, Jesus Christ shares—with us—a common ancestry with humans and chimpanzees!

Providence CanRef is right to sound the alarm.

However, we feel compelled to ask—why this approach? Why an overture to amend the Belgic Confession, which, besides being unnecessary, is laborious and time-consuming? Providence CanRef does not desire a study committee report, for “appointing a study committee on this question allows time for this false teaching to continue being propagated in our churches.”

Such a proposal could very well end up in a (non-binding) study report, and then it could die the death of a thousand amendments. Is there time for that?

Why not discipline? Why not use the keys of the kingdom, which Christ has given to deal with heresy in His church?

The objects of discipline, according to the Heidelberg Catechism, are “those who under the name of Christians maintain doctrines or practices inconsistent therewith”

<sup>2</sup> Italics are mine.

(Q&A 85). Should not Dr. Van der Meer and those who agree with him be disciplined? Providence CanRef hesitates: “because these issues are often dealt with as discipline matters at assemblies in closed sessions, the judgments rendered have no public standing for the churches—they are decisions typically known only to the parties involved.” Discipline cases involving public heresy should *not* be treated in closed session. Public heresy requires a public trial and public censure. “Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear” (I Tim. 5:10).

Belgic Confession, Article 14 does not need to be clarified or changed. It is clear. However, sophisticated theological and scientific minds disagree. “Theistic evolutionists, also in the Canadian Reformed Churches, argue that the meaning of ‘dust’ is not clear. Therefore, they say, the door is open to blending scientific insights with Scripture, arguing that Adam could have been born from hominid parents, rather than formed from literal dust.”

Even a child knows what “dust” means! And if dust somehow symbolizes “hominid parents,” do we turn back into our hominid parents when we die? “Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return” (Gen. 3:19). “Hominid thou wast, and unto hominid shalt thou return”! Theistic evolutionists might think they are clever, but they are simply denying the clear, unambiguous, authoritative teaching of the Word of God.

Let the Canadian Reformed churches bring actual charges of heresy against the theistic evolutionists in her midst—that is the real test. Let us see how the theistic evolutionists squirm to circumvent the clear teaching of the creeds, and let us see if the churches will let them get away with it. That is where the battle must be fought.

## ■ A Tale of Two Cakes

In January 2013, two women entered “Sweet Cakes by Melissa,” a bakery run by Aaron and Melissa Klein, a Christian couple in Oregon. The women requested a cake for a lesbian “wedding.” When the Kleins refused, the lesbian couple filed suit.

The lesbian couple submitted a list of 88 complaints in alphabetical order in support of their lawsuit for “emotional damages.” The list included “mental rape,” “distrust of men,” “distrust of former friends,” “discomfort,” “high blood pressure,” “impaired digestion,” “loss of appetite,” “migraine headaches,” “loss of pride,” “resumption of smoking

habit," "shock," "stunned," "surprise," "uncertainty," "weight gain," and "worry."<sup>3</sup>

Because the Kleins politely declined to make them a wedding cake?

The judge awarded the lesbian couple \$135,000, explaining, "[the] amounts are damages related to the harm suffered by the complainants, not fines or civil penalties which are punitive in nature."

"Harm suffered"? Because they had to order a wedding cake from another bakery?

Spare a thought for the Kleins, who endured online abuse, angry protests, hate mail, harassment, and even death threats. No award for "emotional damage" for them.

The ruling will likely bankrupt the Kleins. Nor has the judge ruled out further damages.

In addition, a GoFundMe website set up to help the Kleins pay their legal costs, which raised over \$100,000, was shut down after a complaint that the fundraising effort was "illegal."<sup>4</sup> Why? Because the bakery had been found guilty of discrimination. GoFundMe does not allow fundraising campaigns for those who have been "found guilty of violating laws."

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<sup>3</sup> "Go Fund Me Shuts Down Fundraiser for Christian Bakers, Claims Money Was for 'Illegal Purpose,'" <http://christiannews.net/2015/04/26/gofundme-shuts-down-fundraiser-for-christian-bakers-claims-money-was-for-illegal-purpose/> (accessed April 28, 2015). Some readers of this rubric might wonder why I have submitted so many "All Around Us" articles on homosexuality. The answer is simple—this is the issue of the day, especially in the Western world. We may find it distasteful—I do; I would prefer to write on other subjects, and I will, as God enables me—but we cannot ignore this. Moreover, at the time of submitting this article, judgment is still reserved on the Ashers Bakery case in Northern Ireland, on which I reported last time.

<sup>4</sup> The GoFundMe website came to national prominence, when it was used to help a Christian pizzeria owner in Indiana. When asked if they would provide pizzas for a hypothetical "gay wedding," Kevin and Christie O'Connor of "Memories Pizza" in Walkerton, IN, said that they would refuse such a hypothetical order. The outrage from the perpetually offended "LGBT community" and their supporters forced the O'Connor family to close their business and go into hiding. The O'Connors received a staggering amount of online donations (over \$841,000 in a few days) from supporters, who respected their right to run their business according to their conscience without coercion from the state. Under national and international pressure, the legislature and governor of Indiana changed their recently passed RFRA law (Religious Freedom Restoration Act), which was designed to protect businesses like "Memories Pizza."

Meanwhile in Colorado, the tables were turned. In March 2014, Bill Jack requested several "anti-gay" cakes. Two of the cakes were to be Bible-shaped. On one cake, he requested the words "God hates sin" and "Homosexuality is a detestable sin" with a picture of two grooms holding hands with an "X" through them. On the second cake, he requested the words "God loves sinners" and "While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" with a similar image.

The bakery, Azucar Bakery in Denver, refused Bill Jack's order. The owner did not want to make a cake with a "message of hate." The bakery even offered to make a plain cake, which the customer could decorate himself—compromises offered by Christian bakeries, which have been routinely dismissed.

Jack filed suit, not because he was offended as such, but as a test case. The wisdom of filing such a lawsuit is questionable. The result is illuminating.

If a Christian can be forced against his conscience to make a "pro-gay" cake, that is, a cake for a "gay wedding," can an unbeliever—even a homosexual—be forced to make an "anti-gay" cake?

The Colorado Civil Rights Division ruled that the bakery is *not* guilty of discrimination:

The Division finds that the Respondent did not discriminate based on the Charging Party's creed. Instead, the evidence reflects that the Respondent declined to make the Charging Party's cakes, as he had envisioned them, because he requested the cakes include derogatory language and imagery. The evidence demonstrates that the Respondent would deny such requests to any customer, regardless of creed.<sup>5</sup>

So a cake with a message that homosexuality is sin is "derogatory," but a cake that celebrates a "gay wedding" is not only good, but even something the law forces a baker to provide against his conscience.

We might seriously reconsider in our modern, corrupt society whether baking cakes, floristry, photography, or other careers in the wedding-planning industry are wise choices for Christians, and advise our children and young people accordingly. ☞

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<sup>5</sup> The text of the ruling can be read at the link provided here, [thedenverchannel.com/news/local-news/denvers-azucar-bakery-wins-right-to-refuse-to-make-anti-gay-cake](http://thedenverchannel.com/news/local-news/denvers-azucar-bakery-wins-right-to-refuse-to-make-anti-gay-cake) (accessed April 28, 2015).

# Keep

“Keep” is a biblical word that teaches both the preservation and perseverance of the saints. Preservation of saints is God’s keeping them; perseverance of saints is their keeping God’s law by His keeping them. Basically, “keep” means to exert careful attention (thus, to heed, obey, and observe), so that something precious and pure is guarded and protected from being defiled and destroyed by some evil power. And with regard to keeping, Scripture teaches six grand truths.

First: Our main calling is to keep. Adam’s duty was to keep the garden. That also implied evil was afoot; angels who kept not their first estate intended to destroy the place (Gen. 2:15; Jude 1:6). When Adam failed, other angels had to keep it (Gen. 3:24). Keeping was the earthly vocation of many Old Testament saints. Cain wouldn’t keep his brother, but Abel kept sheep (Gen. 4:4). So did Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, and David. Kings were called to keep the kingdom, priests the tabernacle, and prophets the Word (I Sam. 13:13; Num. 1:53; Rev. 22:9). So we are also keepers.


Second: The essential thing we must keep is God’s Word. The whole duty of man is to keep His commandments (Eccl. 12:13). The frequent Word to Israel was to keep His statutes, judgments, and laws (Lev. 18:5). Their calling was to keep the covenant, the service, the feasts, and the Sabbath of the Lord (Gen. 17:9; Ex. 12:25); keep their soul, mouths, and hands from evil (Ps. 39:1; Is. 56:2); keep knowledge, truth, righteousness, and wisdom (Is. 26:2; Mal. 2:7; Prov. 2:20). And this does not change in the New Testament. God still calls us to keep His Scripture, the faith and ordinances delivered to us by the apostles (Luke 8:15; I Tim. 6:20; I Cor. 11:2); to keep ourselves pure, in the love of God, unspotted from the world, and from idols (I Tim. 5:22; James 1:27; I John 5:21); and to keep our garments, the unity of the Spirit, and our hearts though Jesus (Rev. 16:15; Eph. 4:3).

Third: Keeping God’s Word is the only and necessary

way of blessedness and life. There is no other way. Blessed are they that hear the Word and keep it (Luke 11:28). In keeping God’s law there is great reward and it goes well with us forever (Ps. 19:11; Deut. 4:40). Whoever keeps Jesus’ sayings shall not see death, and whoever keeps His commandments dwells in God and God in Him (I John 3:24; 8:51). But cursed are those who keep it not; they will be cut off, perish, die, and be cast away from God forever (Deut. 28:25; I Chr. 28:9; Rev. 22:19).

Fourth: No man has kept God’s Word. Except Jesus. He kept the commandments of God (John 15:10). But not Israel. They kept not His covenant, judgments, ways, temple, feasts, or Sabbath (Ezek. 20:21). Neither their wisest kings, princes, priests, or fathers kept His law (I Kings 11:10; Ezek. 44:8; Neh. 9:34). Nor do we. For if we keep the whole law but offend at one point, we are guilty of all (James 2:10). If we say we have not sinned, we make Him a liar (I John 1:10).

Fifth: And yet...saints do keep the Word of God. Scripture says Abraham kept the law and covenant of God (Gen. 26:5). So did Job (23:11), David, and others (Ps. 18:21). So do we. For if a man loves Jesus, He will keep His Word (John 14:15, 23).

Sixth: Saints not keeping, but keeping God’s Word is no contradiction. Nor is preservation (our keeping) and perseverance (God’s keeping) of the saints. First, because God is our keeper (Ps. 121:5). It is the Lord who keeps our soul, keeps us alive, keeps His truth, and keeps us from presumptuous sins, falling, the wicked, snares, and evil (Ps. 17:8; 19:13; 25:20; 41:2; 140:4; 141:9). Abraham kept God’s law because God kept Abraham (Gen. 28:15). Israel kept God’s way because His Angel kept that way (Ex. 23:20). We keep His covenant only because He keeps His covenant to us (Deut. 7:8-9). Secondly, because all keeping of God’s Word is by faith. Faith now, not in one’s merit, power, or ability, but in Jesus the original Shepherd, who kept the law for us, keeps those given to Him, and keeps God’s covenant forever (Jer. 31:10; John 17:11; Ps. 89:29). Indeed, we both keep and are kept by the power of God through faith that commits the keeping of our souls to Him by the Spirit dwelling within us (II Tim. 1:14; I Pet. 1:5). 

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Upon This Rock (19)

## Robbing Christ of His Honor (11)

**W**e concluded our last article with Paul's assertion that to the Jews of the old dispensation the calling of the Gentiles was a mystery. And we noted that this was in spite of the fact that he knew very well that the Old Testament Scriptures were not silent concerning the fact that at the coming of the Messiah the grace of God would be proclaimed to the Gentile world. Think only of the prophecy of Isaiah: "I will also give thee [the Messiah] for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth" (49:6). And that this prophecy was not overlooked by the saints of the old dispensation is clear from Simeon's reference to it when, pre-Pentecost, he held the baby Jesus in his arms: "For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel" (Luke 2:30-32).

Why, then, we might ask, does Paul declare concerning the calling of the Gentiles that "in other ages [it] was not made known unto the sons of men" (Eph. 3:5). Very likely the answer is to be found in the remainder of the sentence in question—simply this, that it was not made known in ages past "*as* [meaning as *fully* or as *clearly* as] it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit." Calvin elaborates on this matter in a way that is very instructive.

How then could that be [called] hidden which has been proclaimed by so many heralds? Why does Paul pronounce all without exception to have been in ignorance? Shall we say that the prophets spoke of what they did not know, and uttered sound without meaning?

I reply, the words of Paul must not be understood

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as if there had been no knowledge at all on these subjects.... The prophets themselves prophesied out of the certainty of revelation, but they left the time and manner undetermined. They knew that some communication of the grace of God would be made to the Gentiles, but when, how, or by what means was quite hidden from them. There was a remarkable instance of this sort of ignorance in the apostles. They had not only been taught about it by the predictions of the prophets, but had heard the distinct statement of their Master, "Other sheep I have which are not of this fold: them also I must gather in: and there shall be one fold and one shepherd" (John 10:16). And yet the novelty of the matter prevented them from understanding it fully. In fact, even after they had received the command, "Go preach to every creature" (Mark 16:15), and, "Ye shall be witnesses unto me from Samaria to the uttermost nations" (Acts. 1:8), they dreaded and recoiled from the calling of the Gentiles as a monstrosity, because its mode was still unknown to them. Before the actual event arrived, they had dark and confused apprehensions of Christ's words; for the ceremonies were a kind of veil over their eyes. Therefore there is nothing absurd in Paul calling this a mystery, and saying that it had been hidden....

We should note, first of all, that when Calvin says that, with respect to the calling of the Gentiles, there was a "remarkable instance of this sort of ignorance in the apostles," he does not mean to suggest that the ignorance was peculiar to *them*—that is, that it did not characterize also the church's *laity*. It could be said of *all* of the earliest Jewish converts to Christianity that the "ceremonies were a kind of veil over their eyes," so that they "recoiled from the calling of the Gentiles as a monstrosity." And that was in spite of the fact that Peter had already preached *this*: "For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call" (Acts 2:39). They understood



that the grace of God would somehow be extended also to the Gentile world, but “dark and confused” was their comprehension of that, because they knew not the “mode.” The “novelty of the matter kept them from understanding it further.” And clarity did not come before the “actual event arrived.”

Already the apostles had seen firsthand the ‘power’ of Pentecost. Three thousand converts the aftermath of a single sermon by one of them. Astounding! But that was a Jewish audience. Only part of the great commission: “... ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

Can you imagine the progress they would have made in the Gentile world...if they preached proselytization? And that is to say nothing of the confusion there would have been in a proclamation of the gospel of free grace...plus circumcision. And yet, that was precisely what remained still to be resolved, namely, how to reach out to the Gentile world in obedience to the command of Christ.

And hardly is Calvin’s assertion an exaggeration, that the apostles at this point “recoiled from the calling of the Gentiles as a monstrosity.” Recall the reaction of Peter to the command of the Lord, in a vision, to rise and eat of the animals in a vessel like a sheet knit at the four corners and let down from heaven. Clean and unclean—a very much unholy mixture in the mind of Peter. Yet the command, “Rise and eat. Take your pick. No need any more to distinguish.” “Not so, Lord!” In Peter’s mind, monstrosity. He recoiled.

Shades of Jonah. “Go to Nineveh and preach? I can’t do it!” And then, after being intercepted on his way to Tarshish, and brought on his way to Nineveh by a large fish, his bitter disappointment when the fruit of his preaching in the capital city of the Assyrians was... repentance! To Jonah, a monstrosity. But why so?

It is not surprising. Consider that, for many of the centuries of the old dispensation, the church took the form of the existence of Israel as a nation. The line of separation between the people of God and the world was *national*.

The youthful nation of Israel, encamped on the eastern side of the Jordan River (Deut. 1:1), had specific instructions for what to do when they crossed the river and entered the land promised to their fathers. Not:

evangelize the nations, beginning with the inhabitants of Jericho. Quite the contrary: “When the LORD thy God shall bring thee into the land whither thou goest to possess it, and hath cast out many nations before thee, the Hittites, and the Girgashites, and the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites...thou shalt smite them, and utterly destroy them; thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor show mercy unto them.... For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God: the LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth.... And thou shalt consume all the people which the LORD thy God shall deliver thee; thine eye shall have no pity upon them...” (Deut. 7:1-16).

Jewish history, thus, helps explain Peter’s dilemma on the housetop of Simon the tanner in Joppa.

Then there were also the ceremonial barriers to which Calvin referred. Particularly, of course, the matter of circumcision. The ceremonial barriers had already been abolished by Christ in His death. Abolished, that is, in *reality*, not in the *minds* of the members of the early New Testament church. The command of Christ, “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15), and “Ye shall be witnesses unto me... unto the uttermost part of the earth” (Acts 1:8) had not yet resolved the issue. “The question that still waited for practical solution, was,” says Fairbairn, “Were those who might embrace the call from other nations to be received without circumcision? Could they find an entrance into the church of Christ without passing through the gate of Judaism?” Never, writes Calvin, would Peter “have dared to open the gates of heaven to the Gentiles unless God Himself had removed the wall.”

Indeed, there still was that question that “waited for practical solution,” namely, how does the *Levitical system* figure into the proclamation of the gospel to the Gentile world?

“Practical solution”? Perhaps it would be more accurate to say that Peter was confronted by a practical *problem* that required a *theological* solution. It was a solution that could, conceivably, have been revealed to Peter at an earlier time, but it was reserved for the moment in which, in the providence of God, he had to grapple with its practical application. On that...next time.

... to be continued. 

Revelation, Inspiration, and Infallibility (13)

## What the Bible Says about the Bible: The Unique Witness of the Gospel Accounts and Acts

### Introduction

Christians are Bible-believing, Bible-reading, Bible-honoring, and Bible-loving folk. In the past, Christians were often referred to as “the people of the Book.” That is indeed what they are—people of the Book. They are people of the Book because of the place that the Bible has in their lives. They are people of the Book because of the regard that they have for the Bible and the use that they make of the Bible. And they are people of the Book because this is what distinguishes them from those who are not Christians—their attitude towards the Bible. J. I. Packer indicates the central place that the Bible has, or at least ought to have, in the lives of Christians when he writes that “Christianity is ultimately a matter of bowing to [God’s] authority by obedient response to His revelation.”<sup>1</sup> Packer is right. This, in every age, is the mark of the Christian—even those “Christians” living in the Old Testament—that they assume towards God’s Word written the same attitude that Samuel had towards God’s Word spoken directly to him: “Speak; for thy servant heareth” (1 Sam. 3:10). This is the prayer that the Christian should make every time he opens up his Bible.

We are at present considering what the Bible says about itself in the gospel accounts and in the book of Acts. It is important in this connection to emphasize

<sup>1</sup> J. I. Packer, *God Has Spoken* (1979; repr., Grand Rapids: Baker Book House: 1989), 102.

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that Jesus’ attitude and the apostles’ attitude towards the Bible were the same. There are those who deny this. They are determined to create disjunction between what Jesus taught about the Bible and what the apostles later taught about the Bible. Whereas Jesus took a much more liberal view of the Old Testament Scriptures, they contend, not regarding them necessarily as verbally inspired, after His death the apostles took a much stricter view of Scripture and began to teach a doctrine of verbal inspiration. There is disparity, therefore, between Jesus’ view of Scripture and that of His apostles.

Another attempt to create tension between Jesus and the apostles with regard to the doctrine of inspiration is the contention by some scholars that the apostles’ view of Scripture represents accommodation to the Jews of their day. Although Jesus did not hold a strict view of verbal inspiration, this view had become widely accepted in Second Temple Judaism, that is, Judaism after the return from the captivity and rebuilding of the temple. In deference to Second Temple Judaism, so it is alleged, the apostles assumed a view of Scripture that differed from Jesus’ view.

But every attempt to create disharmony between Jesus’ view of the Old Testament Scriptures and the apostles’ view of the sacred writings distorts the plain facts in the case. An honest comparison of Jesus’ use of Scripture, as well as what Jesus has to say about the nature of Scripture, with that of the apostles reveals complete agreement between them. Jesus’ view is their view; Jesus’ use of Scripture in His preaching and teaching is the use to which they put Scripture in their preaching and writing. And in their controversies the apostles made the same sort of authoritative appeal to Scripture

as did Jesus in His many controversies. Jesus and the apostles differ not a whit in their view of the inspiration, inerrancy, and authority of sacred Scripture. In fact, they share a common view of Scripture, which view is that Scripture is the Word of God, the Word of God in the words of men.

### New Testament Fulfillment

The one most important word that describes the relationship between the Old Testament and the New Testament is the word “fulfillment.” Over and over again the words “fulfill” and “fulfilled” occur in the gospel accounts and in the book of Acts. By their use of fulfillment language, Jesus and the apostles are making clear their view of Scripture. The very first chapter of the New Testament follows the angel’s command to Joseph to name Mary’s son Jesus with the words, “Now all this was done, *that it might be fulfilled* which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying...” (Matt. 1:22). Jesus healed the sick and cast out evil spirits “*that it might be fulfilled* which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses” (Matt. 8:17). At the end of His life, at the time that He was captured in the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus said to his captors, “I was daily with you in the temple teaching, and ye took me not: but the scriptures *must be fulfilled*” (Mark 14:49). In connection with His first sermon in the synagogue at Nazareth, after Jesus has quoted Isaiah 61:1, 2 He says to those in His audience, “This day is this scripture *fulfilled* in your ears” (Luke 4:21). In connection with His imminent betrayal, Jesus says in John 13:18, “I speak not of you all: I know whom I have chosen: but that the scripture *may be fulfilled*, He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me.” Concerning Jesus’ crucifixion, Luke says in Acts 13:29, “And when they *had fulfilled* all that was written of him, they took him down from the tree, and laid him in a sepulchre” (emphasis added).

Jesus uses the language of fulfillment in Matthew 5:17 and 18: “Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.” What Jesus teaches in this passage is very significant for several reasons. First of all, it is plain that Jesus

is speaking in this passage of the *written* Word of God. Jots and tittles were some of the very smallest marks in the Hebrew Bible. The jot is one of the smallest letters of the Hebrew alphabet; the tittle is a slight stroke (“flourish”) on the edge of a Hebrew letter that distinguishes it from another letter of the alphabet that is similar in shape. Even the jots and tittles in the written text of the Old Testament were inspired by God, and therefore would not pass away until they were fulfilled. If the jots and tittles are inspired by God, the whole Old Testament, and by extension the whole Bible, is inspired by God.

Secondly, it is because Scripture is inspired by God that Jesus goes on to say that He has not come to destroy the law or the prophets—the whole Old Testament—but rather, He has come to fulfill the Old Testament. And He goes on to say that “Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled” (v. 18). Fulfillment of Scripture is the purpose of His coming, not replacement of or dispensing with Scripture. All Jesus’ life, ministry, and death are concerned with the fulfillment of Scripture. That the Old Testament must be fulfilled, that it must be fulfilled by the perfect obedience and by the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ, can only be due to the fact that Scripture is the very Word of God. Fulfillment has to do with completion and perfection. Fulfillment concerns carrying out and finishing. The Old Testament must be fulfilled in the New Testament because the Old Testament is the Word of God. And the same applies, by implication, to the New Testament. For while the New Testament is the fulfillment of the Old Testament, the New Testament itself points to the perfect and final fulfillment of all things written in the Holy Scriptures in the glorious future that awaits the people of God. We can anticipate that future fulfillment because it is promised in Scripture, and Scripture is the very Word of God.

### The Gospel Writers Share Jesus’ View of Scripture

That the gospel writers take the same view of the Old Testament Scriptures that the Lord Jesus does is seen in two important respects. First, like the Lord Jesus they affirm the truthfulness of Old Testament history. And second, like the Lord Jesus they share subscription to the great doctrinal truths set forth in the Old Testament.


Without any reservation or hesitation, the gospel writers and Luke in the book of Acts regard the history recorded in the Old Testament as real and reliable. The events that are recorded really happened and the people that are mentioned really existed. This is how the New Testament begins; it begins with the genealogy of Jesus starting with Abraham. A genealogy is only as accurate as the individual entries in the genealogy. On the basis of the genealogy in Matthew 1:1-17, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and the twelve patriarchs were real historical figures. The account of Judah's incestuous relationship with Tamar, the result of which was the conception of Phares, is reliable history that took place just as it is recorded in the book of Genesis. The history of Ruth the Moabitess, including her incorporation into the nation of Israel and line of David, actually happened as it is recorded in the book of Ruth. The history of the kings, the Babylonian captivity, and the return from exile all happened just as all these events are recorded in the Old Testament. Jesus' genealogy in Luke 3, though traced through Joseph rather than Mary, is similarly built on the historicity of the persons and events referred to out of the Old Testament Scriptures. The entries in this genealogy descend from Jesus all the way down to the first man, Adam, "which was the son of God" (Luke 3:38). By describing Adam as "the son of God," Luke is affirming his special creation by God. Among the last entries in this genealogy are Noah, Enoch, Seth, and Adam. Presupposed is the historical accuracy of both the creation account and the account of the worldwide flood of Noah's day. These events happened, and they happened just as they are recorded in Genesis 1-9.

Besides the genealogies, sprinkled throughout the gospel accounts are numerous references to the history and historical figures of the Old Testament. Moses and what Moses wrote are often referred to, as well as what David said and did. Reference is made to "the beginning," in John 1:1, in which is implied the whole biblical truth concerning God's creation of all things in the beginning. The overthrow of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah are referred to on several occasions in the gospel accounts (Matt. 10:15; 11:23, 24; Mark 6:11; Luke 10:12; 17:29), as a precursor of the final judgment and the everlasting destruction of the wicked at the end of the ages. The references take for granted that the account in Genesis

19 of God's miraculous destruction of these cities for their idolatry and immorality, specifically their "going after strange flesh" (Jude 7), that is, homosexuality, is real, reliable history. Thus, they can serve as an example and a warning in our day to those who approve of and practice this vile sin.

Throughout the book of Acts, the history of the Old Testament is often mentioned. In Acts 7, Stephen refers to Joseph and the whole history of the bondage and exodus (Acts 7:9ff.), as well as to Joshua and the history of the conquest of Canaan (Acts 7:45ff.). In Acts 13, Paul rehearses the history of the forty years of Israel's wilderness wandering (Acts 13:18), the conquest of the Canaanites (vs. 19), the history of the Judges (v. 19), and Samuel, Saul, and David (v. 20), concerning whom he says, "Of this man's seed hath God according to his promise raised unto Israel a Savior, Jesus," (v. 23). It is all real history, accurately recorded in the Old Testament Scriptures.

Besides affirming the truthfulness of Old Testament history, the gospel writers and Luke in Acts share subscription to the great doctrinal truths set forth in the Old Testament. They teach creation by God of all things in six, literal, twenty-four hour days. They point to the cause of man's present, lost condition in the fall of Adam and Eve in the Garden. They teach the consequence of the fall of man into sin as total depravity, that is, the natural man's inability to do any saving good, anything that is truly pleasing to God. They teach justification by faith alone apart from the works or worth of man. They teach election and reprobation. They teach the deity of Jesus Christ and His eternal Sonship. They teach the ingathering of the elect from the nations, as God in judgment turns from the Jews to the Gentiles. They teach that Christ's kingdom is heavenly and spiritual, not a carnal kingdom of earthly peace and prosperity. They teach the end of all things in the second coming of Christ and the final judgment of all men.

Jesus' view of the Old Testament Scriptures is the view embraced by the gospel writers. They are in complete agreement with each other. Both Jesus and the gospel writers view the Old Testament Scriptures as the verbally inspired, completely trustworthy, and uniquely authoritative Word of God. To them, as to Him, what Scripture says, God says. 



# Infant Baptism

## Lord's Day 27

Question 72. Is then the external baptism with water the washing away of sin itself?

Answer. Not at all: for the blood of Jesus Christ only, and the Holy Ghost, cleanse us from all sin.

Question 73. Why then doth the Holy Ghost call baptism “the washing of regeneration” and “the washing away of sins”?

Answer. God speaks thus not without great cause, to wit, not only thereby to teach us that, as the filth of the body is purged away by water, so our sins are removed by the blood and Spirit of Jesus Christ; but especially that by this divine pledge and sign He may assure us, that we are spiritually cleansed from our sins as really as we are externally washed with water.

Question 74. Are infants also to be baptized?

Answer. Yes, for since they, as well as the adult, are included in the covenant and church of God; and since redemption from sin by the blood of Christ, and the Holy Ghost, the author of faith, is promised to them no less than to the adult; they must therefore by baptism, as a sign of the covenant, be also admitted into the Christian church; and be distinguished from the children of unbelievers as was done in the old covenant or testament by circumcision, instead of which baptism is instituted in the new covenant.

**T**his Lord's Day continues the catechism's treatment of the sacrament of baptism by addressing two common errors related to baptism. The first is the error of the Roman Catholics and Lutherans, that baptism itself does something to the recipient. The other is the error of the Baptists who say that the sacrament of baptism is reserved for adult believers.

## No Grace in Baptism Itself

The first two questions of this Lord's Day teach us that the water of baptism itself does not confer grace or wash away sin. Rather, the external and visible sign directs

our faith to an internal and invisible washing of sins by the blood of Christ through the work of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, we do not receive baptism, nor do we baptize our children, because we believe that the sacrament itself saves us and our children.

We also do not baptize our infant children because we believe that all children born to believing parents are elect children, chosen of God from eternity to be saved. “For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel” (Rom. 9:6).

Nor do we baptize our children presuming that they are already regenerated and saved, and so must receive the sign that matches that reality. While it may indeed be true that some children are regenerated as infants, (e.g., Jeremiah and John the Baptist), this is not always the case, nor is this the reason to baptize them.

Also, our children are not baptized because we believe

*Rev. Kleyn is pastor of Covenant of Grace Protestant Reformed Church in Spokane, Washington.*

*Previous article in this series: February 1, 2015, p. 202.*

that in baptism God makes a promise of salvation to every one of them, the fulfillment of which is conditioned on their faith. Of Abraham's sons, Isaac was the child of promise and Ishmael was not, yet God commanded that both be circumcised (Gal. 4:23). There was no grace and no promise to Ishmael in his being circumcised.

Rather, we baptize our children because baptism is a covenant sign and, since the children of believers are included in the covenant, the sign of the covenant must also be administered to them.

### **The Sign of the Covenant**

When we say baptism is a 'covenant sign,' we mean that it takes the place of circumcision as the symbol of God's saving grace to believers and their children.

According to Genesis 17:7, God establishes His covenant with Abraham and with his children after him in their generations for an everlasting covenant. That covenant is established sovereignly and unilaterally—"I will establish my covenant." The essence of that covenant is friendship—"to be a God unto thee and to thy children after thee."

Along with the covenant, God gives the sign of circumcision that Abraham is commanded to administer to all in his house, including his infant children. The covenant also includes the promise to Abraham that God would gather His elect church from among the children of Abraham. This is not a guarantee that all his 'natural' seed would be saved, but that from among his natural children God would gather the true, elect, and spiritual seed (Rom. 9:7-9).

As a sign, circumcision represented a spiritual circumcision of the heart (Rom. 2:28-29) in which the body of sin is put off (Col. 1:11-12). In other words, it basically represented the same thing that baptism represents—regeneration and the washing away of sin. And so, in Colossians 1:11-12, Paul uses the words 'circumcision' and 'baptism' interchangeably.

The covenant that God established with Abraham, including the promise, God still makes with believers and their children today in the New Testament. The words of Acts 2:39, "the promise is unto you, and to your children," tell us that as New Testament believers we can read God's promise to Abraham in Genesis 17:7 as His promise also to us. Because of this, we as New Testament believers are also commanded by God to

administer the covenant sign to our children; to neglect to do so is to despise God's covenant and promises.

### **Answering the Baptists**

Often the Baptists, who deny infant baptism, will ask for biblical evidence in the New Testament for the baptism of infants. However, the whole argument for infant baptism cannot hang on just this. Even though there is no recorded incident of an infant being baptized in the New Testament, we do have the statements and promises of the covenant to believers and their seed in both the Old and New Testaments. If this had changed, so that God would work salvation only with individuals and not in families in the New Testament, then it seems God would have made that clear in the New Testament. But there is no such announcement. Yes, adult converts are to be baptized after they believe (Mark 16:16), but this does not become the general rule for all baptisms. Instead, just as Abraham circumcised his household, so when the Philippian jailor and Lydia believed, their households were baptized with them (Acts 16:15, 33).

In my experience with the Baptists, infant baptism is generally dismissed as a remnant of Roman Catholicism, and those who practice it are usually categorized as believing that baptism itself automatically saves children. For this reason, our teaching on the doctrine of the covenant needs to be very clear, biblical, and consistently Calvinistic. Baptism itself does not save, nor does it offer a universal grace or general promise to all recipients, but is a symbol of God's grace and promise to believers and their elect children. And, like the preaching of the gospel, baptism becomes a sword that cuts both ways: a means of grace to those who receive it in faith, and a symbol of condemnation to those who reject the gospel. If you take the time to explain these things to a Baptist, it is likely that they will be hearing things that they have never before considered.

### **A Sermon in Symbols**

A sacrament is the Word of God in a visible form. In Lord's Day 26 we learned that the water of baptism is a symbol of our being washed by the blood of Christ from the guilt and defilement of sin, and of our being made new creatures through the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit. Now, the question is, Does this also apply

to the children of believers? The answer is Yes, and that is why we baptize them. This is not to say that every one of them is washed and regenerated, but then, neither were Ishmael or Esau.

So, what does baptism teach us about our children?

First, it teaches us that they are sinners who, like us their parents, need salvation through the blood and sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Baptism does not mean that they are all saved, but it does teach that as sinners they all need salvation. Baptism is not to be used as a symbol of a person's acceptance of Jesus Christ (as believer-baptism teaches), but is a symbol of the fact that God in grace comes to unworthy sinners to redeem them. Baptism calls our children to repentance and faith.


Second, baptism teaches that God makes a special promise to believers, to work salvation in their generations, that is, to save their children after them. While it is true that God also gathers His church through the work of missions from those who were not raised in believing homes, generally speaking, God works generationally in gathering His church. This is wonderful, because it provides continuity and maturity and experience in the church as it moves forward from generation to generation. Those who have grown up in Christian homes and in the context of the church carry the banner forward. This is stated beautifully, strongly, and repeatedly in the catechism—"they, as well as the adult, are included in the covenant and church of God"; "redemption from sin...is promised to them, no less than to the adult"; and "they must by baptism...be admitted into the Christian church"—the point being that they are members of the church. And so they must be viewed and treated. Writing to 'the church' at Ephesus, Paul, addressing the different members says, "Children, obey your parents" (Eph. 6:1). And so Jesus, after receiving and blessing the infants who were brought to Him (which is essentially what we say He does in baptism), gives this as the reason, "for of such is the kingdom of heaven" (Mark 10:14).

Third, baptism teaches that believing parents have a great responsibility before God to bring up the children that He has entrusted to their care in the "nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Eph. 6:4). Viewing their children as the "heritage of Jehovah" (Ps. 127:3) who are "sanctified" (I Cor. 7:14), believing parents will see themselves as stewards and caretakers under God of His most precious

possession, and so will be intentional in their instruction, correction, and example to these children.

And, baptism also teaches our children that they are set apart by God to be His people in this world. Baptism has been compared to a uniform that is worn by an officer of the law or a soldier. That uniform represents a police-force or nationality, and identifies the one wearing it as belonging to that force or country. The uniform can be worn in a way that brings dishonor to what it represents—if a soldier defects to the enemy, his uniform identifies him as a traitor—and that uniform places obligations on the one wearing it. Our children are called, by baptism, to repentance and holy living.

### Questions for Discussion

1. Does baptism itself confer grace on the recipient? If not, why is baptism still important and necessary?
2. What are some wrong reasons for the baptism of infants?
3. What is the teaching of "presumptive regeneration" and how is this used by some as an argument for the baptism of infants? What is wrong with this teaching?
4. How would you refute the idea that in baptism God makes a promise to all the children of believers? What is the main problem with this teaching?
5. How can we justify baptizing all our children, if we know that not every child is elect, and that not necessarily every child will believe?
6. What are some arguments that a Baptist will present against infant baptism? How would you answer these arguments?
7. Dispensationalism teaches that God saved Old Testament Israel one way, and that He saves the New Testament church a different way. Why is it important to maintain that there is one church throughout history, which includes Old Testament Israel, and that there is only one way of salvation? How does this affect one's view of the baptism of infants?
8. Can you demonstrate from Scripture that baptism replaces circumcision?
9. What does baptism teach parents regarding their children?
10. What does baptism teach the children of believers?
11. What wonderful promises come to believers as they present their children for baptism? 

## The Elder's Ordination (2)

## Significant for the Elder

“...Over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers...” (Acts 20:28).

In our last article we began examining the matter of the ordination of elders into office. This refers, we saw, to the work of the church by which she officially and authoritatively places a man into that church office for which he was chosen. We noted that, while both words “ordination” and “installation” refer to this activity of the church, there is an important distinction between the two terms, especially regarding the office of minister. And we concluded by pointing out that ordinations and installations should take place in a public ceremony.

Now we ask, *why*? Why the need for ordination and installation? And why the need for such in a public ceremony?

Generally, the answer is that in this way we follow biblical examples and principles. In the Old Testament, priests and kings were installed into office publicly. And Acts 6:6 and 14:23 indicate that the apostles, by public ceremonies, inducted men into the offices of deacon and elder.

More specific reasons can be given from two viewpoints: first, from the viewpoint of the person being put into office, and then, second, from the viewpoint of the people of God whom the officebearer will serve. We proceed in this article to develop the first viewpoint, regarding the significance of public installation for the *elder*. These reasons are gleaned from our “Form of Ordination (or Installation) of Elders and Deacons.”<sup>1</sup>

From now on, by the word “installation” I refer to both *ordination* and *installation*.

<sup>1</sup> *The Confessions and the Church Order of the Protestant Reformed Churches* (Grandville, MI: Protestant Reformed Churches in America, 2005), 290-294 (also found at [prca.org](http://prca.org)).

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

Previous article in this series: April 1, 2015, p. 304.

## The church confirms her call of the elder

One reason for a public ceremony of installation is that by it the church confirms that she has called this man to office.

The church had already called this man objectively. By voting from a nomination of men, or by approving the consistory's appointment of a man to office, the confessing members of the church expressed their desire that this man serve in office; he has been “lawfully called of God's church.”

By installing him into office, the church confirms that it still is her desire that the man serve her in this way. By installing him at a public worship service, the church as a whole confirms her desire publicly.

Does the elder really doubt the church's call, so that he needs it confirmed? Probably not, usually; but in exceptional cases, possibly. Think of an instance in which, after the election was held, some alleged that the man was not qualified to hold office. If the consistory properly investigated such allegations and found them not true, the installation of such a man is clearly a confirmation of her call of him. Other times it becomes necessary to postpone installation for a time. The PRC have decided that “in case of difficulties in the congregation, the officebearers then serving shall continue to function until their chosen successors can be installed.”<sup>2</sup> In such a case, a man might begin to wonder (especially if he does not understand what those difficulties are that postpone his installation) whether the church still desires him to hold office. When finally the difficulties have been worked through, and he is installed, his call is confirmed.

## The elder expresses his confidence of being called

Another reason for a public ceremony of ordination or installation is that it gives opportunity for elders publicly to voice their conviction that they are called to this office. The elder answers “yes” to the question in the

<sup>2</sup> *Confessions*, Decision pertaining to Article 27, 389.



Form, “whether you do not feel in your hearts that ye are lawfully called of God’s church, and consequently of God Himself, to these your respective offices?”

The call to which we refer now is the *subjective* call, the man’s personal conviction that he is called to this work. The question put to the elder asks regarding what he feels in his heart. This conviction on the elder’s part, he did not express publicly when he was elected. The church did not ask him to do so. And perhaps he was not ready to do so, having hoped that another would be elected at that meeting. But elected he was. And in the weeks between the congregational meeting and the installation, he has had time to reflect on God’s will as made known by the vote of the church. Now he must be able to say: “I feel the conviction of the call.” Or, to apply the verse quoted at the beginning of this article: “I know that the Holy Spirit has made me an overseer over the church of Christ.”

(As an aside, the same is as true for ministers. Of course a candidate desires a call to a congregation; but once in that congregation, when informed he is on a trio, a minister might very well prefer that another man get the call. But when he gets the call, and considers it, he must then tell the congregation that called him one of two things: either, “I feel in my heart that God has not called me,” or, “I feel in my heart that I am called of God Himself.”)

### **The elder expresses his resolve to do the work faithfully**

Why should the elder state his conviction of being called? Knowing that he is called, he realizes that he must do his work faithfully. So another reason for a public ordination ceremony is that the elder-elect publicly express his vow to be faithful and diligent in his work.

The elder expresses this resolve also by an affirmative answer to a question that the Form requires be asked of him. The first question regards his conviction of his being called; the second regards his confession that the Scriptures are “the only Word of God and the perfect doctrine of salvation,” and his rejection of “all doctrines repugnant thereto.” And the third reads, in part: “Whether ye promise, agreeably to said doctrine, faithfully, according to your ability, to discharge your respective offices....” Having made this resolve, the elder is ready to take up his labors, and officially begins to serve his term.

This resolve, I said a few paragraphs earlier, is ex-

pressed in the form of a “vow”—a promise to God. The elder does not make this promise *to the church*, but to *God*. Yet he makes this vow publicly, because the church is the representative of God, and because the church will benefit from his faithful labors.

### **The elder is assured that God will equip him**

A fourth reason why a public ceremony of installation is appropriate is that by this the elder receives the assurance that God will equip him for his work.

His work is weighty and daunting; and when understood as the work of Christ in His church, it is all the more weighty. What the inspired apostle said regarding his work, applies as much to the work of the elder: “who is sufficient for these things?” (I Cor. 2:16). Rephrased: what mere mortal, sinful man is equal to this task, and is enough for it? None.

But during the installation ceremony, the elder is assured that whom God calls, He equips. This assurance comes, first, from the fact that the church, *as God’s representative*, puts the man into office. The man is assured that he, as a member of the church, and laboring for the good of God’s kingdom, will receive sufficient grace. And second, the *minister says*, as the representative of Christ: “The Almighty God and Father replenish you all with His grace, that ye may faithfully and fruitfully discharge your respective offices. Amen.”<sup>3</sup> A *prayer* this is not. Nor is it a hopeful *wish* on the part of the minister or church. Rather, it functions like the salutation and benediction that the minister pronounces on the church at the beginning and end of the worship services: Christ through the minister is telling His elders (elect, redeemed, sanctified elders), that the grace of God will empower them, and be sufficient.

### **The church prays for him**

Finally, at the installation ceremony the church prays for the elder. Our Form includes a prayer that the church, led by the minister, brings to God’s throne of grace. As with all the prayers in our liturgical forms, it is a beautiful prayer. It brings to God, through Christ, the fundamental needs of the officebearers and congregation. It aims at the magnifying of God’s name and the enlarging of the kingdom of Christ, *through the work of the elders and deacons*.

<sup>3</sup> *Confessions*, 293.


While the prayer as found in the Form is prayed usually not more than once a year in any congregation, the substance of the prayer is repeated week after week in the congregational prayer, and is echoed in the prayers of believers throughout the week—at the dinner table, in their private devotions, in their Bible studies, and at other occasions.

The elder knows, not only that the church *prayed* for him, but that the church *is praying* for him.



All that I have said is in substance the answer of VanDellen and Monsma, in explaining Article 22 of the Church Order, to the question, “Why then does the Church Order provide for proper installation?” They write:

So that the appointees may publicly accept their appointment to office, and publicly assume their responsibilities, openly promising before God and His Church loyalty and devotion, and openly testify that they accept the appointment as coming from God Himself. Also, in order that the congregation may receive its new officebearers in the right attitude of heart and mind. Furthermore, in order that the congregation may appropriately implore God’s blessing upon the newly elected officebearers.<sup>4</sup>

“That the congregation may *receive* its new officebearers in the right attitude....” We have focused in this article on the benefit of a public installation for the *elder*; we must yet speak to the significance for the *congregation*. 

<sup>4</sup> VanDellen, Idzerd, and Monsma, Martin, *The Church Order Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1941), 106.

## PERTAINING TO THE CHURCHES...IN COMMON

## FROM THE SEMINARY

This past semester might be called the semester of doctors. It started with a laparoscopic appendectomy gone awry, resulting in an appendix that disintegrated before removal. That put one student in the hospital and produced complications for weeks that slowed his recovery. Then our fourth-year student was diagnosed with mono, bronchitis, and infected sinuses, so we did not see him around for a while. After that it was wave after wave of colds, flu, and one case of pneumonia that took out various students from week to week. A visiting student informed us that he had been diagnosed with tuberculosis, with the result that all who were in that class were instructed to be tested (no positive results, happy to say). And now at the very end of the semester, one student is hobbling around on crutches with a badly injured knee, wondering what the surgeon will recommend.

Other than that, we are well, thanks.

From every other point of view, this was an exciting semester. Abilities developed through ten weeks straight of practice preaching. Students started teaching catechism in the churches. Reams and reams of paper were devoured for exegesis, church history, dogmatics, and church polity assignments/papers. And, very important, the instruction was well received by the diligent students one and all.

Exciting news is found elsewhere in this issue of the *SB*, namely, that five of the students have been licensed to speak a word of edification in the churches. As most readers know, a large class just finished its second year of

seminary. To all the seminarians the Lord gives gifts in differing amounts, and causes them to develop at varying rates. Thus one cannot expect that the entire class would be ready for licensing at the same time. We thank God that these five have developed to this point, and that the others are working diligently toward this goal.

For some of the students, instruction will continue into the summer, though it will be of a different kind. Five students will have a mini-internship focusing on missions. This has been done twice in the past eight years. Many years ago bequest money was set aside (according to the designation of the giver) to be used specifically for training in missions. That money enables us to offer second-year students the opportunity to live on a mission field for a time in order to get hands-on experience. Five students responded with enthusiasm. Accordingly, two will go to Pittsburgh, one to the Philippines, and two to Spokane (a small, young congregation with extensive outreach activity).

Last, and surely not least, seminarian Ryan Barnhill has completed his fourth year of seminary training. The faculty wholeheartedly recommend him for examination at the synod of 2015. Another minister will soon take his place in the ranks. How good our God is to us.

We thank God for His grace abundantly bestowed to the students and the professors alike. And we thank God for the continued support of the churches.

Prof. Russell Dykstra,  
Rector 

### Mission Activities

Rev. Daniel Kleyn, missionary to the Philippines, has recently had opportunity to use lectures recorded at our seminary in the pastor training classes he conducts in Southern Negros Occidental. Rev. Kleyn and his wife Sharon continue to visit that island the third week of each month. Lectures given by Prof. Ronald Cam-menga on Anthropology (the doctrine of man) were sent to Rev. Kleyn and enjoyed by the group of about a dozen men. The first lecture was an introduction to Anthropology while the next addressed Scripture and creation. The audience of pastors voiced appreciation of the lectures, one man calling them “guwapo!” (that is, “beautiful”). The men were especially appreciative of the in-depth content of the videos in sharp contrast to what they have heard before. Another positive way to make use of the technology God has given.

### Minister Activities

Rev. Nathan Decker announced on April 26 that God had led him to decline the call to be the next missionary to the Republic of the Philippines and to remain in the work at Trinity PRC. We are glad that God has made His will plain to Rev. Decker. The Council of the calling church in Doon, IA will continue to attempt to determine the man that God has called to labor in the Philippines, working with the Foreign Mission Committee that “provides the calling church with a list of suitable candidates from which a nomination

may be made and a missionary called” (FMC Constitution, VI, B).

Peace PRC called from the trio of Rev. Nathan Decker (Trinity PRC, Hudsonville, MI), Rev. Garry Eriks (Hudsonville, MI PRC), and Rev. Steven Key (Loveland, CO PRC) on April 26. This resulted in the congregation voting to extend their call to Rev. Decker. May God grant him clear direction as he considers this call in addition to the call to labor in his present congregation at Trinity PRC.

### Congregational Activities

The annual spring Ladies’ League meeting of the five Siouxland area churches was held on the evening of April 22 at Calvary PRC in Hull, IA. A good-sized group of all ages listened as Rev. Cory Griess, pastor at Calvary PRC, spoke on the topic “How Did We Get Here?” The speech concentrated on why the Dutch Reformed came to Iowa and why it matters for today. Special numbers were performed, refreshments were served, and an offering was taken for the music department at Hull Protestant Reformed School.

Grand Rapids, MI area bulletins included an announcement regarding the PRSO, which stands for Protestant Reformed Student Orchestra. Those interested in joining were encouraged to attend the clinic, a class for students who are studying to play a stringed instrument and have not yet placed in the PRSO. Four sessions were scheduled in late April and early May at Hope PR School. Further investigation reveals that the PRSO, a tax-exempt organization, was formed in 2012 by parents in the Grand Rapids, MI area who desired

that their children have an opportunity to play in an orchestra. Its season runs September through January, with rehearsals once per week after school and a final concert performed at the end of the season. A summer camp and clinic are provided for those wishing to participate and grow in expertise. Last season the PRSO was made up of 21 students from the West Michigan area, and those players ranged in grade level from third through eleventh. The orchestra is directed by Mr. Eric Phelps.

We read in Matthew 24:7 regarding the signs of the last times: “For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places.” While our Redlands, CA congregation often feels earthquake tremors, it is unusual for our Michigan residents to feel them. However, on Saturday, May 2, God’s presence was felt in an earthquake in Western Michigan and beyond. A magnitude 4.2 quake with an epicenter located nine miles southeast of Kalamazoo, MI was experienced just after noon that day, with no injuries reported. The state had only experienced one other earthquake of this magnitude, a 4.6 registered in August of 1947 and centered 30 miles southeast of the recent quake. Also on Sunday morning, May 3, a 3.9 magnitude earthquake was felt in Los Angeles, CA, but not by those of our Redlands congregation. All this following the massive 7.8 earthquake in Nepal in late April that killed over 6,000 people and injured over 14,000 more. Certainly the footsteps of our Lord draw nearer.

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

## Denominational Activities

The annual Synod of the PRC is scheduled to convene in Faith PRC, Jenison, MI on June 9, with the pre-synodical service held the night before, on June 8, at 7 P.M., D.V.

## School Activities

On Saturday, May 2, the Mothers' Club of Adams Protestant Reformed School held its second Amazing Race

fundraiser. The race, which began in the afternoon and included a burger supper and fellowship later, included a "trek around the world" involving clues, challenges, fun photos, and more. Prizes were awarded to the three teams earning the most points. This event reminds us just a bit of the challenges of Edmonton's Remembrance Day Car Rally.

The Genesis Protestant Reformed School (Lacombe, AB, Canada) hot lunch recently began with chicken stew and concluded with dessert including "Worms in Dirt" and "Bugs on the Beach." An interesting menu to be sure! We are certain that all enjoyed the meal just fine.

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

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### Wedding Anniversary

■ With all praise to our great God, we rejoice with our parents and grandparents,

**REV. MICHAEL and DAWN DEVRIES,**

as they celebrate 40 years of marriage in our LORD on June 6, 2015. We are so thankful to God for parents and grandparents who love the LORD, His church, each other, and each of us unconditionally. What a beautiful picture God has given us of Christ and His church. We pray that God will continue to bless their marriage, their place in our family, and also their work in His church. "But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children" (Psalm 103:17).

- ☞ Jeff and Angie DeVries  
Kaylie, Megan, Michael, Amber, Alivia
- ☞ Joel and Connie DeVries  
Anna, Katelyn, Nicklas
- ☞ Russ and Kate DeVries  
Julia, Tyler, Renee, Brett
- ☞ Jason and Karen Elzinga  
Trevor, Benjamin, Justin, Leah, Kent  
Kalamazoo, Michigan

### Reminder

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

### Teachers Needed

■ The Board of Reformed Heritage Christian School is accepting applications for a full-time high school/junior high Language Arts teacher and also a part-time Kindergarten teacher for the 2015-16 school year. Reformed Heritage is committed to teaching our covenant youth from a distinctively Reformed perspective. Our goal is to train our young people to grow academically, think biblically, and be servants of Christ in all endeavors of life.

A cover letter and resume can be mailed to: Reformed Heritage Christian School, 700 N. Fletcher Ave., Kalamazoo, MI 49006, Attn: Mr. Dave VanderMeer. Or e-mail: dnjvm5@att.net.

### Student Licensure

■ With much thanksgiving to God, the faculty of the Protestant Reformed Theological Seminary inform the churches that they have licensed five students to speak a word of edification in the churches. These five, with their current church membership, are: Matthew DeBoer (Hudsonville), Joseph Holstege (Southeast), David Noorman (Faith), Stephan Regnerus (Grace), and Justin Smidstra (Hudsonville). It is our prayer that God will use this for good as Article 20 of the Church Order indicates "for their own training, and for the sake of becoming known to the congregations." All scheduling of the students for leading public worship services will be done through the seminary.

### Classis West

■ Classis West of the Protestant Reformed Churches will meet in Edgerton, MN, on Wednesday, September 30, 2015 at 8:30 A.M., the Lord willing. All material for the Agenda is to be in the hands of the stated clerk 30 days before classis convenes, that is, by August 31, 2015. All delegates in need of lodging or transportation from the airport should notify the clerk of Edgerton's consistory.

Rev. D. Kuiper, Stated Clerk

## Reformed Witness Hour June 2015

| Date    | Topic                                   | Text                |
|---------|---|---------------------|
| June 7  | "In the Beginning God Created Marriage" | Genesis 2:18-25     |
| June 14 | "God's Design for Marriage"             | Genesis 2:24        |
| June 21 | "God's Rule of Conduct for Marriage"    | Colossians 3:12, 13 |
| June 28 | "A Dress Code for Marriage"             | Colossians 3:12, 13 |