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Editorial office

Prof. Russell Dykstra
4949 Ivanrest Ave SW
Wyoming, MI 49418
dykstra@prca.org

Business office

Mr. Alex Kalsbeek
1894 Georgetown Center Dr
Jenison, MI 49428-7137
616-457-5970
alexkalsbeek@rfpa.org

Church news editor

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

United Kingdom office

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

Rep. of Ireland office

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

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Meditation

Rev. Dennis Lee, pastor of Bethel Protestant Reformed Church in Roselle, Illinois

God's word to Jonah... the second time

“And the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the second time, saying, Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee.”

Jonah 3:1-2

The second time! God's word came to Jonah the second time! Do we realize the wonder of that? The wonder of the amazing grace of God? For in these verses we see that God not only recovered His errant, run-away servant in the way of working repentance within him and forgiving him for what he had done, but also that He restored him to the office of prophet and recommissioned him to do His precious work of bringing His gospel message to Nineveh.

“The second time”—all by itself, that was a gracious fact for Jonah. For recall and consider what he had done. When God's word had come to Jonah the first time, Jonah did the *exact opposite* of what God told him to do. Instead of going to Nineveh, Jonah, without delay, traveled to Joppa and went on board a ship manned by pagan sailors heading in the opposite direction, to Tarshish. In so doing, we were told that he fled from the presence of the LORD.

But God did not let go of His wayward child and servant. The LORD sent out a great storm into the sea where the ship Jonah was traveling on sailed. God used the pagan sailors to rebuke Jonah. God sovereignly worked it out so that the casting of lots exposed Jonah as the cause of the trouble the pagan sailors were experiencing on the sea. He even prepared a great fish to swallow Jonah up in safety when he finally had to be thrown into the sea to secure the safety of the ship! And in the belly of that fish, God worked within the heart of Jonah, so that he prayed a beautiful prayer of repentance to God. Finally, after having spent three days and three nights in the belly of the fish, Jonah was spat out by the fish upon dry land.

It is at this point in the life of Jonah that we would have expected God to say to Jonah, “Now my child, you are forgiven. You may now go home. Go and sin no

more.” And that would have been sufficiently gracious on the part of God to do just that! For the knowledge of forgiveness of sin lived once again in the heart and mind of a repentant Jonah, and Jonah was now renewed and ready to live once more a new and godly life, only in a new and different vocation!

But God did so much more than that! He restored Jonah to the office of prophet, and recommissioned him for the work of bringing His gospel to Nineveh! What a wonder of grace!

In order to appreciate that, we need to think about this and ask ourselves, would *we* have done what God did? What follows is by no means a perfect example, but in order to help us think things through, suppose you were a small business owner, and that you had given a very important assignment to your employee to work on. You had trained him for years to do just this assignment and he has been doing very well on all his jobs you have assigned him. You are thoroughly invested in this assignment because your customer, whom you truly care about, is dependent on it for his own business to grow. You have set aside half of your personal savings to purchase the materials for this work. Soon the job is ready to begin, and you give the money to purchase those materials to your highly esteemed and trusted employee. But he took all of that money and squandered it and did not report that to you. Your customer is furious and there are many repercussions for what has taken place. There is loss of reputation, loss of trust, and half of all your savings is gone! You have been deeply hurt by your once-trusted employee. But now, to your complete surprise, he returns to you weeping and says that he is sorry for what he had done. You determine that his apology is genuine, and after deep struggles within you, you forgive him. But that important assignment remains: *Would you do the job yourself, or would you rehire him and, in addition, reassign him to that job?*

The simple fact here with Jonah is that he had disqualified himself from the office of prophet! He did so by his defiant and rather public sin of disobedience. And so, when God stretched forth His arm in so many

wonderful ways to pursue and recover him, and amazingly worked repentance in his heart and assured him of His forgiveness, would we not have thought that God would have stopped there with Jonah and commissioned *another* prophet to bring His gospel to Nineveh? *That, all by itself, would have been so gracious of God!*

But God did not stop there. We are told that the word of God came to Jonah *the second time!* Dear reader, is this not a great, great wonder of grace shown unto Jonah? Indeed it is!

But we should also know that this is not the only time that God displayed His wondrous, amazing grace to His sinful but repentant servants! Did not God's word come to Abraham a second time at Haran when Abraham tarried there halfway on his God-assigned sojourn to Canaan? Did not God's word come to Moses a second time on the occasion of the burning bush and after Moses had taken matters into his own hands when he killed an Egyptian? And did not Jesus also restore a sinful but repentant Peter to office after he had denied his Lord *not once, nor twice, but three times?*

Dear reader, has God not also been so gracious to you and to me? Has not God's word come to us the second time? Have we never stopped halfway at our own personal Harans? Have we never taken matters into our own hands to do the work of the LORD in our own way instead of His? Have we never denied our Lord with our silence when we should have spoken up and stood up for Him?

We should understand that God has been and is amazingly gracious to us!

Without being flippant and teaching that we should sin that grace might abound (cf. Rom. 6:1-2), has not God's word come to us the second time, the third time, the fourth time...in fact as many times as is necessary in our own hearts and lives?

If that is our confession and experience, ought we not also be ready to display some measure of the graciousness of God to those who have so offended and hurt us? Has your spouse hurt you so grievously? Has he abused you? Or is it your parent, your child, or someone in your extended family, or your fellow brother or sister in Christ at church, or anyone for that matter, even a total stranger, who has hurt you? The hurt inflicted on us has been undeniably great, but the proper way to respond to hurt is not the way of hatred, anger, bitterness, or resolve never to forgive. The only proper way to respond, as believers who know and have been saved by the amazing grace of God, is to respond with something of the grace that our gracious God has shown to us. Has not God forgiven *us* of our own sins and trespasses, which are far, far worse than the hurt we have suffered? May God graciously cause us to behold the cross of His dear Son and our Savior, and to remember the amazing grace shown to Jonah when God's word came to him the second time!



Editorial

Prof. Russell Dykstra, professor of Church History and New Testament in the Protestant Reformed Theological Seminary

The covenant and Dordt (11)

Head IV: The wonder of faith

Key to a proper understanding of the Reformed doctrine of salvation and therefore also of the doctrine of the covenant, is faith. How faith fits as an instrument must be carefully taught, lest one slip into hyper-Calvinism or into Arminianism.

That faith is an instrument is clear from the confessions. The Belgic Confession (Art. 22) teaches that “the Holy Ghost kindleth in our hearts an upright faith,

which embraces Jesus Christ, with all His merits, appropriates Him, and seeks nothing more besides Him.” It goes on to maintain that believers “possess Jesus Christ through faith.” The article rejects the notion that “faith itself justifies us, for it is only an instrument with which we embrace Christ our Righteousness.” And it concludes, “faith is an instrument that keeps us in communion with Him and all His benefits.”

The Canons echo this in Head I, Article 4:

The wrath of God abideth upon those who believe not this gospel. But such as receive it, and *embrace* Jesus the Savior by a true and living faith, are by Him delivered from the wrath of God, and from destruction, and have the gift of eternal life conferred upon them [emphasis added].

Conditional covenant theology maintains that God establishes His covenant with every baptized child, and then requires faith as a condition that the child must fulfill. We have already seen that the Canons explicitly reject faith as condition of election, maintaining rather that faith is a fruit of election (I, 9). Really that should end the matter, and the Reformed theologian should recognize that for his covenant theology to be consistent with the Canons, faith is not to be set forth as a condition in the covenant.

The idea of faith as condition in the covenant is also in conflict with Head IV, on the conversion of man, and its clear teaching on faith as God's gift.

Here the conditional theologian who holds to the Canons recognizes a problem. His solution is to insist that while faith is a condition, it is not man's work. Rather, God gives faith. This, he insists, makes his conditional faith not Arminian, but in harmony with the Canons. This is Klaas Schilder's explanation:

Now someone has said that actually you are speaking as a Remonstrant, because the Remonstrants teach that faith is a condition for salvation. No, no, we respond! You must watch out. The Remonstrants teach that man must do that and make this good work the ground of salvation (faith seen beforehand by God is ground for salvation). We do not teach this. We say that God makes and devises everything. That God has also created my saying "yes" and my faith. Any good that comes from me is God's gift and is from Him alone! Yet we must speak of conditions: I will not receive it if I do not comply with the demand—faith is the first demand.¹

In response, we note first of all, that it is not the usual idea of a condition if God demands a condition, but then fulfills it. Why call it a condition? But leaving that aside, it will become plain that this idea is contrary to the confessions because it requires that man fulfill a condition *in order to be saved*.

This comes out in the typical illustration given by Liberated theologians, namely, the notion that the baptism certificate can be compared to a bank check. As they explain it, at baptism, each child receives a check written out to him or her, signed by God Himself, promising the child salvation from sin and eternal life. The child can do one of three things with that check. First, he might de-

cide to frame it and hang it on the wall. He is a member of the church and has the personal promise of eternal life. But if he dies, the check is worthless because he never claimed the promise (cashed the check), and he perishes. Second, he can rip up the check and throw it away, rejecting any promise of God. He is a covenant-breaker and likewise will perish. Third, he can turn the check over, endorse it with his signature, and taking it to the bank, claim the promise and receive it—eternal life is his. He does that by believing God's promise to him. Without that, as Schilder writes, "I will not receive it if I do not comply with the demand—faith."

There is a serious problem with this presentation. One can try to distinguish it from the Arminian conception of faith as a condition, but the problem remains. It is this: The child must do something in order to get saved. He has the check, the promise, but not what the check promises, namely, salvation. Only after he fulfills the condition, by believing, does he receive salvation. So, faith, the activity of the child, gets him salvation. To be more explicit, he is not saved so long as he only holds the check in his hand. But, in that *unsaved state*, he obtains salvation by his act of endorsing the check, that is, believing the promise.

This contradicts the truth of total depravity. This child is, apart from the saving work of the Spirit, dead in sin. Before the Spirit works salvation, the child can in no way believe.

Over against that, the Reformed teaching on faith is that faith is not a condition *unto* salvation. Rather, faith is *part of* God's work of salvation.

Head I taught that election is the cause of faith. Head IV does the same:

Article 10. But that others who are called by the gospel, obey the call, and are converted, is not to be ascribed to the proper exercise of free will, whereby one distinguishes himself above others, equally furnished with grace sufficient for faith and conversions, as the proud heresy of Pelagius maintains; but *it must be wholly ascribed to God, who as He has chosen His own from eternity in Christ, so He confers upon them faith and repentance*, rescues them from the power of darkness, and translates them into the kingdom of His own Son [emphasis added].

In Head IV, the Canons explain the marvelous saving work of God under the broad term "conversion." Included in this is regeneration and faith. Article 11 gives an overview of God's work in His elect:

But when God accomplishes His good pleasure in the elect, or works in them true conversion, He not only causes the gospel to be externally preached to them, and powerfully illumines their minds by His Holy Spirit, that they may rightly understand and discern the things of the Spirit of God; but by the efficacy of the same regenerating Spirit, pervades the inmost recesses of the man; He opens the

1 "The Main Points of the Doctrine of the Covenant," p. 13 (a speech given by Dr. K. Schilder August 31, 1944, translated in 1992 by T. van Laar).

closed, and softens the hardened heart, and circumcises that which was uncircumcised, infuses new qualities into the will, which though heretofore dead, He quickens; from being evil, disobedient, and refractory, He renders it good, obedient, and pliable; actuates and strengthens it, that like a good tree, it may bring forth the fruits of good actions.

All that is required in the dead sinner to produce the fruits of salvation!

Article 12 warns that God works this “in us without our aid.” Then the Canons point out:

But this is in no wise effected merely by the external preaching of the gospel, by moral suasion, or such a mode of operation, that after God has performed His part, it still remains in the power of man to be regenerated or not, to be converted, or to continue unconverted.

On the contrary, “it is evidently a supernatural work, most powerful, and at the same time most delightful, astonishing, mysterious, and ineffable.” And, the result? “All in whose heart God works in this marvelous manner, are certainly, infallibly, and effectually regenerated, and do actually believe.” And this is the marvel of it: “Whereupon the will thus renewed, is not only actuated and influenced by God, but in consequence of this influence, becomes itself active. Wherefore also, *“man is himself rightly said to believe and repent, by virtue of that grace received.”* [Emphasis added.]

Finally in Article 14, the Canons answer the question, In what way is faith a gift of God? First, it rejects some Arminian explanations of how faith could be a gift of God, and yet remain in some way a work of men. “Faith is therefore to be considered as the gift of God, not on account of its being offered by God to man, to be accepted or rejected at his pleasure.” Is faith an external gift offered to all, take it if you want it? No, rather, faith “is in reality conferred, breathed, and infused into him.”

A second possibility taught by the Arminians is that “God bestows the power or ability to believe, and then expects that man should, by the exercise of his own free will, consent to the terms of that salvation, and actually believe in Christ.” That also is rejected by the Canons. And the Canons then state this astounding truth: God “who works in man both to will and to do, and indeed all things in all, produces both the will to believe, and the act of believing also.” The very *act of believing* is God’s work in His elect!

And how can anyone think then—this act of believing is the way that a baptized child will fulfill a condition with God?

Indeed, faith is an instrument that embraces and appropriates Christ. But this is not to be understood as if a dead sinner gets faith, and then reaches out to take salvation that he did not have before. Rather, when

God saves His elect, *part of His saving work is faith*. This is the teaching of Canons II, 8 concerning “all those, and those only, who were from eternity chosen to salvation, and given to Him by the Father; that He should confer upon them faith, which together with all the other saving gifts of the Holy Spirit, He purchased for them by His death.” Faith is one of the “saving gifts of the Holy Spirit” that Christ earned.

With this faith, the saved believer embraces Christ and appropriates Him personally. He has the certain knowledge and hearty confidence that Christ is his personal Savior. This is no condition. Rather, it is God fulfilling His promise made to the elect child at baptism. “I establish my everlasting covenant with you. You are washed in the blood of Christ. The Spirit will work faith in you, even the act of believing. You belong to me.” And God keeps His promise infallibly.

However, more can be said about faith and its role in salvation.

Herman Hoeksema wrote an eleven-part series in 1949-50 entitled “As to Conditions.” In this marvelous series, he demonstrated that faith is not and cannot be a condition. He dealt with many aspects of the discussion, including the question of man’s activity, or responsibility. He wrote:

But, you say, how then about the responsibility of man? Do we not need the term condition to denote that man is a responsible creature? Do we not make man “a stock and block” by laying all emphasis on the truth of election and sovereign grace?

My answer is decidedly: No!

I must say more about this in the future. I am not yet through with my discussion of conditions.

But let me suggest that instead of the Pelagian term “condition” we use the term “in the way of.”

We are saved in the way of faith, in the way of sanctification, in the way of perseverance unto the end.

This term is capable of maintaining both: the absolute sovereignty of God in the work of salvation and the responsibility of man.

But, as I say, about this I must write more in the future.²

Here, Hoeksema, rejecting the notion that faith is a condition in any sense, introduces the expression “in the way of” as a better way to speak of the relation between faith and the blessings of salvation. He promised to write more about this idea of man’s activity and faith. What he wrote in subsequent editorials is clear and therefore helpful and valuable for us yet today, and portions of it will be quoted in the next editorial on the covenant and Dordt.

2 As to Conditions [5], *Standard Bearer*, December 15, 1949 (Vol.26, No.6), 125.



All around us

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

United Methodist Church parties agree to divide

Some details

Christianity Today (CT) reported that the “12.5-million-member UMC has been in a standoff over LGBT issues for decades, culminating in a vote in favor of its traditional position against same-sex marriage and gay clergy during a special session last year. As a result, some left the UMC, some continued to defy the UMC positions outright, and some challenged the legality of the vote in the denomination’s court—ultimately putting the question of how to move forward before the delegation once again in 2020.” There is a biblical way to deal with those who hold positions that are contrary to the Bible and who transgress the 5th commandment by rebelling against the decisions of the church. But the UMC has chosen a political approach to their division rather than a biblical one.

The CT report explains the intention of the denomination to implement a “Protocol of Reconciliation and Grace Through Separation.” This Protocol, “the result of months of negotiation...creates a quick, ‘clean break’ for a new, traditionalist denomination that has yet to be created but will receive a \$25 million sum at its inception.” As a political document the Protocol includes a “moratorium” on charges of sin against those who are guilty of sin related to homosexuality. I say this is a political proposal because I have yet to find any biblical support for a moratorium on exercising Christian discipline for impenitent sin. For more on the details on the Protocol I leave it to the interested reader to look up the CT article.¹

A worthwhile analysis

Writing for *First Things*, Carl R. Trueman provided an insightful critical analysis of the division in the UMC, with the criticism aimed especially at the so-called conservatives who desire this supposedly amicable split. His article, “A Strange Split in the UMC,” follows:

The United Methodist Church has decided to divide over the issue of same-sex marriage. This is not surprising, given the longstanding disagreements on this matter that have afflicted the denomination. The UMC has arranged the separation in a remarkably civil way: The proposed solution, formulated by a committee of members drawn from both sides of the debate, will (hopefully) avoid the rancor and distress and disputes about properties and pensions that have marked other such denominational splits in recent times.

It is odd, however, that this is the issue that has produced the division. Same-sex marriage has not become plausible or imperative by virtue of its own merits. It has only become plausible as a function of much wider and deeper shifts within society’s understanding of the self. The sexual revolution was always but a symptom of the selfhood revolution whereby expressive individualism came to dominate how our culture understands the purpose of life. And that means that any church where same-sex marriage is significant enough to cause divisive debate is a church where significant parties have already absorbed the spirit of the age regarding personhood, love, sex, and sexuality—whether intentionally or by cultural osmosis. And that in turn means it is a church where significant parties have already abandoned basic Christian anthropology and an orthodox understanding of biblical authority.

The United Methodist Church has been a theater for numerous battles over basic orthodoxy. At the *Juicy Ecumenism*² blog, Mark Tooley has pointed out the church’s failure to deal with Bishop Joseph Sprague, who denied Christ’s eternal deity and bodily resurrection. One UMC church hosted a conference where the resurrection was denied.³ And a pungent response⁴

1 <https://www.christianitytoday.com/news/2020/january/united-methodist-church-umc-plan-protocol-split-plan.html>.

2 In Trueman’s online article the words ‘Juicy Ecumenism’ link to this website: <https://juicyecumenism.com/2017/05/19/methodist-bishops-false-doctrine>.

3 In the online article the words ‘the resurrection was denied’ link to the website at: <https://juicyecumenism.com/2014/04/10/dc-methodists-host-resurrection-denying-seminar-on-historical-jesus>.

4 The words ‘pungent response’ in the online article link to: <https://thinkfaithfully.blogspot.com/2017/05/mark-tooley-bishop-sprague-ird-and.html>.

to Tooley from a UMC minister indicates that exactly what constitutes orthodoxy and belief in the UMC is disputed even among United Methodists. All this, in a sense, makes a split on an issue like same-sex marriage profoundly odd. Is the definition of marriage more important than the resurrection? In fact, does not the Christian definition of marriage itself depend upon Christology, of which the resurrection is a central component? Therein lies the risk: To fight over same-sex marriage while tolerating heresy on foundational doctrines is to make oneself vulnerable to the charge of being motivated less by fidelity to the Christian faith and more by homophobia. I am not saying that the UMC conservatives are motivated by homophobia, of course; but I am saying that, after so much else has been allowed to pass without division, making same-sex marriage the hill upon which to die does render such an accusation plausible.

This touches on two further difficulties Christians face on the issue of same-sex marriage. First, there is the broad cultural problem: This issue cannot be isolated from the much deeper cultural pathologies that have formed over many years. The helpful exchange⁵ between Rod Dreher and Robert P. George last week highlighted the various problems traditionalists face on this issue, particularly the cowardice that has characterized too many.

But courage is not enough. We live in a time and place where the foundational issues upon which same-sex marriage rests were decided long ago. For my generation, the aesthetic argument that kept my parents' generation in check—homosexuality as disgusting—was barely plausible. For the rising generation, with taste buds shaped by everything from sitcoms to Internet pornography, this aesthetic argument is as ridiculous as that which (to use Freud's famous example) makes a man find kissing a woman to be delightful but using her toothbrush to be disgusting. And the forces that have made morality a function of aesthetics, and rendered traditional Christianity distasteful, are too pervasive to allow for much hope that the situation can be changed for the better within the next few decades at least. A revolution so long in the making and so comprehensive in scope cannot be undone without an equally chronic counter-turn.

Second, and returning to the UMC split, the Christian church cannot expect its rising generation of young people to hold the line on traditional sexual ethics and marriage if that generation is not properly catechized in the basics of the faith. Same-sex marriage is not really the issue. Thorough catechesis is. At the risk of tautology, if Christian marriage makes sense, it only makes sense within the framework of Christianity, on the basis of an ethics rooted in Christian doctrine. There

is no point in dividing a denomination or congregation over same-sex marriage if that division is not driven by a deeper commitment to creedal Christianity.

Sadly, a widespread sin

Trueman's charge that conservatives in the UMC are guilty of "tolerating heresy on foundational doctrines" only to draw a line in the sand when it comes to issues such as homosexuality sadly applies to conservatives in many other denominations. Errors regarding God (that He loves everyone), Christ (that He offers to save all), God's work of creation (that it can be harmonized with evolutionism), marriage (tolerating divorce for any reason), and about the sufficiency of Scripture (its claims have to be tested by science/general revelation) prevail. There may be much complaining and hand wringing, but little call for discipline, and though a few "radicals" may leave, most are content to stay and do nothing. Often for many decades(!) people are allowed to promote views on homosexuality or women in ecclesiastical office that are supposedly so odious to the conservatives. But these views are not odious enough to demand and seek to address these deviations in a *biblical* manner through Christian discipline. It is fine to be part of the federation and fellowship of those who promote these deviant views for decades. But let a decision be made that actually approves women in office or homosexuality, well then, it is time for a division! Now you go your way, and we will go our way, and civilly if you please.

This is not merely strange, but sinful. It is sinful to tolerate the evil of homosexuality and then seek an amicable split without doing the hard work of seeking the repentance of those who are guilty of transgressing the truth of God's Word. It is sinful to tolerate and do nothing to reprimand those who hold twisted views about God, about Christ, about man, and about the Bible that lead up to a sinful acceptance of homosexuality. Perhaps there does come a point where the evils have spread so much that the only thing to do is to separate, but not by making political deals that ignore the issues of biblical doctrine and morality in order to preserve some earthly property. What is needed is shame, repentance, a heart-felt remorse for sinful toleration of deviation from God's Word. If a new "conservative" denomination forms without going to the foundations of the Christian faith and determining that it will not tolerate deviations from them, then it is doomed to fall again.

⁵ In the online article the word 'exchange' links to: <https://www.thepublicdiscourse.com/2020/01/59369>.



Search the Scriptures

Rev. Thomas Miersma, minister emeritus in the Protestant Reformed Churches

Going about our calling

Ecclesiastes 11:1-6

The need for discernment over against the folly of sin having been addressed, the text now turns to our going about our calling in the labor and activity of this life. In harmony with the boundaries God has set in our life and His government over all undertakings, we are to labor conscious of our dependence upon Him in every outcome.

Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days. Give a portion to seven, and also to eight; for thou knowest not what evil shall be upon the earth (Eccl. 11:1, 2).

Verse 1 contains a principle that joins together the activity of sending forth and the return or finding of it as its fruit. It has been used as a legitimate inference for both Christian giving and the sending forth of the preaching of the Word and its fruit. Its immediate reference is more concretely to our labor and enterprise.

The casting or sending forth under the figure of sending forth bread upon the waters in verse 1 has caused some difficulty. The figure has been understood of sowing an inundated field, while yet under water, with a view to the eventual springing of the grain as the water recedes. While this makes some sense in the context of sowing in verse 4, it does not fit with verse 2, which continues the thought of verse 1. Furthermore, the farming technique is one used in Egypt with the annual flooding of the Nile, not in Canaan which depended on the falling of the rain.

Rather, we should turn to Solomon's history. "And king Solomon made a navy of ships in Ezion-geber, which is beside Eloth, on the shore of the Red sea, in the land of Edom. And Hiram sent in the navy his servants, shipman that had knowledge of the sea, with the servants of Solomon. And they came to Ophir, and fetched from thence gold, four hundred and twenty talents, and brought it to king Solomon" (I Kings 9:26-28). "For the king had at sea a navy of Tharshish with the navy of Hiram: once in three years came the navy of Tharshish, bringing gold, and silver, ivory, and

apes, and peacocks" (I Kings 10:22; see also I Kings 10:11, 12; II Chron. 9:21). While Tharshish was originally a place name for the area near Gibraltar in the Mediterranean, it became a term for a large cargo ship of which Solomon had a large fleet. Solomon's ships were sailing out of a port on the Red Sea along the coast of Africa obtaining gold and ivory. The Word of God also references bringing almug trees, a form of sandalwood, for making pillars and instruments (I Kings 10:11, 12), and peacocks. Both of these are native to India, so that Solomon's navy was sailing across the Arabian Sea on extended three-year voyages both to Africa and India. (See also the history of Jehoshaphat, II Chron. 20:35-37.)

The figure, then, is of Solomon's commercial enterprises, sending forth upon the surface or face of the waters his ships, selling grain in exchange for the riches that were brought back. Not all of Solomon's wealth came in the form of gifts; rather, most of it came in the form of trade and commerce. This makes the concrete reference in verse 1 of sending and returning clear. It also makes the next verse clear, "Give a portion to seven, and also to eight; for thou knowest not what evil shall be upon the earth" (Eccl. 11:2).

The calling, therefore, to the believer is to go about his work, to engage in enterprise, building a business, undertaking the affairs of life in buying and selling. He is not to be timid, fearful, or slothful, but industrious and diligent. Solomon has in view the young man building a business or career, who labors in the fear of God. But that fear of God also guards him from the pride of the world, which thinks its life is in its own hand. Therefore he counsels prudence: you do not know "what evil shall be upon the earth." The times and seasons of life are in the hand of God, "...if the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that" (James 4:15). "Give a portion to seven and also to eight," is the way of wisdom and prudence. Not every enterprise will succeed; the world lies under the effects of the Fall and the curse. Solomon's ships could be driven by storms, attacked on a hostile coast, or miscarry in

some form. Solomon did not put all his grain in one ship. The calling to undertake our labor is given us. It is limited by the fact that we do not know the outcome, which is in the hand of God. The qualification, “for thou shalt find it after many days,” makes it clear that the fruit of our enterprise or undertaking will not always be immediately apparent. As the future is unknown to us, prudence is called for; but beyond that we are to leave it in the Lord’s hand.

If the clouds be full of rain, they empty themselves upon the earth: and if a tree fall toward the south, or toward the north, in the place where the tree falleth, there it shall be (Ecc. 11:3).

This consideration is further underscored. A cloud full of rain will empty itself. This we can discern. While prudence takes note of these facts, it is limited. When that rain will fall, exactly where or on what field, and how much rain there will be, all of these things are unknown to us. The principles inherent in the creation we can discern in a limited way, as cause and effect. But the time and seasons of them are not ours to determine or judge. This is not a fatalism that shrugs its shoulders, but a recognition of our limitation as creatures under the hand of God, who works all things for good to His people.

He is God, and under His dominion where the tree falls, south or north, there it shall be. “O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps” (Jer. 10:23). Man’s life is circumscribed by the power and government of God his Creator. God governs all things. This calls us not only to a humble recognition of His sovereignty, but also to a childlike trust in His provision in our labor and activity.

He that observeth the wind shall not sow; and he that regardeth the clouds shall not reap (Eccl. 11:4).

The sinful pride of man wants to be in control. But he is not in control, not of the weather nor of the climate. Man wants to figure out the future, as if it were his to discern and judge. But it is not so. He wants to cover all eventualities, to protect himself, to make the outcome according to his will. He is not able to do this. Prudence in the fear of God does not lead to timid paralysis but a just discernment in activity. We are called to sow and reap and to labor with prayer, for “...neither our care nor industry, nor even Thy gifts, can profit us without Thy blessing...” (Heidelberg Catechism, Lord’s Day 50, Q&A 125).

As thou knowest not what is the way of the spirit,

nor how the bones do grow in the womb of her that is with child: even so thou knowest not the works of God who maketh all (Eccl. 11:5).

The knowledge of man is a finite knowledge; the text now underscores this fact. While the spirit can be the human spirit of a child growing in the womb physically, it is perhaps better to take it here as “wind,” which is the basic meaning of the word. The movements of the wind are unseen except in their effect. The growth of a child likewise was completely hidden in the womb in an era when there was no ultrasound. Even now, knowing how the bones grow, life in the womb is still an unseen wonder. Man’s understanding, not just his power and control, are limited. God’s government, on the other hand, is almighty. He works all things under the sun according to His eternal counsel and wisdom. Not a sparrow can fall to the ground nor a hair of our head but by the will and wisdom of God. He maketh all, that is, He does all His good pleasure, realizing His counsel and purpose in and through all things and bringing to pass all things under the sun. Before that majesty of God, man’s limited knowledge and understanding,

which has the emphasis here, are that of a creature of the dust. Man is finite, dependent; the works of God are beyond our comprehension. We are to walk in what God has revealed in His Word for our understanding.

That is to be a walk by faith and trust in our heavenly Father’s wisdom and disposition of all things. The fool in rebellion strives with this. It is by grace that we walk in the fear of God.

Hence the conclusion to which the Word of God brings us:

In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand: for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good (Eccl. 11:6).

God’s provision and blessing are the real fountain of that which is good for us. He knows what we do not. Going about our work and calling in the fear of God, we may rest, for it is right. This is not pessimism, but the way of peace in contentment.

God governs all things. This calls us not only to a humble recognition of His sovereignty, but also to a childlike trust in His provision in our labor and activity.



Pillar and ground of truth

Prof. Douglas Kuiper, professor of Church History and New Testament in the Protestant Reformed Theological Seminary

The Council of Nicea (AD 325): The meeting of the council

The last article stated that Arius had asserted that Christ was not eternal and, therefore, not God. Alexander insisted He was. In 324, Emperor Constantine, not understanding the theological issue, chided these men for discussing such subtle and unprofitable questions, and asked them to forgive each other.¹ When this plea did not have its desired effect, Constantine called the Council of Nicea. Perhaps his motivation was political: he desired a unified empire, and thought that a unified church would promote a unified empire.

So in 325, from late May to late July, about 300 bishops met in Nicea. Most of the bishops were from the eastern part of the empire; only seven were from Italy or west of Italy. Each bishop took several elders and deacons with him. Constantine had summoned them all and paid for their expenses.

To open the council, the emperor entered in a state-ly procession, sat on a golden throne, and gave a lofty speech. Then Constantine—an unbaptized man (converted from paganism twelve years earlier by what he thought was a sign from God in the sky) and political head of the civilized world—presided at the first ecumenical Christian council. When the civil government stopped *persecuting* the church (Constantine had put an end to that over a decade earlier), it began *controlling* the church.

Initially, the council was divided into three factions: those siding with Arius, those siding with Alexander, and a middle group. The Arians first proposed a creed defending their view. The council quickly rejected this proposal.

Next, the middle group proposed a creed that taught that Christ had a divine nature but did not say that Christ was of the same *essence* with the Father. That the Arians were ready to sign this creed indicated to the Alexandrian group that the creed was not specific enough, and that adopting it would not help

end the controversy. The Alexandrians insisted on the inclusion of the word *homoousian*, meaning “of the *same* essence.” Even *homoiousian*, with only one added letter, would not suffice, for it meant “of a *similar* essence.” One letter can make the difference between truth and falsehood. Constantine agreed with the Alexandrians.

In the end, the council adopted the Nicene Creed—a first version of, but not exactly identical to, what we today know as the Nicene Creed. The creed included the assertion that Jesus Christ is “God of God, Light of Light, true God of true God, begotten, not made, being of one essence with the Father.” Although it asserted faith in the Holy Spirit, it said nothing more about the person or work of the Spirit. And it concluded with these words:

And those that say, ‘there was when he was not,’
and ‘before he was begotten he was not,’
and that ‘He came into being from what-is-not,’

Or those who allege, that the son of God is
‘Of another substance or essence’
or ‘created,’
or ‘changeable,’
or ‘alterable,’

these the Catholic and Apostolic Church anathematizes.²

This was the first ecumenical creed of the Christian church. The delegates signed it, and those who refused to sign it were banished. The church, with the help of the emperor, had pronounced Arianism a heresy, and defended the deity of Christ.

The controversy was not entirely over; the creed itself would be revised several decades later. The next article, however, will not continue this history yet; rather, it will note other decisions of the Council of Nicea.

1 *A New Eusebius: Documents Illustrating the History of the Church to AD 337*, ed. J. Stevenson, 2nd revised ed. (London: SPCK, 1987), 332-334.

2 All quotes from the original version of the Nicene Creed are from *Documents of the Christian Church*, ed. Henry Bettensen and Chris Maunder, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 27-28.



When thou sittest in thine house

Rev. Arie denHartog, minister emeritus in the Protestant Reformed Churches

Teaching our children to be involved in the life and activities of the church

The baptism of our covenant children teaches us that they are from birth members of Christ's church. As our children grow up in our covenant homes, we must teach them the reality and blessing of this truth.

The central calling of the church is performed when she gathers every Lord's day in the sanctuary of God for worship. In our homes we must instruct our children concerning this by our word and example, and even by our spiritual attitudes. Our children must grow up having a pattern of true godliness that orders the priority and the practice of the most important things in their lives.

When we go to church, we unite our hearts together with our fellow saints to offer the sacrifices of thanksgiving and praise to our God. We lead our children by the hand when they are still very young to come to the service with us.

The proper instruction of our children includes that we exhort them to "enter into his gates with thanksgiving and into his courts with praise." By our admonition and the example of our lives we teach our covenant children that the worship of the Lord in His house should have highest priority in our lives. The worship of the God of our salvation should be with joy and praise and with thanksgiving in our hearts.

The worship of God should not be for us a matter of drudgery or mere legalistic necessity, but an activity of joy bursting from hearts of thanksgiving. Because of the sinful nature of our children, they can at times have unholy negative attitudes about sabbath observance and about the need of being reverent and quiet for lengthy periods of time during the worship services. We need to be on guard against any sinful attitudes growing in the hearts of our children.

We must teach our children together with all the church members to be active in the ministry of the gospel that God has given to the church. We teach our children to bow in holy reverence for God with the whole church in consecration to Him.

Family worship in the home trains our children for the service of God in the public worship of God in

church and the proper attitude for this holy activity in their lives. By God's sovereign and gracious election, we are His chosen and peculiar people, called by God to show forth His glorious praises in the world and to walk in the good works He has ordained for us.

The Word of God preached in the worship services is as much for the children and it is for adults. Our children must be taught to listen to the preaching and encouraged to exercise their minds to understand the truth preached in the church.

Our children do not understand many of these things when they are still young, so they must be instructed by their parents in their covenant homes. The purpose of catechism instruction is to prepare our children to be mature and active members of the church when they grow up.

In the public worship service, we must teach our children to join heartily with their fellow saints in prayer with spiritual urgency in their hearts, making petition to God for His blessing and for the welfare of the church we love dearly in our hearts and the glorious cause of the kingdom of God she represents in the world.

In the congregational prayer led by the minister, our children must learn to be engaged in praying together to God with minds and hearts totally focused on Him. The congregational prayer should not become a time for them to daydream and allow their minds to wander to all kinds of worldly things and pleasures. Toys even for our young children should not be brought into the sanctuary. The worship service is a time not for play but for the worship of God, also by our children.

With the prayers of the congregation, our children must learn to pray for one another, and to pray especially for the members of the church who are going through trials of sicknesses, sorrows, and the difficult experience of the death of loved ones. Our children must be taught to love the members of the church, and to rejoice with them that rejoice and to weep with them that weep. In the church the children must learn to be deeply sympathetic to the other members of the church.

In the church our children must be exhorted and commanded to be faithful in the service of God in all of their lives and not just on the Lord's day. In the church on the Lord's day we exercise our calling in the office of believer. In the church we all have the opportunity to exercise the particular gifts that God has given to every member of the church according to the measure of the gift of His grace, to be used for the edifying of the whole body of Christ.

After the worship services, the sermons heard should be discussed with the children. Application of the doctrines of Scripture should be made to the lives not only of the adults but also the children. Much of the calling to make the doctrines preached in the church practical belongs to her members. Children must learn that preaching is not just about abstract doctrine but doctrine that is foundational for strong Christian living and practical for daily godliness.

As our children grow older and increase in their sanctified understanding, they must be impressed in their hearts with the truth that worshiping God on the Lord's day is a solemn duty that they must perform willingly. Our carnal desire is to use the Lord's day merely for doing one's own pleasure and engaging in worldly pleasures, such as watching sports activities or going out for a day of recreation. We are called together with our families to be a separate and holy people. Isaiah 58:13-14 gives some good counsel regarding the proper use of the Lord's day. There is nothing legalistic about this instruction, nor is it only for the Old Testament times. Read this passage with your children, and explain and apply it to their lives.

The guiding spiritual principle of proper Lord's day observance must be that this day is and must be different than the other days of the week. The worship of God is for a separate, holy people called out of the world to prepare them for daily Christian living in the world. There is much for parents to teach their young children in connection with the proper observance of the Lord's day in the house of God.

Young people must not be permitted to stay at home when the church is gathered for worship; they may not neglect the service of God on the Lord's day in their youthful lives. They may not be permitted to develop attitudes of laziness and carelessness regarding the things of the Lord.

The Lord's day is the prime opportunity in the lives of every child of God to be a living part of the communion and fellowship of the body of Christ. Being part of the church and her communion of the saints gives excellent opportunity for our children and young people to choose friends and to forge strong and enduring godly friendships. The youthful members of the church can have such good influence on one another. Good Christian friendship can be very effective in keeping our children from having worldly young people as their closest friends. When such friendships (worldly friendship) are more important than church friends, these will have an evil influence on their lives and sometimes contribute to their leaving the church in the later years of their lives.

Of greatest importance in this aspect of our subject is where and how our children in God's providence find their life's partner to marry. The way of wisdom is for them to find their partner in the sphere of the communion of the saints.

Strong, united marriages arise from this and faithfulness is continued in generations. When the above things are neglected in the lives of our children, there will be very great danger of apostasy in the church. The tragic result of this will be seen when worship services are

attended only by the elderly. Children, and especially young people, are absent. This is a great evil happening in many Reformed churches of our day.

So far, we discussed all of this with particular focus on the worship services on the Lord's day. The true church of Jesus Christ gathers together as the company of believers to confess their faith and to maintain and defend His truth in this world against worldly philosophy and apostasy in the church world in general. As members of the church, we must condemn all errors and warn against the seriousness of apostasy. Our children must be part of this great work of the church in the world for the glory of God and the maintaining of the gospel in the preservation of His true church among us.

Besides the central activities of the church on the Lord's day, the members must continue as the body of Christ with living spiritual reality through the week among her members. The sign of a spiritually healthy church is that her members are engaged together also at times during the regular days of the week between the two Lord's days. We are not members of the church

As our children grow older and increase in their sanctified understanding, they must be impressed in their hearts with the truth that worshiping God on the Lord's Day is a solemn duty that they must perform willingly.

only on the Lord's day. We are members of the church that is the living body of Christ also during the week. As living members of the body of Christ, we should love to gather together and be continually exhorting and encouraging one another. We should lay hold of opportunities to show our love to one another, communicate with one another, and serve one another. It is a sad commentary on the church when Bible study societies and the study groups arranged for the benefit of the church are very poorly attended.

According to the instruction of the inspired apostles the members of the church are to edify one another, building each other up constantly in the faith. This is the teaching of Ephesians 4, where Paul speaks of the exalted Lord of the church giving special offices of prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers. These special ministers of Christ have the calling to equip the members of the church for the work of the ministry. The reference to the work of the ministry is to the activities performed by every member of the church according to the measure of grace given to him for the unity and growing maturity of the whole church. The church in this way must grow up together as the body of Christ to full maturity and manhood.

Then her members will not "be tossed to and fro" by the many winds of false doctrine blowing everywhere in the apostate church world.

It is spiritually healthy for parents and children to attend seminary convocation when possible, to encourage those involved in training ministers of the Word, both for the local church and for the mission field. A few of the young men in the congregation may be inspired to consider the call to the ministry when they are actively engaged in such church activities.

The members of the church must take great interest in these activities. In a Spirit-filled church there are special gatherings in connection with the ordination and sending out of missionaries throughout the world. All the members of the church should have a keen interest in this glorious work and support this work with their attendance at special meetings where this aspect of the work of the church in the world is on the forefront.

In the sphere of the communion of the saints we inspire each other to be living witnesses of the truth also to others. The church often sponsors special meetings to focus on these important callings in the church. All

the activities of the church must have a central spiritual focus and promote the spiritual growth of her members. The world that observes witnessing events advertised and promoted by her must not be confused about the real calling and purpose of the church in the community.

We as parents must encourage our children by word, by our own example, and by our enthusiastic interest. We cannot expect that our children will be actively involved in the life of the church if we do not show ourselves to have zealous interest in her activities. Sometimes the many activities of the church during the week

can make our lives very busy. It is not possible to join every gathering of church members; wisdom and discretion are necessary to make good choices. Family obligations in the home are also important to fulfill.

Performing all this regularly makes the lives of the covenant family very busy. There are times when we must stay home because there is so much work

that must be done in our families, not only for the physical maintaining of the family but also for her spiritual unity. We need not feel guilty about this.

Our homes must encourage on-going and lively interest in the important activities of the church, especially in the local congregation where we have our membership. According to Psalm 122 God commands His blessing among the saints that dwell together in unity and love and encourage each other in various aspects of the spiritual life and activities of the church.

We as parents must encourage our children by word, by our own example, and by our enthusiastic interest. We cannot expect that our children will be actively involved in the life of the church if we do not show ourselves to have zealous interest in her activities.



Strength of youth

Rev. Jon Mahtani, minister-on-loan to CERC in Singapore called by Grandville Protestant Reformed Church

A drinking problem

“Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the spirit of our God. All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.”

I Corinthians 6:9-12

There is a widespread problem in our churches. It is a serious problem that most are aware of but few want to acknowledge. It is not the *only* sin problem among us, but it is a pervasive and severe one. Let us break the strange silence: Alcohol abuse is one of the most minimized but prevalent sins within conservative Reformed churches such as ours.

Here are some common trends: The high school upperclassman drinks undercover and underage in order to fit in with the “lit” crowd. The abstaining student who swore before graduation, “I will never participate in *that*,” finds the extra freedom after high school irresistible. The young adult anticipates his twenty-first birthday as the designated day (with a designated driver, of course) to guzzle booze. Parents are oblivious (sometimes intentionally so), or they shrug their shoulders in indifference saying, “We turned out alright.” The “buzz” becomes the norm but is denied as drunkenness. Young and old know not how to have fun or relax without liquor flowing. Regular is the church-going on Sunday, but just as regular is the party beforehand. The problem is euphemized as a bad habit that we can easily stop whenever we want. We laugh along with the jokes and sing along with the songs that make light of and even glorify a drinking problem. The Reformed man boasts of his doctrine but with the same mouth drinks until he forgets it all. The devil behind the idol

consumes the consumer from the inside out, and along with his spiritual destruction often comes that of his own family.

Three clear sins should sober us. First, young men and women under the age of twenty-one break the fifth commandment by rebelling against the law of the land. Second, there is extreme overindulgence. After a few drinks in one sitting, many cross the line into drunkenness far sooner than they imagine. Contrary to popular opinion, they are drunk far before they lose the ability to walk straight. Third, there is an addiction problem, otherwise known as an idolatry problem. Even if we do not get drunk often, we feel the *need* for a drink after a stressful day. The *dependence* and *desire* that ought to be toward God our souls and bodies feel toward a different god.

Many readers may stubbornly deny that the above is an accurate description of certain trends among us. I boldly insist that it is; denial is often due to the blinding power of sin or our proud naiveté.

Alcohol abuse is flagrant sin. It is true that all sin is serious and all sin deserves eternity in hell. But some sins are worse than others, and I daresay that drunkenness is one of those. It is egregious. What! You didn’t know that? Then you did not read carefully the verse prefacing this article. “Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.” Listed along with homosexual sin (“effeminate” and “abusers of themselves with mankind”) is drunkenness. If you are one who unremorsefully continues in drunkenness, you must know that while you may be known as some highly reputable “PR,” you are not going to heaven.

Now, do not misunderstand; someone who *used to be* an alcohol abuser but has repented (meaning that there is a change of mind leading to a change of life regarding this sin) can be certain of salvation because of

Jesus Christ. “And such *were* [emphasis added] some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the spirit of our God” (I Cor. 6:11). Drunkenness is not the unpardonable sin. However, willful and continuing impenitence is. He who persists unconverted in his drunkenness while imagining that he is in covenant, forgiven, and on the way to heaven will find out differently very soon.

It is not just hell that should be of concern to us. It’s the spiritual health of Christ’s church. We need men—and real men at that—who prove themselves so, not by being able to drink lots of beer but by practicing lots of self-control. “Woe unto them that are mighty to drink wine, and men of strength to mingle strong drink” (Is. 5:22)! We need men qualified to be office-bearers and therefore “not given to wine” (I Tim. 3:3). Just as much, we need godly women who are sober (Titus 2:4) and “faithful in all things” (I Tim. 3:11). We need men and women who together repent of their sin before the cross and hold each other accountable to fight against sin.

What contributes to dead orthodoxy? What contributes to mere formal worship? What contributes to a lack of pastors? What contributes to an increase of complex conflict in family and church? What contributes to many young people exiting a doctrinally sound denomination like ours? Of course, there are other components, but I strongly suggest that alcohol abuse is a far stronger factor than we have been willing to consider. Quickly to disagree and dismiss this diagnosis is to ignore what Scripture frequently indicates to be a problem in the church. Read Isaiah 5:11-25, 28:1-4; Hosea 4:11-19; Joel 1:5; Amos 4:1-3, 6:1-6; Nahum 1:10; Habakkuk 2:15-17. I only echo the warning of the prophets to the Old Testament church.

Alcohol is not an evil. It is a good and lawful gift that we may use. But considering the widespread abuse of it, each of us needs to consider whether it is expedient/beneficial. Paul continues, after saying that drunks will not enter into the kingdom of heaven: “All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful unto me, but I will not be brought under the power of any” (I Cor. 6:12). Instead of being profitable, alcohol is becoming a powerful enticement unto all kinds of sin. Am I willing to abstain from this lawful substance for the spiritual benefit of myself and quite possibly also of those with whom I drink? Unwillingness is evidence that I may have a problem.

The quenching of your thirst comes not by drinking deeply of beer, but by imbibing “the sincere milk of the word” (I Pet. 2:2). Real merriment and rest for your soul come not by spirits with drinking songs, but by the Spirit with psalms (Eph. 5:18-19). You cannot wash away with mind-numbing liquor the guilt that plagues your conscience; only the blood of Christ drunk by the mouth of faith has such power. Our drinking problem is not only that we drink underage, excessively, and idolatrously, but also that we are not drinking what is far more satisfying. Let Reformed people repent of drunkenness and in so doing earnestly partake of the water of life freely (Rev. 22:17).

Note: Let all beware of self-righteousness. If the reader is truly not someone who personally struggles with the sin of drunkenness, it would do him well to repent of his abuse and/or idolatry of other things such as cigarettes, drugs, caffeine, food, sports, screens and devices, essential oils, video games, shopping, etc. But God forbid that the abuser of alcohol, in seeing the sins of others also exposed, minimizes his own wickedness and need of repentance.



Sounding out the Word

Rev. Carl Haak, pastor of Georgetown Protestant Reformed Church in Hudsonville, Michigan and radio pastor for the Reformed Witness Hour, on which this message was aired (March 1, 1999)

The cup our Savior drank

Of all the truths of the sufferings of Jesus Christ there is none so dear as the truth that He suffered voluntarily. He was not dragged to the cross against His will.

He did not endure His suffering as a passive victim, reluctantly, with cold resignation. But He went to the cross and endured His suffering willingly, zealously, and voluntarily.

“The Lord GOD hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back. I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting” (Is. 50:5, 6). “No man taketh it (my life) from me, but I lay it down of myself” (John 10:18). “I lay down my life for the sheep” (John 10:15).

That willingness of Jesus Christ to go to the cross was motivated by His eternal love for us: “the Son of God who loved me, and gave himself for me” (Gal. 2:20). Because He loved His children, given to Him of the Father, with an everlasting love, and because that love is the expression of the sovereign and eternal love of God—for this He gave Himself for us. “Having loved his own...he loved them unto the end” (John 13:1).

Even more amazing and wonderful, the voluntary suffering of our Lord Jesus Christ appears when we see that He knew in precise detail all the suffering that was to come to Him. He did not step into something of which He had no knowledge. He did not go upon a path where He did not know how it would end or how deep or how awful or how agonizing it would be. The suffering that the Father had prepared for Him was not a vague, fuzzy, indiscernible mass in the future. But He knew. He knew exactly its depths and its extent, even down to the suffering of the curse and the wrath of God against our sins on the cross during the three hours of darkness.

Love may prompt a man to volunteer to put himself in the place of another, only to have him say, “Had I known all that was involved, I would never have been so willing.” Christ knew. He knew how unworthy we were. And He knew what He must suffer.

Scripture presents this truth to us in a figure of speech, in the figure of a cup that He willingly drank. All the sufferings necessary to make full payment for our sins were poured into a cup that the Father presented to His Son, the Son of God, who knew what was in that cup and who loved me, drank the cup, and then dashed the empty cup on the ground before the cross.

In Matthew 26:42 we read: “O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done.” And John 18:11, “The cup that my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?” These were the words that He spoke while in the Garden of Gethsemane hours before the cross. There in the Garden of Gethsemane He saw a cup that the Father had extended before Him, a cup that He must drink.

What was in that cup? In general, the idea is very clear. A cup is a vessel filled with liquid that one drinks. This was the cup given to Him of the Father. We read in Psalm 75:8, “For in the hand of the LORD there is a cup,

and the wine is red; it is full of mixture; and he poureth out of the same: but the dregs thereof, all the wicked of the earth shall wring them out, and drink them.” We may say that the cup held before Jesus was the full measure of the suffering God had set out as the way of payment, or atonement, for the sins of His people. These sufferings had been assigned to Jesus, sufferings that would culminate in the cross.

The Bible makes plain that the cross was not simply an act of injustice on the part of men. It was not simply an example of what awaits men if they do not repent. But the cross was substitutionary suffering. Jesus Christ suffered in the place of the people given to Him of His Father. And He suffered what they deserved. It was God’s Son in our flesh, standing in the place of God’s elect out of the earth, standing in the place of what they deserved as sinners who had broken His law. The cup that the Father presented to His Son was filled with the lava of God’s holy wrath against our sins, the measure of suffering owed to us who have sinned against the God of heaven. And to receive that cup meant for Christ that He must assume our place before God’s justice, and answer in His own body upon the cross by enduring the burning and holy vengeance of the wrath of God owed against our sins. Christ knew of this cup.

The Garden of Gethsemane was not the first time that He learned of its existence. He had said to His disciples in Matthew 20:22, “Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? They say unto him, We are able.” For this purpose Jesus came into the world. It was a sign to Him. But now, in Gethsemane, Jesus comes to the moment when He must actually drink that cup. The hour had come. The full horrors of sin and guilt are now presented to Him. He is under the shadow of the cross.

In many ways Gethsemane gives us a deep insight into the agonies that Christ is going to suffer upon the cross. While on the cross, Jesus is going to speak seven times. Only one time did His words have direct reference to the personal agony that He carried as He bore the penalty for our sins. That was the fourth time, when He said: “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” He gives there a direct inlet into the deepest agony of His soul. Gethsemane reveals the personal agony of Christ as He stands in our place and prays about the cup: “O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done.”

We must understand that Jesus Christ was not hallucinating. He was not seized by a figment of His imagination. He was coming under the complete realization in His soul of what it would mean to stand before the

bar of God's justice representing the multitude which no man can number, the elect of God from every nation, tongue, race, and age.

That cup that He must drink is further described in Revelation 14:9, 10: "If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb." It is the picture of the cup of God's wrath unmixed with mercy or pity, poured out upon Him. It was this cup that was presented to Christ, the cup all the elect would have to drink personally if Christ did not drink it in their place. A cup composed of all the elements that the righteousness and justice of God demanded as He beheld the sins of God's people. Those sins were imputed or reckoned or given over unto Christ, the Lamb of God, so that the cup that He must drink is the undiluted wrath of God against the sins of God's people, the cup which began to be filled in Adam, his original sin, and is still being filled with every sin you and I commit, filled with the sins of all of God's elect, the burning lava of God's holiness against their sins.

What was Jesus to do with that cup? He was to drink it. He was to drain it until empty and not an ounce left within.

It is clear that when the cup was presented to Him in the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus saw that His calling was to drink it. He said, "The cup that my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" He said that to Peter who was standing at that moment in His way.

Now, when you drink something, say a glass of water, and you empty it, you ingest it, you internalize it, so that it becomes part of yourself. The Father presented the cup to His Son, not simply to look at, not to admire the holiness of God reflected in it, not only to stagger at its horrors as He did; but God presented the cup to Christ for this purpose: to drink it. It cannot pass away from Him except He drink it, ingest it into His soul. As water is poured down into your stomach, so Christ must take to Himself the undiluted wrath of God against our sin so as to bear it away.

The Lord showed His aversion to this cup. In verse 39 of Matthew 26 He says, "O my Father, if it be possi-

ble, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt." He recoiled at the prospect of drinking it. We might ask, "Was that right?" Three times, in fact, He prayed in Gethsemane that it might be removed from Him. He asked whether there might be another way, whether the cup of wrath might in some other way be drained than by His having to drink it. He wrestles with this. He wrestles in prayer so intense that He fell upon His face on the cold ground and sweat great drops of blood. Was that right?

Beloved in the Lord Jesus Christ, not only was that right of Jesus, but it would have been the grossest impiety, the grossest hardness, the grossest callousness to look into that cup with anything other than aversion. The aversion, you understand, is not an unwillingness to save us. His reluctance is not that He is reluctant to obey the Father. He is not questioning the will of the Almighty. The aversion is to the horror of God's wrath against sin! "Who knoweth the power of thine anger? even according to thy fear, so is thy wrath" (Ps.

90:11). Who knows God's wrath so that he can have an appropriate fear of it? Who has the proper regard for the wrath of God? You see, sin has crusted us. Sin has blinded us so we do not see what sin deserves. We do not fear the wrath of God as we ought. We are like a child who uses a stick of dynamite as a drum stick, out of ignorance.

But Christ is sinless. His holy nature is exposed to that divine fury. He does know the power of God's wrath. He can anticipate its horrors. And the anticipation of it almost crushes the life out of Him. He does not ignore sin; He does not downplay the reality of divine vengeance and justice. He has no careless disregard for divine holiness. He looked into eternal burnings.

But there was something greater to Him, something greater even than the dread of God's holy wrath. And that was our salvation. The great thing for Him was that He had come to do the will of the Father: not My will, He prays, but Thine be done. "Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God" (Ps. 40:7, 8). My concern is to do Thy will. Not only passively by having Thy will performed upon Me, but My concern is actively to perform that will of God. I am resolved to do Thy will. I will drink the cup dry.

Those sins were imputed or reckoned or given over unto Christ, the Lamb of God, so that the cup that He must drink is the undiluted wrath of God against the sins of God's people, the cup which began to be filled in Adam, his original sin, and is still being filled with every sin you and I commit, filled with the sins of all of God's elect, the burning lava of God's holiness against their sins.

That means that the anguish He actually endured, especially during the three hours of darkness on the cross, did not exceed what He saw in the Garden of Gethsemane. In the Garden He saw the cup. He peered over its brim. He smelled its substance. It caused Him to fall to His knees. On the cross He received the cup. He drank it all. During the three hours of darkness He drank and drank and drank until in the agony of His soul He burst out: “My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?” He drained the cup.

There on the cross the eternal flames and burnings earned by our sins were quenched by the Son of God in our place, quenched by the Son of God drinking it, taking it to Himself. He drank the cup dry. It is finished, He cried out!

Then they offered Him the sponge filled with vinegar. And He drank that vinegar dry. He sucked it all up. He drank the cup of fury dry, every little ounce of it until the cup was empty. Then the cup, being empty, may be smashed at the foot of the cross. For that cup no longer exists for the people of God. That cup cannot be refilled. It is not only empty, it is broken at the foot of the cross!

What a wonderful word. It is a very sobering word. When you begin to view your sins in the light of the sufferings of Jesus Christ, and when you look into the cup that caused Him to be sore amazed, can you talk then about little sins? Can you look into the cup of His sufferings, the very sight of which caused Him to stagger to His knees in intense agony, and can you talk then of *little* sins? A little compromise, a little falling out between husband and wife, a little spat, a little look of lust. You say, “Well, we go so far but we don’t go all the way.” A little desire of covetousness, a little lie, a little pride, a little vanity? Here is the true estimation of your and my sin that we readily minimize and justify and overlook. You want to know what sin is? Look into the cup! That is what our sins deserve! Bring the cup He drank before you and see if you can talk yourself into the idea of little sins.

Can you look at the cup He drank and minimize the judgment and wrath of God against sin? If the sinless Son of God was in an agony when He considered the content of the cup of God’s wrath, if the pure Son of God cried out, “My God, My God, why hast Thou for-

saken Me?” as He drank the last dregs of the cup of God’s wrath, then what is it going to be for a sinful man or woman, a boy or girl, to fall into the hands of the living God unrepentant and unbelieving and die in sin? Do you live now in the pleasures of sin? What will it be when the almighty and holy God presses to such a person’s lips the cup of wrath that impenitent sinners shall receive from His hand? I call you to flee this wrath. Repent! Do not think that you are up to the challenge of facing the holy God. Repent.

This is a wonderful word of comfort to the people of God. Our death and the curse were in that cup. It was full for Him, but it is empty for us. “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus” (Romans 8:1).

Child of God, have you come to the settled conviction that whatever chastisement the Father deems necessary to bring to you, that there is no wrath of God in it? Whatever is necessary of God’s dark providences to make you to know what sin remains in you and to bring you to repentance, do you know that there is no wrath of God in His dealings with you? It was extinguished. It was exhausted. It was finished in Christ. Not a drop of

it is left. The cup has been drained and then dashed in shivers at the foot of the cross. We may make bold to say that the conscience of God is satisfied in the draining of the cup by His Son. God has a conscience, a very scrupulous conscience. His conscience is satisfied. He beholds His Son obediently drinking all the liquid of that cup and He thunders His holy “Amen,” when Christ

Child of God, have you come to the settled conviction that whatever chastisement the Father deems necessary to bring to you, that there is no wrath of God in it? Whatever is necessary of God’s dark providences to make you to know what sin remains in you and to bring you to repentance, do you know that there is no wrath of God in His dealings with you? It was extinguished. It was exhausted. It was finished in Christ. Not a drop of it is left. The cup has been drained and then dashed in shivers at the foot of the cross.

says, “It is finished.” All the wrath which we deserved has been taken away.

And now our cup is full. He has made a new cup for us. “I will take the cup of salvation and call upon the name of the Lord” (Psalm 116). His cup was abandonment and curse. Our cup: blessing! The cup of blessing. Even though God’s holy eye still sees the vileness of our sin, yet in Christ there is no condemnation. Let us rejoice in this consolation: the cup He drank is empty. It is replaced with the cup of salvation which is full. He swallowed the fury of the holy wrath of God against my sins so that I might be filled with the fullness of salvation. He drank it willingly, completely, all of it.

To God be all the praise!



Special article

Rev. Angus Stewart, pastor of the Covenant Protestant Reformed Church in Ballymena, Northern Ireland

Summer 2020 BRF conference: Union with Christ and fellowship with saints

Theme and day trips

Previous British Reformed Fellowship (BRF) family conferences have had some wonderful themes, but “Union with Christ,” the subject in July 2020 in Northern Ireland, is perhaps the most appealing. The New Testament is replete with references to our being “in Christ” and His being “in” us. Explicitly combining both concepts, I John 4:13 states: “Hereby know we that we dwell *in him*, and he *in us*, because he hath given us of his Spirit.”

Union with Christ in Reformed theology, according to Heinrich Hepppe, is “a real, wholesale, spiritual and indissoluble union of the person of the elect with...the Redeemer.... The implanting of the elect into Christ is thus the beginning of all appropriation of salvation, of all fellowship in salvation and in glory.”

Our two main speakers, Prof. David Engelsma and Rev. Andrew Lanning, will open up and develop our glorious subject in six addresses. John William Perkins, an Englishman with degrees involving history, theology, and education, will give the special lecture on “Union with the Free Will of Christ in the English Puritans.” In a speech and a sermon, Revs. Martyn McGeown and Angus Stewart are to flesh out other aspects of our mystical union with the Lord Jesus.

Our first day trip will include an 800-year-old Norman Castle (complete with tour guide); a “magic hill,” which some reckon involves leprechauns; some beautiful scenery embracing lakes, mountains, and the coast; and an impressive monument to, and a wide-ranging presentation about, the man who burned down the White House!

The second day trip takes us to Dublin. Expanded greatly by the Vikings over a millennium ago, it was briefly the second most populous city in the British Empire, and is now the capital and largest city of the Republic of Ireland. Handel’s *Messiah* received its world premiere in Dublin, which also contains the world-famous Book of Kells.

Attendees and venue

Never have we had so many people book their places at a BRF conference so quickly! Already all the en-suite rooms (those with an adjoining toilet and shower) are gone. We expect this will be our largest and most international conference yet.

People are coming from California, Washington, Colorado, and more, among the western Protestant Reformed Churches. The Michigan congregations of Byron Center, First, Grace, Grandville, Hudsonville, Kalamazoo, Southeast, Southwest, Trinity, and others, will be represented, as will the Canadian and other PR churches, we hope.

As well as from North America and the various parts of the British Isles (England, Wales, Northern Ireland, and the Republic of Ireland), Lord willing, saints will be coming from Turin in Italy, Calcutta in India, Budapest in Hungary, Brisbane in Australia; western Germany, southern Brazil, and northern France; and the islands of Singapore and Sardinia, besides others. It all makes for very interesting fellowship over meals and through the week, as we enjoy our union with Christ and, therefore, with one another.

The conference runs from a Saturday afternoon/evening to the morning of the next Saturday (July 11-18)



and the venue is Castlewellan Castle, Co Down, Northern Ireland. The cost is very reasonable and includes three meals a day. For more about this beautiful Victorian castle, with its secret panel, forest, lake, arboretum, gardens, hedgerow maze, sporting activities, amenities, and more, go on-line (www.castlewellan castle.org).

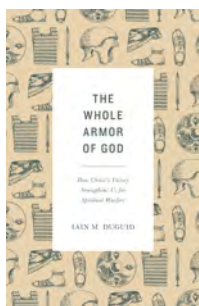
These websites contain more information about the

BRF (www.britishreformed.org) and this summer's conference (<http://brfconference.weebly.com>), including the booking form and contact details for the appropriate booking secretaries: Kristin Crossett (UK), Briana Prins (U.S. and Canada) and Lisa Ong (Singapore). If you want to come, act quickly, for places are filling up fast.



Bring the books...

Mr. Charles Terpstra, member of Faith Protestant Reformed Church in Jenison, Michigan and full-time librarian/registrar/archivist at the Protestant Reformed Theological Seminary



The Whole Armor of God: How Christ's Victory Strengthens Us for Spiritual Warfare, Iain Duguid, Crossway, 2019. 127 pp. Paper, \$14.99.

The Christian life is a battle. We are in a daily struggle against the world, sin, and Satan.

But God didn't leave us to fend for ourselves. He gave us His own armor—armor that Jesus has already worn on our behalf all the way to the cross. The same power that raised Christ from the dead is now at work inside of us. This book unpacks each of the pieces of spiritual armor Paul describes in Ephesians 6, inviting us to take up the armor each day, all while resting in the finished victory of Christ and the assurance that our strength for the battle comes from Him.

With that description, Crossway introduces us to yet another book expounding the Christian's call to arms by taking up God's armor as laid out in Ephesians 6. The value of this book is its solid Reformed, that is, biblical and confessional, perspective, which stands out in its exposition and application of the text. With careful attention to the rest of Scripture about the nature of our spiritual battle and the manner of carrying on the good fight in God's strength, and with plenty of confessional support (the Westminster Confession as well as the Heidelberg Catechism), the author grounds this aspect of

our sanctification in the gospel of God's sovereign grace in Jesus Christ.

Here is just one example:

We are engaged in conflict against an enemy whose strength and skill far outmatch our own. But it is a battle we have been equipped to fight in the sure knowledge that we've been enlisted on the winning side. We take up our cross because our Savior first took up his. We wear God's armor because Jesus wore it first. In the final analysis, standing our ground simply means clinging desperately to Jesus Christ as our only hope of salvation. In that attitude of dependent trust is true victory. For all his power and wiles, Satan has no ability to snatch away those who are trusting in Christ, for they are the children of God, and their Father will not let them go. They have been entrusted by the Father into the safe keeping of the Son and are indwelt by the Spirit himself (p. 22).

The book is enhanced by questions in a "For Further Reflection" section at the end of each chapter. This brief but thorough treatment of Ephesians 6:10-20 would make an excellent read for your spiritual strengthening, as well as an edifying resource for young adult study groups and adult discussion groups.



News from our churches

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

Trivia question

Which Protestant Reformed congregation met in the basement of the local community building for more than ten years following the split of 1953 before reclaiming their church building? Answer to be found in the Church Profile section of this article.

Minister activities

Kalamazoo PRC formed a new trio: Rev. R. Barnhill (Peace PRC, IL), Rev. J. Engelsma (Doon, IA), Rev. C. Spronk (Faith PRC, MI). Rev. Ryan Barnhill received this call.

Cornerstone PRC (Dyer, IN) called Rev. G. Eriks (Hudsonville PRC) to be their next pastor. On February 2 Rev. Eriks announced his decline of this call. We are again thankful that the King of the church grants clear indication of His will in these matters.

Young peoples' activities

Chaperone registration for the 2020 Young People's Convention hosted by Georgetown PRC is now open! The convention is planned for August 10-14, 2020 at the Lake Williamson Camp in Carlinville, IL. To register, go to www.prcconvention.com, and follow the instructions under the Chaperone tab. If you have any questions, send an email to chaperone@prcconvention.com.

Mission activities

Rev. A. Lanning spoke at the annual mission conference in Kolkata, India. The conference theme was, "Ye Are

My Witnesses," and included five speeches and Sunday worship. Rev. Lanning was gone January 21-28.

Also in January, Rev. Carl and Mary Haak and Deane and Donna Wassink visited the PRC of Vellore, India. Their work included meeting with the Tamil and English churches, working with the Grace Foster Home, visiting with members of the church and the consistory of the PRCV, and other work. Rev. Bill and Mary Bruinsma also spent time there from late January into February. Pastor Haak and Rev. Bruinsma provided training for area ministers and students of the PRCV for a five-week period, and hope to follow up these classes with regular Skype classes throughout the coming year.

School activities

The Ladies' Circle of the Northwest Iowa PR School in Doon, IA was busy at work for the school, announcing their regular meeting and inviting new members. They also planned a soup supper and a Winter Pool Party. The school's All-School Program is planned for March 6.

Congregational activities

With the beginning of a new calendar year and with new officebearers being installed, we also note the beginning of a new family visitation season. May God bless this important work of the church and use it for the good of the families and the elders.

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

Church profile—Hull, IA PRC

Compiled by Jan Westra, edited by Brittany Gritters

The history of the Hull Protestant Reformed Church goes back to the beginning of the Protestant Reformed denomination. On March 16, 1925, just a few weeks after a temporary organization called the Protesting Christian Reformed Churches had been organized

in Grand Rapids, Michigan, the Protesting Christian Reformed Church of Hull, Iowa, was organized under the leadership of Rev. H. Hoeksema with a membership of 32 families.

After only five months, a new parsonage was ready

and occupied by Rev. B.J. Danhof. And after only three more months, the congregation met for the first time, on Thanksgiving Day, in the new church building. On December 3, 1925, a dedication service was held in the new church building. The church building, which seated about 350 people, was filled to capacity that evening when Rev. H. Hoeksema addressed the audience in Dutch concerning the events that had taken place in the last year, bringing about the organization of the Protestant churches.

By January 1926, the congregation was reported to have grown to 50 families, but later that year, this new and flourishing congregation was entangled in a controversy. At a congregational meeting held on December 8, 1926, in Hull, Rev. Danhof defended the “Three Points of Common Grace” (adopted by the CRC in 1924) and tried to persuade the congregation to return with him to the Christian Reformed Church (CRC). Rev. Danhof left with all but ten families and returned to the CRC. On February 28, 1927, the church was reorganized as the Hull Protestant Reformed Church with only ten families and five individuals.

The seminary in Grand Rapids was quick to respond to the needs of this struggling, little congregation. Since there were no ministers available, William Verhil, a seminary student at the time, was given a two-year leave of absence from the seminary to help out in Hull until the late summer of 1929, when Rev. C. Hanko graduated from the seminary and took the call extended to him by the Hull congregation. The group was still small, and according to Rev. C. Hanko, met in the basement during the winter months so that they would not have to heat the church auditorium. During the 30s and 40s, the Lord blessed the congregation in Hull with steady growth. Following Rev. Hanko, Rev. Leonard VerMeer and then Rev. Andrew Cammenga served as pastors in Hull.

Again, in the early 1950s, controversy arose in the church. The congregation in Hull suffered a great numerical loss at the time of the split in 1953. At that time, Rev. John DeJong was the pastor of the Hull congregation. During the controversy, Rev. DeJong sided with Rev. H. DeWolf who had been deposed from First Protestant Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan. He and a majority of the congregation claimed the church building. In September 1953, just 25 families remained in Hull as the Protestant Reformed Church. This small group met in the basement of the community building.

Little did they know that this would be their meeting place for more than 10 years. During this time, Rev. J. Heys and Rev. J. Kortering served as her pastors. It was not until 1964 that they again regained possession of the original church building and property through court action.

During the 70s and 80s, the Lord continued to prosper the church in Hull. Rev. J. Kortering and then Rev. M. Hoeksema served as her pastors during the 1970s. In 1979, Rev. R. Cammenga accepted the call to Hull, and in 1985, Rev. R. Moore came to serve as her pastor. During these years, the pews were becoming more and more crowded. It became evident by the early 1990s that a new place of worship was needed. Land was purchased near the grade school, and in the spring of 1993, the congregation met for the first time in her new house of worship.

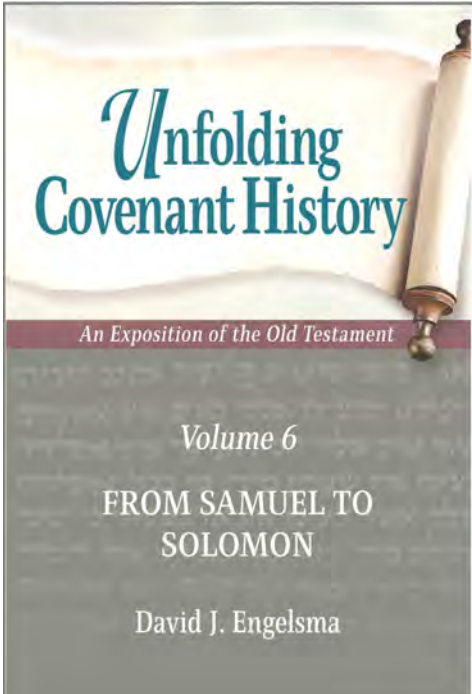
In 2000, the Lord sent Rev. S. Key to labor in Hull. He took up residence in a new parsonage that had been built next to the new church building. Under the pure preaching of His Word, the Lord continued to prosper the congregation with continued growth. In 2005, the new sanctuary was close to being filled to capacity with the 142 families (593 souls) who were now members. Two years later on October 11, 2007, the daughter congregation of Calvary Protestant Reformed Church was organized.

In July 2010, Hull welcomed Rev. James Laning as pastor, and he continues to lead the congregation in the green pastures of God’s Word from week to week. Since 2010, Hull has also been privileged to have emeritus Rev. R. Miersma serve in the congregation.


The Lord in His faithfulness to His people has blessed the congregation in Hull abundantly. May it continue to be our prayer that God will preserve His truth among us and strengthen us spiritually as we look towards the ever more quickly approaching day of the return of our Lord.



Announcements



After a fifteen-year hiatus, and fourteen other published titles, Prof. David J. Engelsma continues the *Unfolding Covenant History* series. The RFPA is happy to report that volume 6: *From Samuel to Solomon* will be available in April and sent to all our book club members!



www.rfpa.org | (616) 457-5970 | mail@rfpa.org

Wedding anniversary

65 years ago, on February 18, the Lord joined two young people together in marriage. We give thanks to God for His faithfulness in caring for our parents, **Otto and Mary Gail Gaastra** through so many years. Our family has been blessed by their model of love and generous care for church and family, standing up for the truth and gently leading and giving good counsel when needed. They have always demonstrated godly wisdom and grace to give guidance in a way that shows not only their love for us but also their love for the Lord. We wish them the Lord's richest blessing in their future years together.

Congratulations from,
Larry and Jana Boersma
Steve and Lori VanBaren
Gary and Mary Gaastra
12 grandchildren (one in glory)
25 great grandchildren

Psalm 128:4-6, "Behold that thus shall the man be blessed that feareth the LORD. The LORD shall bless thee out of Zion; and thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem all the days of thy life. Yea, thou shalt see thy children's children, and peace upon Israel."

Redlands, California

Teacher needed

The Edmonton PR Christian School is in need of a full-time teacher for the 2020–2021 school year. The school will be starting with grades 1–5 minus grade 4. Please contact Gord Tolsma at gr.tolsma@gmail.com / 780-777-5780.

Teacher needed

Loveland Protestant Reformed Christian School (Loveland, CO) will be hiring a full-time elementary teacher for the 2020-2021 school year. All interested applicants should contact the school Administrator BJ Mowery (970) 218.3420 bmowery@lovelandprcs.org or Education Chairman Joe Ophoff (970) 818.6790 joe@scotthomeinspection.com.

Reformed Witness Hour

Rev. R. Kleyn

March 1—"May God's Will Be Done"

Luke 11:2

March 8—"Praying for Daily Bread"

Luke 11:3

March 15—"Forgive Us Our Debts"

Luke 11:4

March 22—"The Prayer of the Christian Soldier"

Luke 11:4

March 29—"Certainty in Prayer"

Matthew 6:13b