

The Standard Bearer

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Glory to God in the highest

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Reprobation—concluded

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“incompatible with
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the godly family in
nurturing aspirants for
the gospel ministry

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A word for the
new year

Rev. Ryan Barnhill



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Meditation

Rev. James Slopsema, minister emeritus in the Protestant Reformed Churches

Glory to God in the highest

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.

Luke 2:13-14

First there was but one angel who appeared to the shepherds in the fields outside of Bethlehem as they kept watch over their flocks by night. Seeing the glory of the Lord shining round about them, the shepherds shrank back in fear. “Fear not,” said the angel, “for I bring you glad tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.” Then the angel proceeded to inform the shepherds of his glad tidings. The promised Savior, the Christ, had been born that very day in the city of David. And the shepherds could see him. They would find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.

And then, suddenly, the heavens were filled with multitudes of angels, praising God for the birth of the Christ child. The angels were obviously filled with great joy. The birth of the Christ child was glad tidings also to them. So overjoyed were they that they could not help but break forth in this doxology of praise to God.

Glory to God in the highest!

And on earth peace, good will toward men!

Let us now consider the beautiful song of praise that reverberated in the heavenly realm!

Glory to God in the highest!

Glory is the revelation of that which is awesome, spectacular, and praiseworthy. The Bible speaks for example of the glory of the sun, of the moon, and of the stars (I Cor. 15:41). How spectacular they are in their heavenly abode! The Bible calls our attention to Solomon who in his great glory was not arrayed like the lily of the field (Matt 6:29).

Overshadowing all the glory of creation is God’s glory. God is the God of all virtue and perfection. Whenever and wherever we see God’s virtues on display, we see His glory.

We see God’s glory in the creation. The glory of the sun, moon, and stars are really God’s glory. The same is true

of the glory of Solomon and the lily of the field. This is because all creation is the handiwork of God that reflects his virtues and perfection. And so the psalmist breaks forth in praise, “The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork” (Ps. 19:1).

But now the angels that appeared to the shepherds outside Bethlehem direct our attention to the little babe born in Bethlehem’s manger. There they saw the glory of God more brilliantly displayed than in any other of God’s handiwork. So much is this true that a multitude of them joyfully broke through the darkness of the night to proclaim to the shepherds God’s glory revealed in Bethlehem’s babe. Never has this happened before. And it will not happen again until the appearance of this same Christ as He comes in His glory from heaven at the end of the ages.

In their joy the angels proclaim, “Glory to God in the highest.”

“The highest” refers not to God as the highest, although this is true, but to the highest region of God’s creation, which is heaven. Heaven is called “the highest” not because of its physical location but rather its exalted nature. Heaven is God’s dwelling place. It is true that God dwells everywhere as the omnipresent God. Yet God dwells in heaven in a very special and unique way as the covenant God, so that it is in heaven that you find the fullness of God’s friendship and fellowship. For that reason, heaven is also the dwelling place of the holy angels. The angels were created as the highest of God’s creatures, whose dwelling place therefore is in heaven.

In response to Jesus’ birth these angels proclaim to the shepherds and to us, “Glory to God in the highest.” The meaning is that in the height of heaven the angels were giving glory to God at the birth of the Christ child. They were acknowledging the glory of God in His birth and giving God the praise and honor due to Him for His glorious work.

And on earth peace!

We may wonder what was so glorious about the birth of Jesus. He was born in squalor. His parents were

poor, so poor that they were not able to make any other arrangements than to find shelter in a filthy cattle shed. And there the Christ child was born. His bed was a manger, a feeding trough for animals. What was so spectacular about this work of God to bring the angels from heaven to proclaim God's glory?

It is through this babe that God will bring peace on earth!

There has been war and strife on the earth from the early history of mankind. It is all the result of sin. Before sin entered into the world there was only peace on earth. Adam and Eve lived in peace with each other and, more importantly, in peace with God. But then they rebelled against God in sin. God punished this sin by placing mankind under the power of sin so that he is filled with hatred, envy, anger, and desire for revenge. This has resulted in war and conflict on every level of man's life. Fallen man is at war with God. Man is filled with bitter hatred against God. Originally, man was the friend of God who served God in love. Now he has become the enemy of God who opposes God in all that he does. This brings upon man the terrible punishment of God that leads to his ultimate ruin. But strife and conflict have also reigned among men. The hatred that fallen man has towards God is also a hatred for his fellow man. And so there have been strife and conflict on every level of society—in marriage, the family, among the races, and between nations. The history of this world has been a history of strife and conflict.

And the world seeks to find peace. Sadly, the world is not interested in making peace with God. Because of their deep hatred of God, they are not concerned to be reconciled with God and live at peace with Him. The world is interested only in peace on the human, earthly level. It wants to put an end to war among the nations, bloodshed on the streets, conflict in marriage and the family. Its motive is not love for God or reconciliation with God. Man wants to enjoy his earthly life to the full, including the pleasures of sin. War and strife stand in the way of this. Prosperity is generally found only in the midst of peace. And so mankind seeks peace among himself so that he can enjoy life on the earth—a life without God, a life enjoying the pleasures of sin. Mankind seeks to accomplish this peace through treaties, arbitration, compromises, and counseling. And the world is brazen enough to cite Jesus Christ as the bringer of this kind of peace.

The peace that Jesus Christ brings to the earth is far different.

The peace He brings is first a peace with God. Jesus Christ is the Son of God in human flesh whom God sent to bring reconciliation between God and men. God has

eternally chosen to Himself a people with whom He desires to live eternally in the joys of His covenant. To that end He sent Jesus Christ to reconcile them to Himself so that they would live at peace with Him as friend with friend. This reconciliation takes place not in the way of negotiations and compromise but in the way of atonement or payment of sin. Atonement requires that Jesus take upon Himself the guilt of sin and endure the awful penalty of sin. It requires the humiliation, shame, and the agony of the cross. The lowly circumstances of Jesus' birth were designed by God to be an indication of this great humiliation and shame. The result of Christ's atoning death is peace with God. It covers our sins so that we are forgiven. It also transforms us from enemies to the friends of God so that we live with Him and enjoy Him in the bond of peace.

The peace Christ brings to His people also creates a wonderful peace among the people of God. If we by the power of the cross have come to love and serve God in peace, it will also fill our hearts with love for our neighbor. The cross that transforms us into the friends of God also transforms us to be friends of each other. And so there is also peace on earth among men. You will find that peace in the church and in the covenant home.

However, that peace also brings strife and conflict, at least for the present. In Matthew 10:34-35 Jesus said, "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law." The point that Jesus makes is that those that stand outside the redeeming, transforming work of the cross remain in their sin. They are filled with hatred not only against God but also against all those that are the friends of God. This will bring the sword of opposition and persecution upon the people of God. This may even be found in your home. And so we look to the day when the Prince of peace will return from heaven to finish His work and perfect His peace by destroying His and our enemies.

Good will to men!

The source of this peace is God's good will toward men.

God's good will is His kindness and benevolence.

This good will God has towards men. These men are His elect church that forms the heart of the human race.

In His good will, God will bring peace to them on earth.

This is His good will even though it means the suffering, shame, and hellish death on the cross of Bethlehem's babe, who is His only begotten Son.

The angels recognized God's great glory in all this

and joyfully filled the heavens with praise to God. We who have and enjoy this peace must with the angels of heaven praise God for His glorious work of sending His only begotten Son into our world as the Savior, which

is Christ the Lord. We must do that in song and prayer. We must do this by living and enjoying the peace God has brought to us in Jesus Christ.



Editorial

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

The covenant and Dordt (6) Reprobation—concluded

Reprobation is God's eternal decree to leave the reprobate in their misery of sin, not to give them saving faith and the grace of conversion, and to condemn and punish them forever. This is the teaching of the Canons in Head I, Article 15. Article 15 adds that this decree is righteous and unchangeable.

Reprobation is also "out of His [God's]...good pleasure." That, first of all, eliminates the possibility that God's determination of who are reprobate is based on something in the person. Just as election is according to God's good purpose and not based on something in the person (no conditions to fulfill), so likewise is reprobation. In addition, "His good pleasure" teaches that this is the good will of God. The decree of predestination is not a decision of God that is written in a book of laws. It is God's will, His eternal plan. It is what God wanted to do. The people He elected are the ones He wanted to choose; and the people He reprobated are also the ones He sovereignly and freely wanted to reject. Their condemnation and eternal punishment will be on the ground of their sin, but God's determination to reprobate them is His good pleasure.

God's covenant of grace is governed by election. God sovereignly determined to establish His covenant with His elect, chosen unto salvation in Christ. God sovereignly saves His people and in this way brings them into His covenant life of love and friendship. God continues His covenant in the line of continued generations, even as He promised Abraham to be a God to Abraham and to his seed after him (Gen. 17:7). The doctrine of double predestination beautifully explains that God establishes His covenant not with all the children of believers, head for head, but rather with the elect children of believers.

But then, how does the other side of predestination,

namely, reprobation, mesh with the doctrine of the covenant? This discussion we started in the last editorial.

The decree of reprobation explains the reality that reprobate children are born to believers. Esau was the son of the patriarch Isaac and his believing wife Rebecca. That raises questions. Specifically, does God establish His covenant with these non-elect children of believers? Does God promise to be their God? Does God promise that they are His people? Does God promise forgiveness and eternal life to these children?

We noted that many reject election as governing the covenant, and teach that God establishes His covenant with every baptized child of every believer. All such answer the above questions in the affirmative. God promises all those blessings to every baptized child objectively, on the condition that the child believes.

This runs contrary to the Canons, which maintain that according to His good pleasure God determined to leave those reprobate children of believers in their misery of sin, not to give them saving faith and the grace of conversion, and to condemn them and punish them forever. God cannot, then, in time promise such children all the blessings of the covenant, the blessings of salvation.

The question must be faced, why does God place reprobate children in covenant families? Why are Esaus born to believers?

Negatively, it must be clearly stated, God's purpose is not their salvation, nor even some spiritual good for the reprobate. The promises spoken at baptism are not conditional; they are genuine and sure. The Reformed "Form for Administration of Baptism" summarizes the promises of God spoken at baptism.

God the Father witnesseth and sealeth unto us that

He doth make an eternal covenant of grace with us, and adopts us for His children and heirs, and therefore will provide us with every good thing, and avert all evil or turn it to our profit. ...the Son sealeth unto us that He doth wash us in His blood from all our sins, incorporating us into the fellowship of His death and resurrection, so that we are freed from all our sins and accounted righteous before God. In like manner...the Holy Ghost assures us, by this holy sacrament, that He will dwell in us and sanctify us to be members of Christ, applying unto us that which we have in Christ, namely, the washing away of our sins and the daily renewing of our lives, till we shall finally be presented without spot or wrinkle among the assembly of the elect in life eternal.

These promises are, may only be, spoken to the elect children, never to the reprobate. There was no promise to the circumcised Esau, of whom God said, “Esau have I hated” (Rom. 9:13), and there are no promises to the baptized ‘Esau’ today. God’s love is eternal and unchangeable.¹ So likewise is His hatred. Fearful to think about, but true: God hates the reprobate child while the child is being baptized. To deny this is to make God changeable. And if God be changeable, terror then fills the soul of the believer. For the God who loves him today and gave those astounding promises to him at baptism, might hate him in the judgment day. But Jehovah God assures believers that it can never be so. “For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed” (Mal. 3:6).

These baptized reprobate children, quite obviously, have a heavy responsibility due to their position and upbringing. They are described in Hebrews 6:4-6, 8.

For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.... But that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is high unto cursing; whose end is to be burned.

Jesus also warned, “And that servant, which knew his lord’s will...neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes” (Luke 12:47).

For they know! They had years of instruction from godly parents. They had years of catechetical instruc-

tion. They may even have had the privilege of training in Christian schools. Yes, this upbringing is a *privilege*, but not a *blessing* to them. They were taught to memorize, “The LORD is my shepherd” (Ps. 23:1). They prayed the Lord’s prayer, calling God their Father in heaven, all the while hating Him. A terrible judgment awaits. For they know the truth about the triune God, His Son Jesus, the cross, heaven, and hell. And they despise it. My soul quakes to think of it. To this, says Peter, “also they were appointed” (I Pet. 2:8).

But we must return to the question. If God’s purpose is *not* the salvation of the reprobate, and God is not offering them salvation on the condition of faith, why does God place some of them in covenant families? It must be that there is a benefit for God’s elect in the covenant. What might that be?

The parable of the wheat and the tares (Matt. 13:24-30, 37-43) sheds light on the question. Jesus tells of how in a certain field (representing the world) the tares are sown in closest proximity to the wheat. The parable makes plain that God wills that both wheat (elect) and tares (reprobate) grow up together throughout the history of the church and the world. The tares appear as wheat in the early stages of growth, just as young elect and reprobate children in a covenant family cannot be distinguished and labeled. God has reasons for the elect believer to grow up with a brother or sister, a cousin, a friend, whom God has eternally determined not to save, even though the chosen one does not know what God has willed about the relative or friend.

First, God determines that the tares will gradually manifest themselves as such. Under covenantal instruction and biblical preaching, the true spiritual nature of children gradually comes to light. The truth about Christ the complete and merciful Savior fills them with utter loathing. Eventually this hatred manifests itself. God’s decree of predestination becomes manifest under, even through, the instruction given to covenant children. The elect, by grace alone, more and more love God whom they come to know. On the other hand, the same instruction hardens the reprobate. That difference is clearly manifest in God’s time and way.

Second, the parable makes plain that God’s purpose in placing reprobate in closest proximity to His elect is to teach His people to live the antithesis. The antithesis is not (as conditional covenant theologians teach) between baptized and unbaptized children. That would make things easier. Every baptized child might then assume that all other baptized children are on the Lord’s side, and they only need be concerned about the unbaptized folk.

But in this parable Jesus warns believers that there

¹ Jeremiah 31:3, *The LORD hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee.*

are tares among the wheat, yes, also in the church and in covenant families. Believers are thus taught not blindly to follow a teaching or lifestyle of another member of their church or family. They must be willing to refute the errors and reject the sins even of those inside the church or family. Such a stand, the battle for the antithesis, painful as it can be, makes God's people spiritually stronger. That is the message of the parable.

More can be said of God's purposes.

The manifestation of reprobates in covenant families is also the cause of much humility. The elect child is reminded that his salvation is all of God, all of grace. The only thing that distinguishes Jacob from Esau is God's electing mercy (Rom. 9). God choose Jacob in pure, sovereign grace and therefore God saved him, miserable sinner though he was. Jacob came to know not only that his salvation was all of God, but also that he was no more worthy of salvation than was his brother. Humbling.

The decree of double predestination worked out in covenant families also teaches humility to believing parents. In it they behold that salvation of their children is not of them. They can save none of their children. They instruct their children, one and all, the same. The same teaching, the same discipline, the same warnings, rebukes, and admonitions. Their instruction is an instrument that God uses for the salvation of God's chosen, but salvation is of the Lord alone.

The manifestation of unbelief in covenant children and their total rejection of Christ emphasizes that God establishes His covenant not with all but only with the elect children of believers. The promises of salvation are spoken to and about the elect children alone. One such promise is Proverbs 22:6, "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it." Believing parents of a wayward child can struggle with that verse. Its promise is so clear. It is God's own promise, and therefore it cannot fail. *But*, they can reason, *we raised this child as we did all the other children. Yes, in weakness and in sin, but directing each one in the paths of truth and righteousness. Why did this one depart?* The answer is not that God's promise failed. Nor is this verse a mere prediction that is true most of the time. Rather, the answer is that God's covenant promises are spoken only *to* and *about* those chosen in Christ. The promise of Proverbs 22:6 never fails.

For believing parents, this is most difficult. If what III John 4 states is true of believing parents, "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth," the converse is also true: there is no greater sorrow than to see children forsake the truth, curse God, and die in unbelief. David's heart-rending cry captures it, "O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would God I

had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!" (II Sam. 18:33).

Now it is so, that God mercifully does not identify to parents elect and reprobate among their children. Also, parents may never assume that this child is elect or that one is reprobate. Until the day they die, believing parents will pray for a wayward son or daughter that God will have mercy on that child and bring to repentance. They know about the son of God-fearing Hezekiah, Manasseh, who "made Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to err, and to do worse than the heathen, whom the LORD had destroyed before the children of Israel" (II Chron. 33:9). But God brought this son to true repentance after many years. (See vv. 12 ff.)

For all the sorrow they experience, believing parents do not deny God's wisdom and goodness in His sovereign decree of double predestination that governs His covenant. They bow in worship of their God "in the heavens: [who] hath done whatsoever he hath pleased" (Ps. 115:3).

God is merciful to believers. At the same time, God in various ways does bring parents to face the question, whom do you love more, God or your child? God commanded Abraham to offer up Isaac, and by faith Abraham did so. At the end of the trial, God spoke this approval to Abraham: "[N]ow I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me" (Gen. 22:12). The fear of God is not only reverence, but *love*. And God added,

[B]ecause thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: that in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice" (vv. 16-18.)

God blesses obedience. God abundantly blesses parents who submit their wills to God's. And their love for God exceeds their love for anyone, including their children.

This is also the answer to believers who, rightly, love every child God gives them. They might wonder how it is possible for parents to be fully happy in heaven if some of their children are not there. I do not know heaven's joy, except in principle. But I do know that not one in his/her perfected state in heaven will be sad that someone he or she loved on earth is missing. Our love for the great God will saturate our perfected souls. Our overwhelming joy will be to praise the glory of God's grace—that marvelous grace that saved every chosen one.

And reprobation emphasizes grace. As the Canons I, 15 so beautifully puts it, reprobation “particularly tends to illustrate and recommend to us the eternal and

unmerited grace of election...[namely] that not all, but some only, are elected....”



All around us

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

Belief in Genesis 1:27: “incompatible with human dignity”

It is unusual that I should be able to report progress on topics recently covered in this rubric (*SB*, October 1, 2019), but the legal machinery has moved more quickly than I anticipated. On September 26, 2019 an employment tribunal in England dismissed Dr. David Mackereth’s case against his employer. The panel of judges found that there was no ground for Mackereth’s complaint that he was subject to discrimination/harassment on the basis of his religious beliefs. On the contrary, his beliefs are “incompatible with human dignity and conflict with the fundamental rights of others.” When I read that in the national and Christian press, I was so stunned that I had to read the judgment for myself—surely the decision has been misreported?

It has not.

First, Dr. Mackereth’s complaint was against the Department of Work of Pensions (DWP), which is a body of the UK government. His actions, namely, his refusal to address transgender people with their preferred pronouns falls foul of the DWP’s “policy on gender reassignment,” which states:

A transgender customer may be undergoing any stage of their “transitioning” when they start to engage with DWP. They should be treated with respect and referred to in their preferred gender at all times. You should always address the customer in their presented sex—try to use the person’s name where possible rather than referring to a person’s gender.¹

In other words, if a biological male with facial hair

presents as Lucy rather than David, the DWP employee *must* address the customer as a female, not as a male—according to the customer’s perception or preference and not according to reality. That to do otherwise is a “backward step” and “detrimental to that person’s mental health” was the opinion of a registered nurse working at the DWP. Some LGBTQ activists have called “misgendering” (the offence of applying the “wrong pronouns” to a person) a form of “violence,” and have argued for misgendering, especially when deliberate and persistent, to be *criminalized*.

Second, the DWP argues that Dr. Mackereth’s actions are *inconsistent with his duties as a doctor*. As evidence, the DWP cites the General Medical Council’s “Code of Conduct, Good Medical Practice”:

You must treat patients as individuals and respect their dignity and privacy.... You must treat patients fairly whatever their life choices and beliefs.... You must not express your personal beliefs (including political, religious and moral beliefs) to patients in ways that exploit their vulnerability or are likely to cause them distress.... You must not unfairly discriminate against patients or colleagues by allowing your personal views to affect your professional relationships or the treatment you provide or arrange.... A doctor must not refuse to treat a particular patient or group of patients because of [his] personal beliefs or views about them.

Doctors and other medical staff adhere to those guidelines as a matter of course. For example, while a doctor might admonish a patient about his unhealthy lifestyle choices, such as smoking, overeating, a lack of exercise and the like, he does not condemn a patient for his *sins*. A doctor does not urge a patient to stop fornicating or to cease an adulterous relationship, although

¹ The full judgment can be accessed here, <https://christianconcern.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/CC-Resource-Judgment-Mackereth-DWP-Others-ET-191002.pdf>. All citations in the article are from this document.

he might want to do so. That would be to express his “moral beliefs” in an inappropriate way—although outside of a medical consultation such a rebuke, which would be part of a Christian witness, is appropriate. A Christian doctor is not permitted to proselytize “on the job.” He may not attempt to convert a Muslim or Hindu co-worker, for example, although he may witness to his co-workers outside of work. Use of a patient’s preferred pronouns is now interpreted as belonging to a doctor’s “duty of care.”

Third, in the judgment appeal was made to the diversity of opinions among Christians, something that Mackereth acknowledges. According to the panel of judges:

...it is not for us to consider if [Mackereth’s belief on gender] is a core element of the Christian faith. Dr. Mackereth accepted that not all individuals who describe themselves as Christians have the same beliefs as he.

Mackereth even submitted a document, *Transformed*, published by the London-based Evangelical Alliance, which states:

One of the most contentious issues can be what to call a transgender person and which personal pronouns to use.... Christians disagree on this matter. For some, the balance of grace and truth is struck by using the person’s preferred name but not pronouns. For others, courtesy leads them to use the name and preferred pronoun of a transgender person. Finally, integrity means that some find any use of preferred names or pronouns leads to confusion and ultimately results in their participation in, and perpetuation of, deception.²

Transformed contains guidance on the usage of pronouns, arranging its advice under four headings: context, the law, relationship, and consistency. On the second point, we read, “If you are in a public role...you may be in breach of workplace policies or guilty of discrimination if you fail to address a person by their new name.” Mackereth can now identify with that. The Evangelical Alliance warns that “failing to use someone’s preferred name will make further conversation difficult, if not impossible.” Finally, the document suggests “if we decline to use a trans person’s name, we should be consistent,” and gives the example of Cassius Clay’s name change to Mohammed Ali “as a sign of his freedom and allegiance to Islam,” which is hardly comparable to this case: Clay converted to Islam, but a man *cannot* become a woman and vice versa.

The Evangelical Alliance opposes compulsion, how-

ever—a person should not be *compelled in law* to use pronouns with which he is uncomfortable or the use of which would violate his conscience. In addition, the Christian Medical Fellowship is cited in the ruling as saying “[the Christian response is to] strongly endorse the human rights of transgender people, affirming their dignity and guarding them from discrimination.” However, does endorsing the dignity of a person require affirming him in *his delusion*, a word that Mackereth uses in his description of transgenderism?

Fourth, we see in this ruling the official view of the British government and the courts on Mackereth’s beliefs, which are helpfully summarized. I find this aspect of the judgment the most troubling: it has grave implications for free speech and freedom of religion in the United Kingdom and elsewhere. The panel of judges summarizes Mackereth’s beliefs on the controverted questions in three propositions: “belief in Genesis 1:27,” “lack of belief in transgenderism,” and “conscientious objection to transgenderism.”

[Belief in Genesis 1:27]: His belief in the truth of the Bible, and in particular, the truth of Genesis 1:27: “So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.” It follows that every person is created by God as either male or female. A person cannot change their sex/gender at will. Any attempt at, or pretence of, doing so, is pointless, self-destructive, and sinful.

[Lack of belief in transgenderism]: The lack of belief (i) that it is possible for a person to change their sex/gender; (ii) that impersonating the opposite sex may be beneficial for an individual’s welfare; and/or (iii) that the society should accommodate and/or encourage anyone’s impersonation of the opposite.

[Conscientious objection to transgenderism]: The belief that it would be irresponsible and dishonest, for example, for a health professional to accommodate and/or encourage a patient’s impersonation of the opposite sex.

One might argue that Beliefs 2 and 3 are not explicitly religious or biblical articles of faith, but Belief 1 is simply *a statement of the Word of God*: all Christians believe that God is the Creator, that God made humans in His image, and that every human being is male or female by virtue of His creation, something that Jesus Christ reiterated in Matthew 19.

The judges summarize the DWP’s defence against Mackereth’s discrimination claim:

The respondents accept that Christianity is a protected characteristic. They do not accept that is so where Dr. Mackereth goes further in seeking to define the beliefs

² *Transformed* (London: Evangelical Alliance, 2018), <https://www.eauk.org/assets/files/downloads/Transformed.pdf>.

he relays [in his submitted testimony as outlined above] as a protected characteristic. The respondents argue that at the heart of those beliefs is intolerance towards transgender people, and that a refusal to respect the dignity of transgender people and their preferred form of address is incompatible with human dignity and conflicts with the fundamental rights of others.

In other words, Mackereth has the right to be a Christian and to practise Christianity, but *his specific beliefs* are evidence of “intolerance” and his refusal to address transgender people with their preferred forms of address [sir/madam, he/she, etc.] is “incompatible with human dignity.”

The panel of judges ruled in fundamental agreement with the DWP:

All three heads, belief in Genesis 1:27, lack of belief in transgenderism and conscientious objection to transgenderism, in our judgment are incompatible with human dignity and conflict with the fundamental rights of others, specifically here, transgender individuals.... We found that his beliefs [as outlined above] were likely to cause offence and have the effect of violating a transgender person’s dignity or creating a proscribed environment, or subjecting a transgender person to less favourable treatment.... In our judgment, refusing to refer to a transgender person by his/her/their birth sex, or relevant pronouns, titles or styles would constitute unlawful discrimination or harassment under the Equality Act.... It is important given the public interest in this case that we make clear this case did not concern whether Dr. Mackereth is a Christian and if that qualifies for protection under the Equality Act. That was never in dispute.... What this case concerned is whether he was entitled to manifest those beliefs in the circumstances that applied here. He accepted that his beliefs meant that insofar as a service user was a transgender individual within the meaning of the [Equality Act], that whilst he did not wish them to, his actions would cause offence and potentially breach the [Equality Act]. We find that if the service user also held a full gender recognition certificate Dr. Mackereth’s position was that he would also potentially breach the [Gender Recognition Act] for the reasons we give above.

This ruling is stunning: *belief in Genesis 1:27* is “incompatible with human dignity”! Mackereth plans to appeal. It raises all kinds of questions for Christians and churches: What must we do when the law forbids us to “misgender” a transgender person? Is it permissible for a Christian to use a transgender person’s “preferred pronouns”? Does that constitute lying, deception, promotion of/approval of sin? What cost are we

prepared to pay for our stand on these issues—the loss of employment, financial penalties, the loss of our children (if we refuse to teach them these delusions or to affirm them in them), or even imprisonment?

On a similar note Piers Morgan, the British TV presenter who labelled Mackereth as a bigot, sparked controversy when he scoffed at the idea of 100 gender or gender identities. The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) has recently produced a video, “Identity: Understanding Sexual and Gender Identities,” targeted at children aged between nine and twelve years to be used in schools.³ At one point in the video a teacher explains, “So we know we’ve got male and female, but there are over 100, if not more, gender identities now You’ve got some people who might call themselves gender queer, who are just like ‘I don’t really want to be anything in particular, I’m just going to be me.’” The video also features Leo Lardie, a transgender activist, born female, now identifying as a male, who talked to the children about her genitalia (a conversation about which they were noticeably uncomfortable) and a Lesbian teacher who encouraged the children to consider whether they might be gay, if they liked a person of the same sex “in a slightly different way they do normally to their friends.”

This is not “education”—it is the grooming of impressionable children! Christian parents who enroll their children in the government-run schools take note!

Morgan sparred with Benjamin Butterworth who defended the BBC’s view of 100 gender identities, although when pushed by Morgan to define some of the more outlandish examples, Butterworth was unable to do so. “Can I, under this new world of self-identification, identify as a two-spirit, neutrois penguin?” asked Morgan, announcing his new identity as a “Two-spirit, gender-neutral, pangender, gender-fluid, fem *penguin*”!

Ofcom, the United Kingdom’s communications regulator, received almost 1,000 complaints and almost 34,000 people signed an online petition to remove Piers Morgan from the show. Nevertheless, Ofcom ruled that, although Morgan’s comments “came close to ridicule of those of a protected characteristic with the potential to offend some viewers,” given Morgan’s advocacy of transgender issues, “further investigation is not warranted.”

Morgan survived this time, but the politically correct police might not be so lenient in the future.

3 <https://www.bbc.co.uk/teach/class-clips-video/rse-ks2-identity-understanding-sexual-and-gender-identities/zfqrbhk>.



Pillar and ground of truth

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

The early church's ecumenical councils

The first ecumenical council of the Christian church was held in A.D. 325 in Nicea, a city that today is known as Iznik, Turkey. A council is a meeting of church leaders from various congregations in different localities, at which the leaders address problems that are common to the churches.

As the early Christian church expanded, the need for councils became obvious: in a council the church would agree on matters of doctrine and practice, and respond with one voice to men who taught error or promoted evil. Regional councils, attended by representatives of churches in a geographic region, had been held already in the late 100s. But the Council of Nicea was the first to which representatives came from *every area* where Christian churches had been established. So it was called “ecumenical,” which comes from a Greek word referring to the whole inhabited earth. In fact, the eastern branch of the Christian church (centered in Constantinople) was more prominent than the western branch (centered in Rome) at this and other ecumenical councils.

Christians generally acknowledge the first seven ecumenical councils to have been important for all Christianity. These seven were the Councils of Nicea (325), Constantinople (381), Ephesus (431), Chalcedon (451), Constantinople (553), Constantinople (680), and Nicea (787).

To these seven, Rome adds fourteen more. She considers the Council of Trent (1545-1563), which defended Rome's theology and practices over against the teachings of the Reformers, to be the nineteenth ecumenical council. The twenty-first is the Second Vatican Council, which met from 1962-1965.

The Reformers and Reformed churches generally agree that the first six ecumenical councils played important roles in the positive development of the Christian faith. The Reformed view the seventh ecumenical council less favorably because it approved the use of images in worship.

Future articles in this rubric will examine why these councils were held, what they decided, and why they were significant for the true faith.



When thou sittest in thine house

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

The influence of the godly family in nurturing aspirants for the gospel ministry

Previous article in this series: October 15, 2019, p. 43.

There have been many urgent calls to our churches and her members to pray for the young men of our congregations to consider the ministry of the gospel in our churches. It has been stated that we as a denomination are headed for a very serious shortage of ministers in the next few

years. This is largely because the PRC has many pastors who are nearing the end of their ministries and because so few new students are arising with the burden of the call to begin their studies. Our people have been urged to make this continually a subject of our daily family

devotions, a matter of pleading with our covenant God for the future welfare of God's church among us. It is, after all, the Lord who calls and raises up ministers of His word. He also in His sovereignty at times does not send them. Sometimes He sends a famine of the hearing of the word to chasten His people.

Many are asking what the reason is for the shortage of ministers among us. Some are convinced that one of the chief reasons for this is recent criticism and judgment of ministers in the context of several major controversies. Some have gone so far as to say that God is judging and chastening our churches by not giving us ministers. The office of the ministry is no longer held in high esteem among us. The preaching of the Word through this office has been too easily subjected to serious criticism and public judgment. Whether or not the above thoughts are indeed true we leave God to judge.

We all believe that no one should enter into the sacred office of the ministry unless he feels in his heart that he is called of God. We believe that only those who are sound in doctrine and godly in daily walk should be encouraged to consider the high calling of God that the ministry indeed is. Many false prophets have arisen in the church where the elders did not keep guard on Zion's walls. In this way evil men have usurped the office. Many of these arise from seminaries where the truth of God is no longer maintained and defended. False preachers are a great danger to the church and can soon subvert even whole denominations. God's gift of faithful and qualified ministers is a very important matter.

The elders must exercise utmost care that no unsuitable men enter into the office of the ministry. This great concern should be shown as soon as any young man begins to talk about a possible call to the ministry. The church needs truly good and godly men. She needs highly gifted and called men, truly called of God. They must be those who have understanding of and love for sound doctrine. They must be those who show themselves to be devoted to a life of holiness. They must not be men of worldly pride and ambition. They must not be self-willed or proud, boasting in themselves. They must be devoted to the glory of God, seeking the true welfare of the church of Jesus Christ. Ministers of the Word must maintain the traditions of the faith, the absolute truth of God's Word, which is the very foundation of the church. The church must maintain a high standard for her ministers. She must not be merely interested in the numbers of her ministers. Having a few good men is better than many who do not truly show themselves to be men of God.

The greatest biblical example of the influence of the home in inspiring and nurturing young men for the call to the ministry is the home in which the great evangelist

Timothy was, in God's providence, raised. I find it so wonderful that the great apostle Paul should have made mention of these things in his letter to Timothy. What a powerful influence the godly grandmother Lois and godly mother Eunice had on young Timothy as he was growing up in their home. It is possible that Timothy had a pagan father or that his father had passed away in his early life. Because of the many wars that were being fought in those days, many young men were dying on the battle field. Women were left to fend for themselves in the raising of their covenant children. What great lessons we can learn from this biblical history! What a great inspiration even one or two godly men or women can have in their very important roles in their covenant home. What great benefit this can be for the faithful church in years to come! In the Old Testament we remember godly Hannah who prayed for and prepared Samuel for his office in the church.

God can raise up ministers of His Word by the wonders of His grace even from backgrounds and circumstances that are full of sin and wickedness. It might have been thought utterly impossible that someone could have been called to the ministry after having grown up in such circumstances. Yet it is undoubtedly true that in most cases men are called to the ministry from the homes of those that are outstanding in faith and godliness. Love for the truth that the church is commissioned to preach must fill the hearts of her members and characterize fathers and mothers in our covenant homes. Usually worldliness, covetousness, pride, and materialism in the home will have a serious negative effect on the raising of children. They will be encouraged to choose life careers that are lucrative and have great prominence and glory in the world. Those called to the ministry must be ready for many sacrifices and great hardships in life. Training for such a career includes being prepared for such a calling. I can remember when I began thinking about the ministry one man said to me, "Can't you think of something else to do in life? You had better realize that ministers can expect ridicule, hatred, and opposition for the whole of their life." They receive this sometimes even from their own family members. Ministers of God must be ready to be on the forefront of the battle when persecution and enemies arise. They must be men of great courage, wisdom, and strength to endure these things.

Is the fact that so few ministers are arising from our midst a reflection of the spiritual state of many of our homes? Have we thought at all about this? Have we considered it a possibility that the reason why a denomination of almost 9,000 members has so few of its young

men desiring the ministry might be the worldliness, covetousness, and materialism among us?

The home of the evangelist Timothy had outstanding persons in it. The teachers in this home were outstanding in unfeigned faith—genuine, sincere, and fervent faith and godliness. So outstanding was this faith that it served as a mighty inspiration that led Timothy to the call of the ministry. “When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois and in thy mother Eunice, and I am persuaded that in thee also” (II Tim. 1: 5).

The ministry requires outstanding, God-fearing men devoted to His glory in the whole of their lives. Men who are worldly, covetous, proud, and self-seeking should not be encouraged to consider the ministry. The church today is plagued by men who seek their own glory and to enrich and aggrandize themselves. Many of the mega-church ministers in our land are scandalous examples of this. We must not be deceived by the large followings that these have and by the grand show of stadiums full of zealous listeners. We must not be deceived by their boasting and glorying in themselves. We must not follow the personality cults they have made the religion they promote to be. Many are being led astray by pop-psychology, and health and wealth prosperity preachers. These false preachers promote a popular and worldly form of Christianity. These are not godly ministers. Some are even an utter abomination in the sight of God in spite of the high opinion they have of themselves and the very popular following. It is astounding that such wicked men can somehow still claim to be followers of Jesus the Son of God, who had nothing in this world and who was the supreme example of humility, seeking only to do those things pleasing to God and to the glory of His heavenly Father. He was ready to be hated of all men and finally to be condemned and nailed to the accursed tree of the cross. Jesus said that if we are to be followers of Him we must expect not to be popular but to be hated in this world.

If our homes by the Spirit and grace of God are going to be His instruments to call our young men to the gospel ministry, they must be God-centered, seeking God’s glory above all. There must be a great love for the truth in our homes and a seriousness about maintaining sound doctrine. Our homes must be characterized by a love for the true church, shown by active, zealous involvement in her life and ministry. It is not God’s will that the gospel be preached by some great human organization independent from the oversight of any church. The gospel must be preached by the faithful church supported by faithful and zealous members and ruled by properly called and ordained godly elders who, as a

very important part of the exercise of their office, rule over the ministry and the men called to the ministry.

There must be in our homes a consciousness of the seriousness of the great battle for the truth in which the church is always engaged. The church is surrounded in the world by many great enemies. The devil himself assaults her on every side, the forces of darkness oppose and persecute her. So in our homes we need to pray for and encourage our young men to be strong in the truth, diligent in standing with the church. We need to encourage those who show themselves to be young men of great courage and steadfastness to consider the urgent need for ministers. We need to teach our children to be sharply distinctive in maintaining the truth, strong in the knowledge of the truth, holding fast to the traditions of the faith.

There is an ever-increasing urgency about all of this as the end of the world and the judgment of God approaches. We need to press this urgency on our young men as they are growing up in our covenant homes. As the day of the Lord is coming, pray earnestly that God will call our young men who are strong, courageous, and zealous to lead us in preserving His truth among us! Godly men! It is usually out of these kinds of home environments that God is pleased to raise up young men for the ministry. Our homes must teach and promote the greatness of the cause of Christ’s kingdom and the tremendous significance of the preaching of the true gospel as the power of God to realize the final end of this kingdom in the glorious return of our exalted Lord Jesus Christ.

We must ask ourselves and examine ourselves whether we are lagging in the zeal that should characterize us as God’s people. Do we convey to our children that we are profoundly concerned about the apostasy of the church in our day? Do we speak to our children about the ever-increasing evil and dreadful wickedness of the world in which we are living? We need men of God to lead our churches by God’s calling in the great spiritual warfare of our times. No, God is never dependent on men nor on the giftedness or learning of men. He is not dependent on numbers, nor does He glory in numbers. He saves and preserves a church that is the tiniest remnant of the whole human race. And He is pleased to use a few good men to be mighty, courageous preachers of His Word. Let us pray that God will raise up such among us. None will ever be made strong for this office except by the power of God in them.



Ministering to the saints

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

The elders' threefold work (2) Its scriptural basis

Previous article in this series: October 15, 2019, p. 40.

In our last article we surveyed the work of the office of elder as prescribed by various articles of our Church Order, the “Form of Ordination of Elders and Deacons,” and Article 30 of the Belgic Confession. Our goal was to demonstrate that imbedded in these confessions, if not explicitly stated, is the idea that the work of the office of elder has three basic aspects: rule or oversight, being a pastor or shepherd, and teaching.

In this article we will demonstrate this point from Scripture. In doing so, we will refer not only to New Testament passages that clearly relate to the work of the office of elder, but also to Old Testament passages that set forth the calling of Israel’s kings. The reason for doing this is that the office of elder in the New Testament church finds its roots and basis in the Old Testament position of judge and office of king.

Ruler/Overseer

In the Greek New Testament, two different words refer to the office of elder. One, which sounds like “presbyter” in the English language, refers to the office as consisting of older, honorable men. In that sense, it functions like our word “elder,” meaning, “older.” The other, which sounds like “episkopos,” refers to the office from the viewpoint of its work of overseeing.

Interestingly, from these two words come two fundamentally different systems of church government, with two fundamentally different views of how the office of elder functions in the church. The presbyterian (Reformed) system of church government views the body of elders as the rulers of individual congregations, chosen by those congregations, and limited in their rule to those congregations. The episcopalian (Anglican) system of church government is hierarchical. It prescribes that a bishop may be appointed by an archbishop, and the rule of the bishop may be imposed on a congregation, even on several congregations in a geographic area. The latter system takes a biblical concept and gives it content that the Scriptures do not give it.

The point for now is that the second of these Greek words indicates that the work of the office of elder is

that of oversight. The word literally means “overseer,” one who watches over others to see that they are doing things properly. It is translated “overseer” in Acts 20:28, and “bishop” in Philippians 1:1, I Timothy 3:1-2, Titus 1:7, and I Peter 2:25. Emphasizing that Christ is our Bishop, our Overseer, to whom we answer in the last day, it is translated “visitation” in Luke 19:44 and I Peter 2:12.

Several passages in I Timothy indicate that the office of elder is the office of rule. God requires a bishop to be a man “that ruleth well his own house” (I Tim. 3:4) and gives the reason in the next verse: “For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?” Later the apostle says, “Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor...” (I Tim. 5:17). In these three passages, the Greek word translated “rule” refers to one who has been appointed or placed over another.

The “Form of Ordination of Elders and Deacons” (used in the PRC and found in the back of her Psalter) refers to Romans 12 and I Corinthians 12 to demonstrate that the office of elder is one of rule. Romans 12:8 requires “he that ruleth” in the body of Christ to do so “with diligence.” I Corinthians 12:28 reminds us that God has given various offices to His New Testament church. Some of these offices are temporary, having ceased with the end of the apostolic age and the completion of God’s revelation. Others the church needs until our Lord returns. In this latter category is “governments.”

To the office of elder the inspired writer to the Hebrews refers when he says: “Remember them which have the rule over you” (Heb. 13:7), and later in the same chapter, “Obey them that have the rule over you.” The Greek word translated “them that have the rule” refers to a leader, one who goes ahead, indicating that the rulers in the church lead the sheep as they trek through the wilderness of this life.

That the Scriptures speak clearly to the work of the elder as that of ruler or overseer does not surprise us, when we consider that through this office Jesus Christ is pres-

ent with His church as our King. A king rules. Not surprising, then, that Peter tells the church that Jesus Christ is “the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls” (I Pet. 2:25).

Pastor/Shepherd

Not only is Christ our *Bishop*, but also our *Shepherd*, Peter said. Certainly Christ manifests Himself as our Shepherd through the office of pastor, when faithful men appointed to that office prepare good spiritual food for our souls, and nurture us in faith and godliness (Eph. 4:11).

But elders are also shepherds.

Two passages here are significant, for they combine the idea of rule and shepherding. Acts 20:28 records the admonition of the apostle Paul to the elders of Ephesus: “take heed...to all the flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God....” And in I Peter 5:1-4, the inspired apostle exhorts the elders to “feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof...being examples to the flock.” Both speak of the church as a flock; both indicate that the work of the elders is to oversee; but both also speak of the need to “feed” the flock. In both passages, the Greek verb means to keep sheep, to ‘shepherdize’ the flock, which involves everything from rule and government (Matt. 2:6, “shall rule my people Israel”), to furnishing food and nourishment (Luke 17:7, “feeding cattle”), to tender loving care.

What shepherd does not rule his sheep? Does not his rod (staff) serve a practical purpose? Yet, what shepherd is not also tender toward his sheep, and attends to their distresses? So the elder rules as a shepherd, as one who loves his sheep and is compassionate toward them.

The godly kings of Old Testament Israel were concerned not merely to govern the outward lives of the people by applying an outward code to them, but especially to instill a love for the law and for Jehovah that would proceed from the hearts of the Israelites and would be the way to enjoy the deepest blessings of Jehovah.

The ungodly kings were rebuked for being unfaithful shepherds. The “pastors that destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture” (Jer. 23:1) were evidently wicked kings, for that description of the pastors is sandwiched between a denunciation of Coniah and a promise that the Messiah will come: “a king shall reign and prosper” (23:5). The same is the case in Ezekiel 34, a chapter rich with the shepherd imagery. Jehovah pronounces Himself against the shepherds who have destroyed the flock (v. 10), will Himself perform the true work of a shepherd (v. 11ff.), and “will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even my servant David” (v. 23), another reference to Jesus Christ.

Jesus referred not only to His work as Prophet and Priest but also to His work as King when He said, “I am the good shepherd” (John 10). He is “the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls” (I Pet. 2:25), and “the chief Shepherd (who) shall appear” to give faithful elders “a crown of glory that fadeth not away” (I Pet. 5:4).

If the idea of rule and oversight does not suggest to the elder that he should have a continual care for the church of God that shows itself in a compassion and pity for each member, the idea of a shepherd must. No shepherd worthy of the title lies on his back on a grassy knoll, only to check on the sheep occasionally; his care of them is constant. He guards, watches, feeds, leads to still waters—always. Likewise, the elder feeds the sheep with the Word of God.

Teacher

If the elder feeds with the Word of God, he must be a teacher. Again, one might say, “But pastors are teachers. Do not Reformed churches consider the words ‘pastors and teachers’ (Eph. 4:11) to refer to one and the same office?” Certainly.¹

Yet, as I argued some years earlier with regard to the office of deacon, each special office in the church has a teaching aspect to it. So does the office of elder.

Just as the inspired list of divine qualifications for the office refers to elders as rulers, so it refers to them as teachers. “A bishop must then be...apt to teach” (I Tim. 3:2). And, “holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers” (Tit. 1:9).

That significant passage in Acts 20:28, which indicated that the elder is both overseer and shepherd, does not speak explicitly of the elder as teacher. Yet the idea is implied. The apostle has just told the elders of Ephesus that, while among them, he “taught [them] publicly, and from house to house” (20). Now he warns them against wolves that will destroy the flock. How? By their teachings: “speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them” (30). So when the apostle says, “Therefore watch” (31), he means, guard by teaching! And when he commends them “to God, and to the word of his grace” (32), he reminds them of the very means by which they can teach and the food (God’s Word) that they must set forth as shepherds.

In the Old Testament godly kings provided for the instruction of Israel.

¹ John Calvin took the position that these terms referred to two different offices. The pastor was the pastor of a congregation. The teacher was the doctor of theology, the professor in the seminary. However, Reformed churches generally have concluded that, grammatically, the two terms must be understood as referring to one and the same office, that of pastor, who is a teacher.

For one thing, David and Solomon were both kings and prophets. In this respect, they were exceptions; many godly kings in Israel were not prophets. But how lovely that, at the height of the glory of Israel as an earthly manifestation of God's kingdom, the kings taught not only the law that God had already revealed, but also new revelations from Jehovah!

Jehoshaphat was not a prophet. Yet we read that he, working to reform Israel, sent princes to teach God's law in the cities of Judah (II Chron. 17:7-9).

Already in the time of Moses, God had prescribed that the king of Israel, when she had one, must write out by his own hand his own copy of the law of God,

that he might know it and keep it (Deut. 17:18-20). This would also prepare him to teach it.

Elders in Christ's church must teach, in addition to ruling and shepherding. Indeed, the three aspects of their office are all related. Elders cannot rule without shepherding. They cannot shepherd without teaching. They cannot teach without ruling.

Christ's church needs elders who have a comprehensive idea of what their work involves. The flock needs rulers who shepherd, and shepherds who teach.

According to this threefold division, therefore, we will begin to examine the work of the elders in more detail.



Go ye into all the world

Rev. Wilbur Bruinsma, pastor of the Protestant Reformed Church in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Protestant Reformed missions The war years: Mission work flounders (1940-1946) 5

Previous article in this series: September 1, 2019, p. 473.

There are various legitimate means evangelism committees and mission committees use to spread the gospel. One such means already faithfully used by the PRC Mission Committee was that of the printed page. During the years that war was being waged in Europe and the south Pacific, various churches, especially First PRC in Grand Rapids, published pamphlets addressing diverse doctrinal and practical issues—many of them written by Rev. Herman Hoeksema. In the twenty-fifth anniversary booklet of the Protestant Reformed Churches the author writes:

There are the pamphlets of the Sunday School Society of the First Prot. Ref. Church in Grand Rapids, and I assure you they are worthy of mention, of honorable mention. Thousands upon thousands of these pamphlets have seen the light on many and diverse biblical and Reformed subjects, and they have been spread far and wide. And their influence can hardly be underestimated.¹

During the war years these pamphlets multiplied and were used extensively in evangelism outreach and by the

mission committee with the prayer that they would gender interested groups of people who would seek us out to labor among them.

Worthy of note is the launching of a couple new periodicals during this period of time. The first issue of the *Beacon Lights* was distributed in January 1941. The aim of this periodical put out by the Young People's Federation was not that of evangelism work, although it has been used at times where people have shown an interest in our churches. One aim of the *Beacon Lights* was and is "to unite all Protestant Reformed Young People's Societies so that they may work in close unity and secure a sense of solidarity." A second aim is "to seek the mutual edification of the members of this Federation and to strive for the development of talents as becomes Christian young people."² This periodical still thrives today under God's blessing.

A second periodical named the *Concordia* was published by The Evangel Society of Northwest Iowa. Its initial editor-in-chief was Rev. Gerrit Vos. In his first editorial he asked his readers:

Therefore, we would kindly ask you to read the name

¹ *The Protestant Reformed Churches—Twenty Fifth Anniversary 1925-1950*, (Grand Rapids, MI, 1950), 99.

² *Beacon Lights*, vol. 1, No. 1: January 1941 (Grand Rapids, MI).

of our paper in conjunction with the name of the society who prints it: “The Evangel Society.” We are “Concordia in Euangelio!” Our hearts together sing the everlasting song of the Gospel of God! So you see, dear friends, that these two names are advisedly chosen, in order that they might express to the whole world your and our “endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace!” (Eph. 4:3). Agreement, unity, concord in the Gospel! It is the calling of the church to do so as long as the sun and the moon endure.³

This makes it clear that this church paper was meant to be used in the evangelism work of these churches in Iowa and Minnesota. The rubrics were divided among the ministers of the six churches there. The one somewhat strange exception is that Rev. Hubert DeWolf, co-pastor of First PRC in Grand Rapids with Rev. H. Hoeksema, was invited to join the editorial staff, to which he consented.

Now, there was nothing wrong with the Evangel Society publishing its own periodical. In fact, in the first few years of this publication, especially while Rev. Vos was its editor, the *Concordia* was a welcome addition to the church papers. There seemed, however, to be an ulterior motive in publishing it that did not immediately reveal itself. There was a growing dissatisfaction with what was perceived as the dominant role Rev. H. Hoeksema played in almost every labor of our churches. The *Standard Bearer* since October of 1924 was the unofficial voice of the Protestant Reformed Churches. Listen to the glowing appraisal of this church paper once again in the commemorative booklet of the twenty-fifth anniversary of our churches:

Although many have written on its pages, and although we will not minimize the importance and the correctness of that which was written by many of us, the main voices in the *Standard Bearer* were those of Revs. Hoeksema and Ophoff, the former the acknowledged leader but ably flanked by our beloved brother Ophoff, who has always been, if I may use a military phrase, the second in command.⁴

If you recall, in our last article we already took note of the rift that developed between the two branches of the Mission Committee. Much of this centered on the same reason: Rev. Hoeksema dominated the mission work of our churches. First PRC where he was a pastor had to be *the* church that carried on mission work. Rev. Hoeksema was also the dominant teacher in the seminary. Many of the ministers in the West at that time

also begrudged Rev. Hoeksema for always seeming to have the final word on the floor of classis and synod.

The *Concordia* became a second church paper that now would compete with the *Standard Bearer* as a recognized voice in our churches. It could also be used, so it was felt, by churches doing mission work as the paper of choice since it was written with an evangelistic emphasis. That this added to the tension developing in the churches is evident from the meager review this church paper received in the twentieth-fifth anniversary booklet:

Another important publication is *Concordia*, a bi-weekly, and published in the Middle West.... Its scope is not so wide as the *Standard Bearer* nor is its material as heavy, but it publishes the same truth, although more within our own constituency, rather than in the whole wide world.⁵

In years to come the *Concordia* was utilized by those anxious to oppose Hoeksema by compromising the truth of an unconditional covenant. As we will discover, church growth was more important to them than maintenance of the truth. The *Concordia* gave opportunity for men who embraced the error of a conditional covenant to make their voices heard in the PRC.

The publication of new church papers was not the only new development during the war years. It was also a time that radio had come into its own. It was the latest technology and a means to reach thousands of people with the gospel. Religious programming had become popular in various places in the United States. It was only natural that our churches too would seize the opportunity to use this legitimate means to proclaim the precious truths of the gospel.

First PRC of Grand Rapids again led the way. On October 12, 1941 the Reformed Witness Hour (then named “The Protestant Reformed Hour”) was launched with its first program being, “God is God.” Rev. Hoeksema was chosen as the first radio pastor—another one of his many ventures! The broadcast still airs today over many different radio stations in the United States and abroad. In fact, just recently the Reformed Witness Hour commemorated its 4,000th broadcast (Sept. 2019)! In August of 1945 the Consistory of First PRC adopted the Reformed Witness Hour as her mission endeavor and placed it as a line item on the general fund budget.

But the Reformed Witness Hour was just one of many different broadcasts that sprung up among our various PRCs. The “Protestant Reformed Hour On the

3 *Concordia*, vol. 1, No. 1: February 1, 1944, (Hull, IA), 1.

4 *The PRC—Twenty-Fifth Anniversary*, 97.

5 *PRC—Twenty-fifth Anniversary*, 99

Air” was sponsored by our churches in Redlands and Bellflower, California. Rev. G. Vos and Rev. L. Doeze-
ma were the radio pastors. Sadly, this broadcast discon-
tinued its outreach about a year later.

The churches in Northern Iowa and Edgerton through
their young people’s societies sponsored the “Sovereign
Grace Hour” beginning in April 1942. Rev. W. Verhil
was the radio pastor until his death. At that time the
various ministers in Iowa took turns. This broadcast
was in existence until 1950, under the supervision of the
various consistories of NW Iowa and Edgerton.

The “Reformed Truth Hour” sponsored jointly by
Oaklawn and South Holland PRCs (IL) began live
broadcasting on Sunday evening, September 8, 1946.
Rev. M. Schipper together with Rev. M. Gritters (soon
replaced by Rev. G. Vandenberg) were the radio pastors.
It must be remembered that although broadcasts were
recorded on reel-to-reel tape, it was not easy to mass
produce such tapes and send them to various places in
the United States. Though radio was an amazing tech-
nology it was not developed as it is today. Today mp3
recordings are made and shipped to various radio sta-
tions within minutes to be put on the air. In the 1940s
a large reel-to-reel tape needed to be recorded, spliced,
and then reproduced. This was not simple or cost ef-
fective. For that reason, the radio broadcasts that aired
out of Hammond, Indiana were messages spoken on the
air live. Incidentally, this broadcast was instrumental in
bringing Rev. R.C. Harbach to our churches as a min-
ister.

We only make mention of the “Protestant Reformed
Hour” produced by Oskaloosa and Pella PRCs (IA) some-
what later in 1949. The messages in these areas were given
by Revs. J. Howerzyl and M. Gritters alternately.

All of these broadcasts, with the exception of the
Reformed Witness Hour, abruptly ended with the
controversy of 1953. But, certainly, during the early

1940s our churches were attempting to reach out by
means of radio in order to promote the truth as God
had graciously given it to the PRC. Yet, mission work
floundered because the distinctive Reformed truths our
churches preached no longer held an appeal to most
within the sphere of Reformed churches. Fewer groups
of people were searching us out in order to be formed
into a church. Through radio our churches were able to
extend our message to a broader range of people. This
helped renew our zeal for mission work.

But for all that, the extension of our churches by
means of mission work had dramatically slowed down
since the 1930s. The beautiful doctrines of grace giv-
en us as churches by God’s grace are true but not pop-
ular. The PRC in the early 1940s numbered about
5,000 souls—so, so small in comparison to our mother
church, the Christian Reformed Church. In fact, we
were tiny in comparison to most of the major Reformed
churches. And we were not growing! Despite all our
efforts, we were not getting any larger! Along with a
dissatisfaction with the focus in the East on Rev. Hoek-
sema there was another growing restlessness on the part
of many, including many of the clergy. They did not
like being small and despised. They had an unhealthy
desire that our denomination grow to a respectable size.
This was not happening as they had hoped. There was
not enough progress, not enough growth through our
mission work. As time and circumstances progressed
in the next several years, such restlessness bred in many
a willingness to compromise the truth in order to grow.

Add that restlessness to the uncompromising char-
acter of Rev. Hoeksema and those who stood alongside
of him in the years to come, and our churches were ripe
for disaster! The occasion for this, sad to say, was the
mission work of our churches in the late 1940s and ear-
ly 1950s. This history of missions waits us in the next
set of articles.



Strength of youth

Rev. Ryan Barnhill, pastor of the Peace Protestant Reformed Church in Dyer,
Indiana

A word for the new year

In the years of youth, when the days are full and our
energy is seemingly inexhaustible, we do not often
consider that we are pilgrims on this earth. But we

should. This world is not our home, but we look
forward to God taking us home to Himself in heaven.
December is a unique month: the old year casts its

evening shadows, and the first glimmerings of the new year appear. As 2019 sets and 2020 dawns, it is appropriate that we consider Psalm 121:1, 2.

Psalm 121 is one of the psalms entitled “A song of degrees.” Such a psalm was sung during special pilgrimages to Jerusalem. You must imagine the pilgrim-psalmist traveling to Jerusalem. As he nears the city, he sees the mountains around Jerusalem and sings, “I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the LORD [Jehovah], which made heaven and earth.” Young person, at the close of this year and the beginning of another in your pilgrim-life on earth, your confession is that your help comes from Jehovah.

Jehovah

From *Jehovah* comes your help. Stop reading for a moment. Meditate. Are you breathlessly amazed? From *Jehovah* comes your help!

This Jehovah is infinitely powerful. Psalm 121:2 says that He made heaven and earth. Let us never read Genesis 1 with anything less than a sense of awe. There was no light. God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light! What power that is. He is almighty Jehovah. He made heaven and earth, with all that is in them. He made heaven: not only the dwelling place of God, the angels, and the redeemed church, but also the sky overhead. We are told that the sun in our solar system could fit 9.3 billion times into the biggest star discovered to date. Our Milky Way galaxy, itself so vast that it boggles the mind, is just one out of more than one billion galaxies so far known. God is the Maker of it all.

That Jehovah is powerful is also indicated in verse 1: “I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills....” As the psalmist-pilgrim made his way to Jerusalem and saw before him the hills surrounding the city, he meditated upon a portion of neighboring Psalm 125: “As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the LORD is round about his people from henceforth even for ever” (v. 2). The psalmist saw the tall, broad mountains before him, and was struck by how mighty they were—a dim shadow of Jehovah, the infinitely powerful God who is round about His people.

This Jehovah is unchanging. Before delivering His people from Egypt, God revealed the meaning of His name “Jehovah”: “And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you” (Ex. 3:14). You are always changing. This life is one, continuous blur. But Jehovah never changes. As the psalmist neared Jerusalem and lifted his eyes to those hills surrounding the city, it must have seemed that those hills had been there forever, so firmly rooted. But what only

seemed true of those hills, was *actually* true of Jehovah—He who is round about His people never changes.

This Jehovah is the covenant God. Jehovah is the covenant name of God. He sovereignly establishes a relationship of friendship with His elect people in Jesus Christ. As the psalmist walked toward Jerusalem and raised his eyes to the mountains round about the city, he was reminded that Jehovah was round about His people—a covenant idea. Jehovah is with His people. Situated between those hills was Jerusalem, and in Jerusalem was the temple, where God dwelled with His people in fellowship. He dwelled with His people then, and dwells with us now, on the basis of the shed blood of Jesus Christ. Is it not astounding that Jehovah has, in 2019, and will, in 2020, dwell with *you*?

Help

From Jehovah—infinitely powerful, unchanging, covenant Jehovah—comes your *help*.

The psalmist needed help from Jehovah. Not only was the journey to the city quite possibly a long one, but the path could be marked with treacherous terrain, dangerous animals, and threatening robbers. Perhaps the pilgrim was also thinking on a more national scale of the enemies that Israel had faced in its past, and Israel’s need for help in the midst of all these attacks.

We also need help from Jehovah. As we traverse this life on the way home, innumerable threats and dangers face us. There is persecution—and such suffering is not a mere possibility for a disciple of Jesus, but a certainty. There is the work of Satan, seeking to bring to naught God’s work in you. There are the temptations that the foes hurl at you: tempting you with the allurements of this world; tempting you to become angry with or bitter toward God in adversity. There is your own sinful flesh, and we know how often we are seduced by and comply with the lusts of our flesh. We have an urgent need for help from Jehovah.

This help we need, and this help Jehovah alone gives. Jehovah’s help is His working for the good of His people. The opposite of helping is destroying and tearing down. He destroys and tears down the wicked. Beautifully, He does not destroy and tear us down, but He works all things for our advantage. That is help. But Psalm 121 tells us more about this help: Jehovah works for the good of His people in that He *protects* or *guards* them. Observe how many times “keepeth,” “keeper,” or “preserve” occur in the psalm. Jehovah protects us—that is help.

This help (protection) includes the watchful eye of Jehovah. If you are shopping, and your parents allow you to wander off with your three-year-old brother, they are expecting you to protect him. Protecting him means

you keep a watchful eye on him. Jehovah watches over and attentively cares for you, young person. His eye of love, grace, and mercy is upon you. This meticulous care knows no end. What the psalmist says is personal: “My help cometh from the LORD....” His eye is upon *you*. Jehovah, who made a star so big that it can fit over 9 billion suns into it—cares for *you*. Staggering. He is able to watch over you, being God almighty, and He is willing to do so, being covenant Jehovah.

If Jehovah’s help is His protecting or guarding us, does this mean that no evils will befall us in this life? Of course not! We will experience suffering and adversity here below. But Jehovah protects and preserves, which is to say, nothing will separate us from His love in Christ Jesus our Lord; it is to say that nothing shall bring to naught His work in us; it is to say that He will avert all evil, or turn it to our profit; it is to say that God is, for the sake of Christ His Son, our God and our Father, and He will make whatever evils He sends upon us, in this valley of tears, turn out to our advantage; it is to say that He so preserves us, that without the will of our heavenly Father not a hair can fall from our head, yea, that all things must be subservient to our salvation. And remember, the psalmist is personal: “My help cometh from the LORD....” The infinitely powerful, unchangeable God, the I AM THAT I AM—guards *you*. He is able to protect and preserve you, being God almighty, and He is willing to do so, being covenant Jehovah. What a comfort this is as we look to the year ahead!

God is our help in Jesus Christ. God sent forth His Son for us poor sinners. Jesus satisfied fully for all our sins. He vanquished all His and our enemies. He arose from the grave. He ascended into heaven. And what

does our Lord do at God’s right hand? He gathers, defends, and preserves His church! He defends and preserves *you*. And if God should send forth His Son for us sinners, He will certainly work all things for our good. He will work all things for our advantage, for Jesus’ sake. He guards us, in Christ. His providence is a gracious providence toward us, in Christ.

Confession

The faith-filled psalmist, in whom Jehovah was working, says, “I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills....” That is, he will lift his eyes to Jehovah, who is round about His people. This is what you say too, young people: “I will look for help from this Jehovah who surrounds His people with His powerful and loving arms; He is my Keeper and Savior in Jesus Christ.”

Then, the psalmist asks a question. Psalm 121:1 ends with a question, although it appears as a statement in your Bible. You could read verse 1 this way: “I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills; *from where does my help come?*” The psalmist does not ask this question because he is suddenly confused or doubting. Rather, he asks this question with the design of drawing out of himself a rich confession of who his Helper is. There is something about a question that grabs at the soul and allows for quiet meditation. Young people, when you are afraid, tempted, weary in the battle, or in the heat of adversity in this coming year, ask this question: from where does my help come?

The answer to this question is a rich confession: “My help cometh from the LORD, which made heaven and earth.” Personal confession! Beautiful confession! Your confession in the year ahead.

Special article

Text of remarks made at the dedication of Hope PR Christian High School (Redlands, CA) by Duane Huiskens

A new high school dedicated—Redlands, CA

Psalm 127:1 states, “Except the LORD build the house, they labor in vain that build it.” The same may be said about those who built this high school.

Throughout the addition of this high school, patience was a necessary ingredient. At the January 21 groundbreaking, it was mentioned that construction was delayed because of a dead tree. Even in this, God was teaching us patience.

In God’s providence, the parents of Redlands Protestant Reformed Church, which was organized in 1932, wanted and found a way to start and maintain our own Christian school in 1934, the denomination’s first. We all know the history, how the church and school were lost in 1954. However, the unquenchable desire once again to have our own school is evident from the formation of the Hope Christian School Society and its incorporation

July 19, 1967. The men who served on those initial society boards already had the desire for more than just a grade school. The charter granted by the state of California included both a grade school and a high school.

These were lofty goals, as at the time we did not have a building, teachers, or students; we just had the desire. This God-given desire for our own schools continues



to be passed from generation to generation, as there are great-grandchildren of those original society members in our school now. In the late 1960s and early 1970s the men of the early society approved buying and selling several plots of land before they acquired the original East Brockton four and a half acres.

Besides this desire, God also had to grant us patience. A long time has elapsed from those initial feasibility boards to the grade school and now this high school. We are blessed to still have with us a few of those men—Everett, Bill, Chuck, John, Otto, and Jake—who dedicated hours upon hours to our school. Today's board members stand on their shoulders in managing the school society's vision.

We know that a number of our schools in the West face different challenges, but we also know that we are blessed with a cooperative spirit that has allowed us to build this next level of covenant education. Planners, accountants, engineers, curriculum-development specialists, and teachers all engaged this God-given spirit before we broke ground. Once we broke ground, a different skillset kicked into gear to get this school built. Once again, God was teaching us patience through challenges, obstacles, and serious injury (We do not call them accidents, as with God there are no accidents—only providence.) The Redlands School Society is blessed with professionals in all the skills required to plan, fund, build, staff, and maintain this school.

The high school has more square footage under its roof than the K-4 building. Previous school buildings only needed to have electricity, gas, water and sewer services connected. Today I am told there is more than 5,000 feet of fiber-optic cabling between the buildings, so the computers all have Internet access. We have more

sophisticated fire sprinklers and fire alarms. It has been mentioned before—and it bears repeating—that even though building the school is expensive, that initial outlay is the smallest part of the investment; the ongoing operating expenses of teachers' salaries, utilities, and health insurance will far surpass the building cost.

While we are on the subject of cost, the various school boards may have sent out solicitation letters, but it was the Lord of the harvest who opened the wallets of those within and outside of our school society.

When the first high school building plans were proposed, the building was smaller. However, we continued to fundraise through the providential delays. Because we were able to build using almost entirely the money we had on hand, we did not have to take out a conventional loan. Right now, we are able to borrow a very small amount from our own general fund. We are blessed that God opened the hearts and wallets of very generous supporters of distinctive Reformed education. This includes an anonymous donation of the half-acre of land, large gifts from Protestant Reformed education foundations, individuals outside Redlands who value Reformed education, construction material donations, and scores of donors who give what the Lord puts in their hearts to give. As a result, the construction costs are not passed on to the parents' tuition burden.

Covenant Christian education is an investment. It is often one of the most significant draws on a family's budget, even more than food and housing. We believe our children are part of God's covenant and represent the church's fu-



ture. The wickedness of the public schools and the falling away of the nominally Christian churches are why we know God has given us the means and the desire to have our own distinctively Reformed high school. In one of Rev. (now Professor) B. Huizinga's last sermons in Redlands, he raised several points regarding our responsibilities to these precious gifts from God. Children are a gift from God. The devil is just inside the door of public schools waiting to snatch these young, impressionable souls. We have distinctively Reformed schools not to make our children Christians, but because we believe that they are in God's covenant.

For our continuation as one of the reflections of light in this world and for all our little lights who attend this

school, we continue to covet your support and prayers for this work of God's kingdom here on earth.

Just a few weeks before we opened the high school, I was talking to a long-term supporter of our school. His comment when asked what he thinks of it was simply, "Wow." He was part of the group that built the



original school in spring and summer of 1975, when the construction was simpler and still done by volunteers. I am sure that part of his "wow" was that since the original vision of two classrooms with a kitchen, we have grown to eight teachers, four aides and more than 60 children on campus with a projection of near 100 in the next five years. The "wow" factor also includes the students. In the next "Hope Herald" there will be a number of articles that show a few of the details that were built in, from a water-bottle filler (saving thousands of plastic water bottles), to lockers, to enhanced conference calling that allows for our Spanish teacher to be in Ireland, to a first-class science laboratory that

encompasses chemistry and physics as well as the other sciences. We and our students are truly blessed in the pursuit of knowledge of God's creation.

Such building projects require a lot of cooperation, but to be successfully completed before the deadline requires a dedicated project manager. We would like to thank Mark and Ron Van Voorthuysen for the hundreds of hours they spent shepherding our project through the various city departments, meeting with the various inspectors, subcontractors and school boards, acting as unpaid general contractors with our best interests in mind.

I will refer to it as Hope Christian High School, rather than Hope Christian School High School, as I believe more than one instance of the word "school" is redundant.

Ladies, gentlemen and students, we hereby dedicate Hope Christian High School to the secondary education of God's young people. Our gracious heavenly Father receives all the glory for providing all of our needs,



and especially this wonderful means of advancing God's work here on earth.



News from our churches

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

Trivia question

Prof. Barry Gritters traveled to the Siouxland area of Iowa to give a Reformation lecture. What was his topic? Answer later in this column.

Minister activities

The Lord has led Rev. Jon Mahtani to accept the call to serve as minister-on-loan to Singapore. May God be

with him and his family, as well as with Cornerstone PRC and Covenant ERC as they make this transition.

Immanuel PRC of Lacombe, AB Canada has issued a call to Rev. Ryan Barnhill, pastor in Peace PRC of Dyer, IN. On November 24 he declined this call.

Congregational activities

The Activities Committee at Providence PRC planned

a “Clue at the Cakery” night on Friday November 15. This included dinner and a mystery/scavenger hunt game resembling the board game Clue. It was billed as a fun interactive game night! This sounds like a big hit and something I’d like to try!

First PRC of Edmonton, AB held their ever-popular Car Rally on Remembrance Day with lots of competitors.

Young people's activities

The Young People’s Thanksgiving Mass Meeting was held December 1 at Trinity PRC at 2 P.M. with a speech by Rev. W. Langerak on “Spreading the Word as Young People” based on I Thess.1:8.” All young people were encouraged to attend for a time of fellowship and growth.

The young people of First PRC of Holland, MI held a soup supper recently, offering five different delicious soups and also serving grilled cheese sandwiches and dessert. A great menu for a cool weather gathering.

Cornerstone PRC young people held an action-packed dodgeball tournament! Hopefully everyone survived unscathed.

Providence young people sold Hungry Howie’s pizza certificates and homemade old-fashioned sea foam and blanket. According to their announcement these were *perfect* for holiday parties or gift giving.

The Annual Wingham young people’s volleyball tournament was held recently. There was room for 12 teams and each team had to include two girls. The event was advertised as a “fun, action-packed, food-filled day!” Hopefully you made it there. If not, you missed a great event and you should plan on attending next year.

The young people in Hull, IA PRC held a game night for all those in the congregation over 60 years old. I’m guessing there were some good checkers players in that crowd! A game I could never beat my dad at.

The young people in Lynden, WA PRC began to discuss dating recently. Here’s how their bulletin read:

Dating wasn’t done in Bible times, but the Bible still has much to say about this modern practice. Do we have a biblical perspective on dating? Let’s begin by discussing your answers to the questionnaire on dating that was handed out last week. Then we’ll begin reading and discussing Rev. Engelsma’s new book, “Dating Differently.” Come prepared tonight for another good discussion!

I do believe all of our young people’s societies could benefit from this new book, available from the RFP.

The young people and diaconate of Peace PRC in Dyer, IN planned a fall cleanup day for elderly members

of their congregation. Those in need of assistance simply had to sign up and help was on the way! A nice idea.

School activities

The Mothers’ Circle of Hope PR School (Walker, MI) recently made and sold pigs-in-the-blanket as a fundraiser. And their holiday fudge fundraiser was once again a success! Hope also held their All-School Program entitled “Lead Me Lord” in the auditorium of Grandville high school. And at a special society meeting in November to consider purchasing an adjacent piece of property (for parking) and a building project (for a new music room), both proposals passed.

The Free Christian School of Edgerton made the Minnesota version of pigs-in-the-blanket.

Heritage Christian School Foundation’s “Evening of Praise” was held November 30 with a dessert reception to follow the concert in Grandville high school. The All-School program was held at Fair Haven Ministries with the theme “The Lord’s Prayer.”

Covenant Christian High School choirs have recorded a new CD titled “Finish Well.” Delivery of CDs should be before Christmas.

The Taste of Loveland cookbook benefiting Loveland PRCS is for sale for a discounted price of \$16 plus S&H, free shipping on orders of 2 or more. These make great gifts for family, friends, singles, and newlyweds! Special offers good through the year-end. Please contact Brittany DeJong at lpccscookbook@gmail.com to place your order. Mmmm!

Denominational news

The seminary has announced that Josiah Tan, a student from Covenant ERC in Singapore, has been licensed to bring a word of edification in the churches.

Trivia answer

Prof. B. Gritters’ lecture was on the fourth commandment, “The Command God’s People Love to Keep.” He ended with a short and pertinent verse that goes like this: “A Sabbath profaned whatever may be gained, is a certain forerunner of sorrow. But a Sabbath well spent brings a week of content, and health for the toils of tomorrow.” Amen to that!

Profiles of the churches are starting to come in. Please send yours in soon. Judging by the early entries they should be interesting to all!

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

Announcements

Wedding anniversary

With thanksgiving to God, we celebrate the 50th wedding anniversary of our parents and grandparents, **John and Jean Wynia**, on December 17, 2019. We have seen God's covenant faithfulness demonstrated as He has preserved them through these many years together. How thankful we are for their dedication to a godly home, Christian education, and to Christ and His church. To God be the glory! "It is of the LORD's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness" (Lamentations 3:22-23).

Brian Wynia

Glenn and Lisa Kelderman, Megan and Mykle

Stephan and Jennifer De Jong, Chloe, Weston,

Ava and Mitchell

Brent and Shari Wynia, Kyle, Alex and Jacie

Bradley Wynia

Brandon Wynia

Brady and Brittany Wynia, Covey

Paul and Marlena Kirschenman

Doon, Iowa

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.

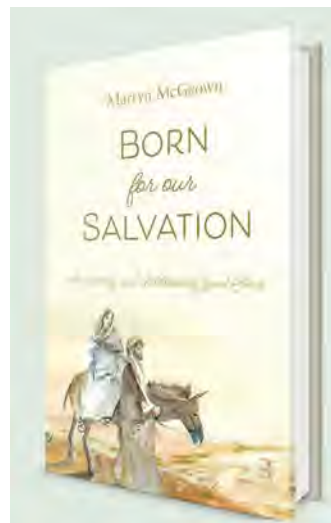
Teacher needed

Covenant Christian High School in Grand Rapids, MI is accepting applications from members of the Protestant Reformed Churches for teaching positions in the 2020-21 school year. There is a particular need in the area of Mathematics but applications will be accepted from those with secondary certification in other subject areas. Those who are interested are encouraged to contact Mr. Rick Noorman, Administrator, or Dr. Brian Decker, Education Committee, for more information. Email contacts are ricknoorman@gmail.com or call 616-453-5048 and deckerbj@gmail.com.

Classis East

Classis East will meet in regular session on Wednesday, January 8, 2020, at 8:00 A.M., in the Zion Protestant Reformed Church, Jenison, MI.

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