

# The Standard Bearer

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## Bearing one another's burdens

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## Meditation

Rev. Michael DeVries, minister emeritus in the Protestant Reformed Churches and member of Southwest PRC in Wyoming, MI

# Bearing one another's burdens

**Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.**

**Galatians 6:2**

Burdens—we all know what they are. We all have them and struggle to bear them to one extent or another. They are the temptations and sins with which we struggle, the anxious cares, the sufferings, and the sorrows that weigh heavily upon us physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Yes, Scripture exhorts us to “cast thy burden upon the LORD” (Ps. 55:22a), but it is not always as simple as that. We need help.

In this chapter the apostle Paul is applying the truth that living in the Spirit calls for a consistent walk in the Spirit of Christ. In the opening verse, in what we might call a “case study,” he shows how walking according to the Spirit is shown in the tender and merciful restoration of a fellow saint who through weakness fell into sin. It is this thought of the proper restoration of a fellow saint who has fallen into some transgression that leads Paul to broaden his admonition. For there are many burdens that we ought to help one another bear.

The apostle is really describing the mutual calling in the communion of saints. It is the communion of the saints in action. In the fellowship of the church, we are not merely to “tolerate each other,” or “put up with each other.” By the grace of God we must jointly shoulder each member's burdens as we have opportunity. This is the blessedness of the communion of saints, that each is not left to bear his burden alone. In the love of Christ others will help him to bear it.

As we noted, the apostle Paul speaks particularly in the context of a burden of sin. Ultimately, *the* burden is sin. Sin disrupts the walk in the Spirit. It robs one of his hope and comfort. Sin disrupts the manifestation of the life of Christ. Sin brings into one's life and into the church great misery and grief. Sin is a heavy weight! It drags us down! It would crush us! When a brother or sister is overtaken in a fault, in a certain sin, we must seek to restore them.

Such sin is a terrible thing. Another's sin may never

be the occasion for lightheartedness or indifference on our part. We may not simply ignore or overlook the sin of a brother or sister. We may not take the attitude, “Well, that's his problem.” In a spirit of meekness, we seek to restore.

At the same time, we must recognize the sad reality that sin has consequences that also may be grievous burdens upon us. There are effects of sin everywhere. There is the reality of God's curse upon this world in which we live. This broadens the whole concept of “one another's burdens.” This would include all the trials and tribulations of this present time. Living in the midst of this world, we know from hard personal experience what burdens are: besetting sins against which we must constantly fight, pain, affliction, financial adversity, anxiety, depression, loneliness, doubts, fears, sorrow, and so much more.

For each of us, our particular burdens, at any given time, are concrete. There is nothing vague or abstract about them. Maybe it is a rebellious son or daughter. Maybe it is living with severe pain. Maybe it is struggling to make ends meet financially. Maybe it is coping with the loss of a loved one. Maybe it is division and separation taking place in the church or your family. You know your burdens and I know mine.

Our calling is to bear one another's burdens. As we become aware of a burden, we become involved, not curiously prying or intruding into someone's personal affairs, but seeking to help out of genuine concern. When it is a matter of a specific way of sin, we are to restore such an one in the spirit of meekness. We do not ignore it. We do not gossip about it. We pray for him/her. We seek out the brother or sister in the love of Christ. It is our desire to bow together before the Word of God and the cross of Christ. We seek restoration in the God-ordained way of confession of sin, hearty repentance, and forsaking of sin. It may well mean lending support—encouraging, comforting, admonishing, listening, perhaps just being there!

But whose calling is this? Is this perhaps only the calling of the officebearers of the church, the pastor,

elders, and deacons? Certainly they have an official responsibility in this regard in their respective offices. They have an awesome responsibility as undershepherds of the flock of Christ.

But there is also a mutual calling given the people of God. There is an area in the church of Christ where the saints together bear one another's burdens, supply one another's needs, help and care for one another in times of trouble and distress. And so the apostle opens this chapter addressing us as "brethren." He speaks to us as those who are "spiritual" (v. 1).

By nature we would not and could not bear one another's burdens. The natural man stands in enmity against God and his neighbor. He has no genuine concern for the brother or sister laboring under a heavy burden. In his supposed sympathy or assistance he is never motivated by the love of Christ. His tender mercies are cruel. Ultimately he delights in the downfall of the brother to the exaltation of self.

But as "brethren," as "ye which are spiritual," we are not only exhorted by Christ but also enabled by His Spirit to bear one another's burdens. God has sovereignly and graciously ordained a communion of saints, ultimately the whole body of the elect. But that fellowship or communion of the saints is manifest in this world wherever the true church is manifest. By God's grace we see and experience this in our own congregation. We are not alone! God brings together many saints who are personally distinct and diverse from one another. But each of us receives of God a place according to our gifts and calling.

One does not receive the gifts and calling of the Spirit by himself only to serve his own selfish ends, but always for the sake of others. We need each other. We mutually satisfy one another's needs. Yes, we are to bear one another's burdens.

In the last verses of Acts 2 there is a beautiful picture presented during that unique time of the church's infancy when there was persecution and great poverty. But there were present at that time indications of the love, concern, and care for one's fellow saints that must always exist among us. The apostle states in I Corinthians 12:25, 26 that the care of the saints for one another must be such that "whether one member suffer all the members suffer with it; or one member be honored, all the members rejoice with it."

And let us remember that this is vitally important for the women of the church. God lays this calling upon women because they have received from God natures that are well suited for this work. Women have a sensitivity, a sympathy, a charitableness of spirit that men are not always as inclined to possess.

Think of examples in Scripture. Remember Tabitha, also called Dorcas, who "was full of good works and almsdeeds which she did" (Acts 9:36). Think of Lydia, the seller of purple in Philippi, who opened her home to Paul and Silas. In Romans 16:1, 2 Paul commends Phoebe, a spiritual sister, a servant of the church at Cenchrea, "for she hath been a succourer of many and of myself also." Never think that as women you have nothing to do in the church! Never let it be said that the faithful church of Christ stifles women, holds them down! For God has given virtuous, godly women in His church this calling, "Bear ye one another's burdens!"

Also the youth, young people, even our children need to hear this exhortation to bear one another's burdens. By nature, in our younger years we are inclined to be self-centered, concerned about our own popularity, focused on our own problems and burdens. But we are called in our youth to bear one another's burdens.

How is this calling fulfilled? As we have seen, it is possible only as saints, brothers and sisters in the Lord. It is possible only by grace, only as we walk in the Spirit. The context emphasizes that the virtues of meekness and humility are necessary. In verse 1 we are exhorted to restore our fallen fellow saint "in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted" (cf. v. 3). In bearing one another's burdens there is no place for pride!

In Ephesians 4:32 we read, "And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." Bearing one another's burdens is possible only if there is that kindness, genuine concern, and tenderheartedness. It is possible only when we are ready to forgive one another our sins, even seventy times seven.

And how vital it is for us to be sensitive to the burdens of others. Often we will not be asked to help. We must strive to be sensitive to the needs of our fellow saints. We ought to have a listening ear so that we become aware of these burdens and know what we can do. And let us guard our tongues! We must be able to keep personal matters private. Spreading reports of sin or problems makes those burdens heavier.

Yet we often wonder what we can really do to help others with their burdens. First and foremost, let us pray for one another! "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much" (James 5:16b). And let us remember that bearing one another's burdens is not something that needs to be excessively difficult, or time-consuming, or costly. It is not usually earth-shaking sacrifices that are involved in bearing one another's burdens. It is the little ordinary deeds of kindness, love, and concern: an encouraging phone call or email mes-

sage, a listening ear, a short visit, a card, some cookies, a tender touch, a ride to the doctor or to Bible study, a note on a care-page. Bear ye one another's burdens!

Remember too that we are but means. Christ is the One who ultimately bears our burdens. His Word is, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28).

Nevertheless, Christ calls us to bear one another's burdens: "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ." In Galatians 5:14 Paul says, "For all

the law is fulfilled is one word...." That phrase, "all the law," means just what it says. It refers to the whole law in every detail. It is the law as it expresses fully the will of God for us. It is the law as it is the rule for our life of thankfulness. This says it all, this one word. What is it? *Love*—"Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" (Gal. 5:14b).

Let us bear the burdens of the brothers and sisters of Christ! Let us minister to one another in true love, so fulfilling the law of Christ.



## Editorial

Prof. Brian Huizinga, professor of Dogmatics and Old Testament in the Protestant Reformed Theological Seminary

# Synods 2020/2021 and "in the way of repentance" (5)

Let's go up to 35,000 feet to see the lay of the land. There are really two issues in the dispute over repentance. One: what is repentance? Two: how does it relate to remission? Is it permissible to teach that repentance *precedes* remission or does that put man *before* God, so that the pardoning God must wait upon the penitent sinner? The second issue is the main issue of dispute. Protests to synod said: repentance cannot be prior to remission, because repentance is a good work and good works always come *after* blessings of salvation. Synod rejected the protests because they deny the order God has established in His Word: repentance is unto remission.

In article #1 in this series I introduced the doctrinal issue faced by our synods. In article #2 I distinguished repentance and good works of obedience, because synod judged these two were confused by the protestant. In article #3 I took the time to provide a carefully worded, bare-bones definition of repentance and demonstrated my reliance upon Scripture, the confessions, and the Reformed tradition. In article #4 I took that skeletal definition, "repentance is the believer's sorrowful turn from sin unto God in the seeking of remission," and put some meat on it with the language of Scripture. At this point then, we have a very thorough explanation of repentance. Before I come to remission of sin and take up the main issue in relating repentance to remission, I want to establish the gospel truth that repentance is not of man but entirely of God's sovereign grace.

## All of grace

The sinner repents. God does not repent for the sinner. Should there ever be a theology that teaches that repentance is the act of God, in the sense that the sinner, because he is by nature totally depraved, does not repent but that God actually performs the activity of repentance for him, then that theology is not only contrary to Scripture and the confessions but an absurdity. God does not turn from sin in sorrow over it and turn to another seeking remission, nor does He do that somehow in our place. *We* repent, and thus we properly speak, and without nervousness, of "*our* repentance," by which we do not mean that we are the source, but the subject of the action. That we repent is the official teaching of the Reformed faith in Canons III/IV, Art. 12: "Wherefore also, man is himself rightly said to believe and repent by virtue of that grace received."

Our activity of repentance, however, is to be explained by God's sovereign grace. Apart from divine grace not one person over the length and breadth of the earth would ever repent. There is absolutely no native desire or ability in man to repent. If repentance were a condition for pardon so that the pardoning God had to wait upon us and our repentance, He would forever be waiting and never pardoning. Should there ever be a theology that teaches that repentance is the act of man apart from or even in cooperation with divine grace, and an act upon which God depends, then that theology is not only contrary to Scripture and the confessions but



nonsense according to the believer's own experience. That repentance is all of grace is also the official teaching of the Reformed faith in Canons III/IV, Art. 12, when it teaches that we repent "by virtue of that grace received," and in Canons V, Art. 7, when it teaches that God, "by His Word and Spirit, certainly and effectually renews them to repentance."

Who does not know from personal experience that repentance is all of grace? Have you ever tried to get through to a stubborn sinner, even a defiant toddler? More importantly, we all know about ourselves personally that we will *never* repent apart from the wonder of God's grace. Having sinned, we will defend ourselves, stringing together one lie after another if necessary; we will play the victim and try to manipulate the impressionable to our side; we will point the finger at everyone else and blast away at all their impiety and self-righteousness; we will feign sorrow after getting caught and weep the big tears of a hypocrite in order to relieve the pressure being applied; we will find and distort some verse in the Bible upon which to rest our case of self-justification and then piously thump away; we will stand before God, angels, and all men everywhere and insist upon our innocence, but we will not repent. We are so wicked by nature that we not only sin, but we deny our sin and act incredulous or indignant when someone dares to suggest we did, in fact, sin.

Of ourselves we will never admit wrong. We will never say, "I did it. I sinned." Like our father we say, "*She* gave me of the tree," and like our mother we say, "The *serpent* beguiled me." With a massive timber log in our own eye, we deceive ourselves and say, "Look at the speck in *his* eye, let's pull it out!" "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us" (I John 1:8). The problem is *within* us. We need a change of mind and heart. We need repentance. And only God can renew us to repentance.

We repent, but repentance is not of man. Repentance is of God, and through God, and to God, so that when a sinner repents he will never take credit for it but give glory to and adore the God of his salvation. From beginning to end Scripture teaches the sovereign grace of God in repentance.

### God's election

Repentance is rooted in and flows out of God's eternal decree of election. Scripture teaches election as the deepest source of repentance when it describes us as *sheep*. The foremost theological truth being taught by Scripture in its identification of us as sheep is not that we are weak, foolish, defenseless, and vulnerable, but that we are *elect*. All throughout John 10, the elect are

identified as the sheep whom God gave to Jesus. Most notably, we read of Jesus telling the Jews that they do not believe in Him, "because ye are not of my sheep" (v. 26). The designation "sheep" underscores eternal election. The Jews did not believe because they did not belong to the company of the elect given to Jesus from all eternity and appointed to salvation.

When Scripture teaches, "All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned everyone to his own way" (Is. 53:6, see also I Pet. 2:25), what guarantees our repentance and restoration is that we are *sheep*. From eternity we have been chosen unto salvation, including repentance. We were not elected *because of* foreseen repentance, but we were eternally and graciously elected *unto* repentance so that "God who is rich in mercy, according to His unchangeable purpose of election... certainly and effectually renews them to repentance" (Canons V, Arts. 6, 7). Even if only one sheep should go wandering, Christ will go out to seek, find, and restore that sheep by bringing him to repentance (Luke 15:3-7) because that sheep is His to save and preserve according to eternal election.

To say that the decree of election is the deepest source of repentance is to ascribe repentance to the love of our covenant God. God loves us with an eternal and unchanging love that draws us to Himself (Jer. 31:3). God's love is always first and sovereign. God promises His love and mercy to those who repent and He certainly gives the taste of it to those who repent, but He is the One who by His covenantal love and mercy brings the sinner to repentance. Even when we do not love our Friend-Sovereign, but disdain Him and His good commandments, going our own stubborn way, not conscious of His love for us, still He loves us. In His abiding love, our Father renews us to repentance so that we sing, "Though we oft have sinned against Him, still His love and grace abide" (Psalter 280, stanza 3).

### Christ's cross

The truth that repentance is all of sovereign grace includes the truth that repentance is one benefit of our salvation procured for us by the Good Shepherd when He laid down His life for us sheep on the cross. The Scripture traces repentance and the preaching of it back to its source in the cross. To the disciples Jesus expounded the Scriptures concerning Himself, "And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem," (Luke 24:46-47). Repentance is preached *in His name*, because He is the One who suffered, died,

and rose again to obtain repentance for His sheep. The call to repentance is grounded in Christ's work of redemption at the cross so that God says: "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me; for I have redeemed thee" (Is. 44:22).

### The Spirit's work

The truth that repentance is all of sovereign grace is taught most commonly in Scripture when it teaches that repentance is God's gift to us, a gift He works in us by His Holy Spirit so that we turn. The God who freely gives us *remission* of all of our sins, is also the God who freely grants us *repentance* unto remission.

Why do the inhabitants of Jerusalem mourn over their sins? Because God pours out His Spirit of grace upon them: "And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn" (Zech. 12:10). Why do the Gentiles repent? Because God gave them repentance: "When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life" (Acts 11:18, see also Acts 5:31). If a rebellious man of the congregation is brought to repentance, how is that to be explained? God gave him repentance: "In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth" (II Tim. 2:25).

If I turn from my sin, what explains that turning? God turned me, as He did Ephraim: "I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus; thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke: turn thou me, and I shall be turned; for thou art the Lord my God. Surely after that I was turned, I repented; and after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh: I was ashamed, yea, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth" (Jer. 31:18-19). In repentance I turn, I truly turn with my heart, mind, soul, and strength. But I turn because God turned me. He worked in me so sweetly by His Spirit, changing my heart and bending my will, so that I consciously turn from my sin unto Him in true sorrow.

Furthermore, the repentance of Ephraim teaches us that God is often pleased to bring His wayward children to repentance through the means of *chastening* so that we say with Ephraim "Thou hast chastised me." If we ever lose our spiritual senses like the prodigal son and are ruled by the lusts of the flesh, then God may

bring us into miserable straits and lay His heavy hand of love upon us so that we groan in agony. In that way of chastening, God the Spirit brings us to our spiritual senses so that we see the emptiness of sin and the hopelessness of life without God.

To put it another way, repentance is simply the fruit of God remembering His covenant. When we stray, then Jehovah says, "Nevertheless, I will remember my covenant with thee in the days of thy youth, and I will establish unto thee an everlasting covenant. Then thou shalt remember thy ways and be ashamed..." (Ez. 16:60-61). When God remembers His covenant, He remembers His unbreakable promise and keeps it by breathing His Spirit into our hearts so that our faith is rekindled and we turn in repentance. The very repentance and faith He demands in the gospel is the repentance and faith He gives in remembrance of His covenant.

### The church's preaching

Finally, Scripture teaches the truth of God's sovereign grace in repentance by teaching God's use of the chief means of grace, the preaching of the gospel, to turn us. Of John the Baptist, Luke 1:16 teaches, "And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God." No one knows better than John himself that he did not and cannot turn one heart to the Lord. The preacher cannot even turn his own heart. Nevertheless, what belongs exclusively to the sovereign grace of God wrought through the Spirit's effectual operations is ascribed to the preacher only to demonstrate that God uses the ministry of the Word by the church to work repentance. The *Word*, not resurrections from the dead or other miraculous demonstrations of divine power, but the *Word* is how God is pleased to bring His own to repentance. Luke 16:30-31, "And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead."

When the Good Shepherd goes out to seek, find, and restore us, His foolish, wandering sheep, He uses His voice (Luke 15, John 10). When through lawfully called and ordained heralds the church sends forth the gospel with its call "Return!" that gospel goes forth as the effectual voice of the Shepherd. With His Word the Good Shepherd pursues us. He breaks down our hard hearts as with a hammer (Jer. 23:29) and pierces them through as with a sword (Heb. 4:12). God be praised for our repentance!



## All around us

Rev. Nathan Decker, pastor of Grandville Protestant Reformed Church in Grandville, Michigan

# Sexual abuse in the church

### Introduction

The subject of this “All Around Us” article is sexual abuse in the realm of the church, a topic about which it is difficult to write and to read. However, it is necessary to do so because, in the first place, we must have a certain level of knowledge that the terrible evil of sexual abuse *is* present in the church. For a member of the church of Christ to think that sexual abuse only occurs in the world is wrong. Not only does such a mentality cause the church not to take the necessary protective measures to prevent sexual abuse from making inroads in the church, but it also very easily leads to a wrong or inadequate response to revelations of sexual abuse. Closely related, a second reason is that the church must seek to grow in her understanding of the dynamics and damage of the sin of sexual abuse. There are so many helpful resources available for doing so, and I encourage the readers of the *Standard Bearer* to avail themselves of them. Regardless, we will be better equipped to prevent this evil in the church as much as possible, protect the vulnerable, and provide true help to those who have walked in this sin by learning from the stories of sexual abuse that are present around us.

### The Roman Catholic Church

I begin with recent reports concerning the Roman Catholic Church (RCC). Sadly, the storyline here is not new. On several occasions, the RCC has been exposed as harboring extensive sexual abuse of children by priests. Of particular note is the work of investigative journalists at the *Boston Globe*, which uncovered the abuse of hundreds of children by dozens of priests in Boston, the largest city of Roman Catholic members in the United States. The investigative work of the *Boston Globe* opened the floodgates of more revelations in the coming years, not only in the U.S. but throughout the world.

One of the more recent stories to break in this regard concerns the RCC in France. A two-and-half-year independent inquiry commissioned by the RCC in France revealed a staggering amount of sexual abuse that had occurred over the past seventy-five years. The report’s information was based on court records, police records,

and church records and speaking first-hand to abuse victims and witnesses. The results were staggering: an estimated 3,000 priests abused some 215,000 children. When considering the broader organization of the RCC, particularly its system of schools, the actual number of abuse cases is likely much higher.

Next we consider what has recently been documented regarding the RCC in Nebraska. The Attorney General of the Nebraska Department of Justice issued a report on sexual abuse in the three dioceses in the state (Lincoln, Omaha, and Grand Island), going back to the 1930s. The investigation revealed 258 credible allegations of sexual abuse and misconduct by fifty-seven church officials. Because of the statute of limitations, most of these abuse cases could not be prosecuted.

I conclude this section regarding the RCC with two quotations from the two men who lead the aforementioned investigations. Both touch on points we do well to consider carefully. Jean-Marc Sauvé, the head of the inquiry into the French RCC, commented regarding the church’s response to the presence of sexual abuse in the church, “There was a whole bunch of negligence, of deficiency, of silence, an institutional cover-up.”<sup>1</sup> And Douglas Peterson, the attorney general of Nebraska, wrote the following in the cover page of his report regarding the RCC in Nebraska:

The most troubling finding from this report is the fact that on numerous occasions, when there was an opportunity to bring justice to the victims, those in authority chose to place the reputation of the church above the protection of the children who placed their spiritual care in the hands of those in church authority. The depth of physical and psychological harm caused by the perpetrators, and the decades of failure by the church to safeguard so many child victims, is unfathomable.<sup>2</sup>

Let the church be warned not only against the sin of sexual abuse itself, but also against the evil of an institution proudly covering up such abuse in her midst.

1 <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-58801183>.

2 [https://ago.nebraska.gov/sites/ago.nebraska.gov/files/doc/Report of Clergy Sexual Abuse - November 4 - 2021.pdf](https://ago.nebraska.gov/sites/ago.nebraska.gov/files/doc/Report%20of%20Clergy%20Sexual%20Abuse%20-%20November%204%20-%202021.pdf).



## Ravi Zacharias

The name Ravi Zacharias may or may not be familiar to the readers of the *SB*. Ravi Zacharias was a well known Christian apologist, leader of a ministry called Ravi Zacharias International Ministries (RZIM), author of more than thirty books, regular contributor through speaking and writing to Ligonier Ministries (the Christian organization founded by R.C. Sproul, which has since removed all of Zacharias' material from their website). Diagnosed with a rare cancer in his spine in March of 2020, Ravi Zacharias died on May 19, 2020. Toward the end of his life in 2017, a woman brought accusations against him regarding sexual misconduct. Zacharias denied the allegations, apologizing and accepting responsibility only for being a "willing participant in an extended communication with a woman not my wife."<sup>3</sup> This 2017 statement concluded with these words regarding his marriage to his wife: "In my 45 years of marriage to Margie, I have never engaged in any inappropriate behavior of any kind. I love my wife with all my heart and have been absolutely faithful to her these more than 16,000 days of marriage, and have exercised extreme caution in my daily life and travels, as everyone who knows me is aware."<sup>4</sup> Upon his death in 2020, however, the sad reality of his life came to light. Ravi Zacharias engaged in sexual misconduct and sexually abusive behavior for many years, often under the guise of receiving massage treatment for chronic lower back pain. His comments in 2017 quoted above about marital faithfulness were patently false.

The purpose of the above paragraph is not to drag through the mud the name of man now deceased. The objective, instead, is to learn from this heart-wrenching story. And there is much to be learned from it, which can be summarized by two words: accountability and deception. Leaders in the church and persons in positions of authority must be surrounded by others who hold them accountable. A humble leader who knows his sin and sinfulness will not question, but ask for, high levels of accountability. But even with levels of accountability in place, such sinful behavior may still be present because a fundamental characteristic of those who engage in sexually abusive behavior is the ability to deceive. To reflect on the above story of Ravi Zacharias is to see how a man can gain the unquestioned trust of so many people for such a long time. Those deceived by such conduct are not only those who are themselves the objects of sexual abuse, but also others

who surround the perpetrator. The manipulation extends to the community and institution of which one is a part, which is one of the reasons it is possible for one to walk in these sins for an extended period of time.

## The Southern Baptist Convention

The final example that demonstrates sexual abuse in the realm of the church is that of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC). The SBC is the largest Baptist denomination in the U.S. A recognizable name from these churches is Albert Mohler, current president of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, the denomination's flagship seminary. The *Houston Chronicle* and *San Antonio Express-News* ran stories in 2019, revealing hundreds of cases of sexual abuse by pastors, church leaders, youth leaders, Sunday school teachers, and church volunteers. Some of them even remained in positions of leadership in the church. The denomination continues to deal with the effects of these stories. After their publication, the delegates to the annual meeting of the SBC mandated an independent third-party investigation into the response of the SBC's Executive Committee (the committee that acts on behalf of the convention when not in session) to cases of sexual abuse over the past twenty years. The annual meeting of the SBC this past June revealed division over this investigation, mainly because the Executive Committee had refused to waive attorney-client privilege for the inquiry. In response, churches and leaders in the SBC put pressure upon the committee to do so. Several weeks after the annual meeting, the Executive Committee voted to waive attorney-client privilege, thus opening the door for Guidepost Solutions, an independent firm contracted by the SBC, to begin its investigation. The results are yet to be known. The firm is planning to make its report and findings public before the June 2022 annual meeting of the SBC.<sup>5</sup>

This is a troubling article to write and a distressing article to read. Such is the nature of writing and reading about sin, especially the horrible and damaging evil of sexual abuse. Nevertheless, my hope and prayer is that this article is edifying. May God use it to make us aware of what is present in the realm of the church and to help us understand that no Christian community is immune from this evil. And consequently, may we be better equipped to respond to the sexual abuse that may be present among us in a way that honors God and shows genuine love for the church of Jesus Christ.

3 <https://churchleaders.com/news/383717-the-story-behind-the-ravi-zacharias-allegations-part-1-lawsuits-ndas-and-email-threads.html/5>.

4 <https://churchleaders.com/news/383717>.

5 <https://www.christianitytoday.com/news/2021/october/executive-committee-investigation-privilege-vote-sbc-abuse.html>.



## Pillar and ground of truth

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

# The Council of Chalcedon (451): The meeting

Previous article in this series: December 1, 2021, p. 107.

We have seen that the Council of Chalcedon was necessary for two reasons: first, to combat the wrong teachings of Eutyches, and second, to formulate a confessional statement regarding the relationship of the divine and human natures in the person of the Son of God. We also noted that Emperor Theodosius might have promoted the Eutychian error, but that he died suddenly and his successor, Emperor Marcian, favored the orthodox view. God's directing hand prepared all things for the meeting of the Fourth Ecumenical Council.

### Delegates, date, and location

An "ecumenical" council is one that represents all of Christendom. At least 500 bishops at the Council of Chalcedon represented eastern Christendom (Greece, Asia Minor, Syria, and Palestine). The representatives from the western region (Europe, centered in Rome) were three delegates whom Pope Leo I sent. By now, the seeds had been planted for the idea that the pope was the head of the church. Leo I was the first to speak of the Bishop of Rome as preeminent among bishops and as the successor of Peter. To have three representatives from the pope at this Council was sufficient; the pope represented all of western Christendom.

The Council held fifteen sessions between October 8, 451 and early November. The Emperor originally intended it to meet in Nicea, but moved it seventy-five miles to the northwest, to Chalcedon. Chalcedon was just on the eastern side of the Bosphorus, across from Constantinople on the western side. This enabled the imperial senate and court to attend the Council, and to keep law and order. The delegates were a rowdy bunch, and the pro-Eutychian party and anti-Eutychian party were often at each other physically as well as verbally.

During its first three sessions, the Council annulled the decisions of the Synod of Ephesus in 449, committed itself to the view of Cyril and Pope Leo I (the orthodox view regarding Christ's natures), and deposed and excommunicated Dioscorus, a proponent of Eutychianism. During its second session, the Council also read the letter from Pope Leo.

### Pope Leo's letter

Convinced that Eutyches was wrong, Pope Leo I had sent a lengthy letter to the Council in which he demonstrated that Christ was both truly divine and truly human. Leo showed that the Nicene Creed really had addressed the matter. In saying that Christ was the only begotten Son of God, it taught that Christ was divine, and of the same being (essence) as God. And in teaching that Christ was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary, the Nicene Creed taught that He took on real human flesh. Leo also showed that the Scriptures taught this in many places.

One quote from the letter is significant:

The Son is everlasting,...differing in nothing from the Father, because He was born as "God from God," Almighty from Almighty, Coeternal from Eternal; not later in time, not inferior in power, not unlike Him in glory, not divided from Him in essence, but the same Only-begotten and Everlasting Son of an Everlasting Parent....<sup>1</sup>

Take a moment to read the Creed of Chalcedon now; you will see this view of Leo reflected in it.<sup>2</sup>

The delegates desired to align themselves with the decisions of the previous councils. So, in the fourth session, they confirmed the decisions of the first two Ecumenical Councils as expressed in the Nicene Creed. At the fifth session they adopted the Creed of Chalcedon, which begins, "following the holy fathers." At the conclusion of the sixth session, more than 450 of them signed it. In the remaining sessions, the delegates treated other church political matters.

The next article, God willing, will focus on the theology of the Creed of Chalcedon. After that, an article will be devoted to these other church-political matters.

1 "The Tome of St. Leo," *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Second Series, Volume 14, *The Seven Ecumenical Councils* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1988), 254.

2 Most books containing the ecumenical creeds include it. It can also be found at <http://www.prca.org/about/official-standards/creeds/ecumenical/chalcedon>.



## Search the Scriptures

Rev. Ronald Hanko, minister emeritus in the Protestant Reformed Churches and member of Covenant of Grace PRC in Spokane, WA

# Jonah's displeasure

**But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry. And he prayed unto the LORD, and said, I pray thee, O LORD, was not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish: for I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil. Therefore now, O LORD, take, I beseech thee, my life from me; for it is better for me to die than to live. Then said the LORD, Doest thou well to be angry?**

**Jonah 4:1-4**

A lengthier but better title for this article would be “Jonah’s Displeasure at God’s Good Pleasure.” That puts Jonah’s sulking, as recorded in the first verses of Jonah 4, in perspective. Jonah was not only angry at Nineveh’s repentance and rescue, but he was wickedly displeased with a merciful and gracious God. It is difficult to think of anything worse. His sin was the sin of those who perish forever because they grudge and complain and reject the everlasting mercy of God. That we must never do.

We must see Jonah’s displeasure in its historical context. Jonah was not only displeased that God had been merciful to Nineveh, the capital of Israel’s greatest enemy, but also that God had not shown the same mercy, as Jonah saw it, to Israel. These were the days, after all, of Jeroboam II, days of material prosperity and political expansion not only, but also days of rapid spiritual decline. Israel would soon come to the end of its history as a kingdom under God’s judgment.

In sparing Nineveh and casting away the Northern Kingdom, God not only foretold the salvation of the Gentiles but showed that “he [hath] mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth” (Rom. 9:18). Jonah did not like that revelation of God’s sovereignty, but he was no different than most, only more outspoken in his displeasure.

Perhaps Jonah wanted the destruction of Nineveh so that he could go back to his work as a prophet in Israel with the message, “See what happens to those who wickedly rebel against God?” and with the hope that such a message would bear good fruit in Israel—that

Israel would turn from its wickedness and turn to God. Patrick Fairbairn suggests this possibility in his commentary on Jonah<sup>1</sup> and it is not unlikely.

If Jonah’s great concern was for Israel, as his reference to “my country” suggests, we can sympathize with him and even commend his concern for his own people. Nevertheless, Jonah’s sin was the sin of thinking he had the right to dictate to God the dispensing of His mercy and grace, thus denying the sovereignty of God in salvation. Jonah’s sin was the sin Paul describes in Romans 9:20, the sin of replying against God. His responsibility as a prophet was bringing God’s Word and leaving the outcome to God.

His sin is the sin of those who say, “I could never believe in a God who saves some and sends others to hell,” or “a God who eternally chooses some and not others is not a merciful, gracious, and loving God.” It is the sin of those who are unhappy, discouraged, and complaining because God does not show His love and mercy to a family member or friend. It is the sin of the preacher or church member who is discouraged and unhappy because the fruits of the gospel are not such as he or she wants. It is the sin of those who begrudge the church’s efforts in missions because of a greater “need” at home, as they perceive that need, though they usually are not as bold in their displeasure as Jonah was. This is the sin of people who think that only those of a certain theological persuasion or with certain traditions can be saved. There are things that must be believed for salvation but, even then, salvation is not a matter of one’s theological persuasion but of God’s sovereign mercy and grace. The sin is the sin of anyone who thinks that they have the right to counsel God as to whom He should save and not save.

When Nineveh repented, Jonah knew already that God would spare the city and was “very angry,” with God! Literally, he was “burned up” against God. Nor was his anger concealed, but expressed both in his “prayer” and in his sulking outside the city. He would express his anger also against the gourd that for a time sheltered him from the sun, but even then his anger was against God.

<sup>1</sup> Patrick Fairbairn, *Jonah, His Life, Character and Mission* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1964), 156.



The reference to Jonah's displeasure is very difficult to translate. The English words "displeased" and "exceedingly" are really the same word in Hebrew, one of the Old Testament words for sin that describes sin as malicious rebellion against God. The passage could be translated, "And wickedly rebelling, Jonah wickedly and greatly rebelled and his anger was kindled." Jonah was not just displeased, therefore, but in his displeasure, was guilty of rebellion against God and so sinned grievously.

Jonah had been chastised by God and had repented of his previous rebellion in running away from God's command, but he was far from being cured of that sin. His attitude had not changed very much and he even tried to justify his previous rebellion: "Was not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish: for I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil." How much like ourselves he is! Corrected by God and truly sorry for what we have done, we nevertheless find ourselves committing the same sins over again, especially those sins to which we are prone, and always excusing our sin.

Jonah's prayer to God hardly qualifies as such. It was addressed to Him, but full of self-pity, self-justification, foolish anger, complaining and rebellion, it really was no prayer at all. What an abomination such a prayer must be to God who requires humility and trust in prayer. Yet God only gently rebukes Jonah with the words "Doest thou well to be angry?" for Jonah was one of God's own, just as the Ninevites, and God shows the same patience and mercy to Jonah that He had shown them. Jonah, however, was too blinded by his anger to realize that he was in the same place as Nineveh and equally in need of God's mercy. In fact, he was even more in need of it, since his sin was aggravated by his greater knowledge of God, his prophetic calling, and his previous repentance.

He adds sin to sin by asking to die. His request was not only an expression of discouragement, but an act of further rebellion, a resigning of his office as prophet and really the same sin he committed when he tried to go to Tarshish. In asking to die, he means to say, "If you are not going to destroy these Gentiles, these Ninevites whom I hate, then I'm done as prophet. If you spare them, I would rather be dead." Jonah was not unlike Elijah under the juniper tree, who, when God did not do what he expected after God's revelation on Mount Carmel, also wanted to resign his office and die.

He sins even more when, rebuked by God, he does not answer but turns his back on God and walks away. Going outside the city, having finished his work of preaching, he found a place from which he could watch

the city to see if God might after all destroy it. Did he really expect that God would yet destroy Nineveh? It would seem he did not from his own words, "I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil." Why then did he go outside the city and build a booth, waiting (perhaps as long as forty days) for Nineveh's destruction, all the while enduring the desert heat? It is likely that Jonah, so like us, was enjoying his case of the sulks and seeking to prove that he was right in being angry with God.

When God tried to teach him the lesson of the gourd plant, Jonah insisted that he was right to be angry and did what we do when we find every excuse to keep a bad attitude even while we know in our hearts we are wrong. Whether Jonah was cured of his displeasure and anger, Scripture does not tell us; but he remains an example of what we must not do when we find that God's ways are not our ways. We, like Jonah, are happy enough to confess the sovereignty of God when things go our way, but when God does otherwise than what we want and have prayed for, we too become angry, frustrated, discouraged, depressed, and unhappy.

Thus Jonah himself becomes again an example of the sovereignty of God's mercy and of the undeserved grace of God. He proves, as we all do, that no one ever deserves God's favor and lovingkindness, that God does indeed show mercy to whom He wills. In his sin and in the mercy God shows him, Jonah shows that he stands in God's sight with the Ninevites and is not a whit better than they. He demonstrates that there is no difference in God's sight between Jew and Gentile:

What then? are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin; as it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one (Rom. 3:9-12).

Jonah is a reminder that we who attend church faithfully, who have learned the Word of God from our youth, who have had the advantage of covenant homes and families, who can look down our noses at the wickedness of those who do not believe and shake our heads in amazement at what they do, are no better than they, that there is nothing we have that we have not received, and that we are as much in need of the mercy of God as the worst of hardened criminals and those who have turned our society on its head, destroying morality, good order, and decency. Much as we may sympathize with Jonah's motives, his hatred for Israel's enemies, and his love for his own country, our only response to the



sovereignty of God's mercy may be that of the publican in the temple: "God be merciful to *me* a sinner" (Luke 18:13). And when He has shown to us the same mercy He showed to Nineveh and to Jonah, we say, do we not?

O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments,

and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen (Rom. 11:34-36).



## God's wondrous works

Rev. James Laning, pastor of Hull Protestant Reformed Church in Hull, Iowa

# Submission within the Trinity?

Errors are used to get us to think. We consider them not only that we might be on guard against them, but also that we might grow in our own understanding of the truth. God uses them to prod us to look more deeply into what the Scriptures say. This is just one of the many ways in which our Lord turns an evil to our profit.

In this article we consider the teaching that there is submission within the Trinity. The current form of this teaching has become known as "Eternal Functional Subordination," abbreviated as EFS.

Those holding to EFS maintain that within the Trinity the second person (the Son) is submissive to the first (the Father). Along with this goes the teaching that the third person (the Holy Spirit) is submissive to both the first and the second. For now, to simplify matters a bit, we consider just the teaching regarding the submission of the Son.

### EFS and the submissive wife

One influential author who holds to EFS is Dr. Wayne Grudem, distinguished research professor of theology and biblical studies at Phoenix Seminary in Phoenix, Arizona. Grudem served as the general editor of the ESV Study Bible and is one of the co-founders of the Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood (CBMW), an organization that opposes same-sex marriage and has published articles and papers critical of "gender-neutral" Bible translations. He is the author of *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrines*, a popular dogmatics. Along with John Piper he edited *Biblical Foundations for Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism*, which was *Christianity Today's* "book of the year" in 1992.

I mention this for two reasons. First, it serves to show that this position is held today by some who have a considerable amount of influence. Secondly, I intend to demonstrate how some holding to EFS make use of it to promote positions concerning male-female roles in society.

For example, the calling of the wife to submit to her husband is said to be related to the submission of the Son to the Father within the Trinity. Bruce Ware, who holds to EFS and was a contributor to the newer edition of *Biblical Foundations for Manhood and Womanhood*, makes this connection:

And here, wives can benefit enormously from the doctrine of the Trinity in realizing that the submission required of them as wives is itself reflective of the very submission eternally given by the Son to his Father, and by the Spirit to the Father and the Son.<sup>1</sup>

One may wonder why they look within the Trinity to find an example of submission. It appears they want to find an example of someone who submits to another who is his equal. With the stress today on gender equality, they want to say that they agree that men and women are equal, but that equality does not rule out submission. One can be *equal with* and yet also *submissive* to another. Wives, they would say, are equal to their husbands and yet are called to submit to them.

So how are they going to root this theologically? If we look to Christ from the viewpoint of His human nature, He is indeed submissive to the Father, but He is not equal to Him. Jesus Himself said, "my Father is greater than I" (John 15:28). So those holding to EFS instead turn to the

<sup>1</sup> Bruce A. Ware, *Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: Relationships, Roles, & Relevance* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2005), 145.

Trinity. They argue that within the triune God we find three persons who are all equal, and yet some of them are submissive to one or more of the others.<sup>2</sup>

But is there really submission within the Trinity?

## Subordinationism

One of the ancient errors regarding the Trinity is known as *subordinationism*. The term has been used to refer to the teaching that the second and third persons of the Trinity are subordinate to the first person, and that the Holy Spirit is subordinate to the Son.

Today there are differences of opinion as to what is meant by this term. Grudem distinguishes what he teaches from what he refers to as “the heresy of subordinationism”:

The heresy of subordinationism, which holds that the Son is inferior in being to the Father, should be clearly distinguished from the orthodox doctrine that the Son is subordinate to the Father in role or function.<sup>3</sup>

Grudem maintains that the Son is equal to the Father, though subordinate to Him. So, according to Grudem, his teaching is to be distinguished from subordinationism.

Leaving aside for the moment what is meant by *subordinationism*, there needs to be some discussion as to how those holding to EFS are using the term *subordinate*. By subordinate they mean more than that the Son is second in order to the first person. By subordinate they mean that the Son is *submissive* to the Father. So to bring out more clearly what their position is, I intend to use the word *submissive* rather than *subordinate* when referring to what they teach.

## Biblical example of submission

There is no question that Christ *according to His human nature* is submissive to God. Yet those holding to EFS are not referring to Christ from the viewpoint of His human nature. They are speaking of the Son being eternally submissive within the Trinity. The quote from Ware referred to earlier demonstrates this, when he speaks of “the very submission eternally given by the Son to his Father.”<sup>4</sup>

2 Those promoting EFS are not the first to argue that their ideas regarding civil society are patterned after the Trinity. Some who desire to do away with all structures of authority and submission have referred to the Trinity as a society of three distinct “beings” who commune together without any of them being in authority over the others. Those holding to EFS differ in that they desire there to be structures of authority and submission in society. So they maintain that there is submission to authority within the Trinity.

3 Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2020), 288.

4 Ware, *Father, Son, and Holy Spirit*, 145.

Is this the example of submission that Scripture gives? Does Scripture say that wives are to submit to their husbands just as the eternal Son submits to the Father within the Trinity? Rather, God says that wives are called to be subject to their husbands “as the church is subject unto Christ” (Eph. 5:24).

Indeed, all of us are called to be submissive. We are to submit to those in authority over us, even as Christ according to the flesh is submissive to God. It is in this sense that Christ, the Servant of Jehovah, is an example for us.

## The unity and sovereignty of God

To refer to the eternal Son within the Trinity as submissive amounts to saying that the will of the Father is different from the will of the Son. Yet the will of God belongs to His essence. If there is one divine essence, there is one divine will. There are three persons in God, but those three persons have one will.

Christ has two wills, because He has two natures. When Christ said, “not my will, but thine be done,” He was referring to His human will.

The triune God, however, has one will. Multiple wills would actually mean multiple gods, since the will belongs to the essence. The teaching that each of the divine persons has His own distinct will is contrary to what Scripture teaches concerning the oneness of God.

Furthermore, the true God is sovereign. He has all authority. Yet Ware says the Son does not have supreme authority:

The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are each fully God, each equally God, each possessing fully the one undivided divine nature. Yet each Person of the Godhead is different in role and position in relation to each other. The Father is supreme in authority, the Son is under the Father, and the Spirit is under the Father and the Son. Yet there is also full harmony in their work, with no jealousy, bitterness, strife, or discord.<sup>5</sup>

If the second person of the Trinity does not have supreme authority, is He really the sovereign God?

Grudem, Ware, and others holding to EFS may say that God is one, that He is sovereign, and that the three persons are equal. Yet their teaching regarding EFS is not in harmony with that confession.

Those are just a few comments about the EFS position. So how do those holding to it attempt to prove what they say? What passages do they cite? Lord willing, we will consider a few of them next time.

5 Ware, 131.



## All Thy works shall praise Thee

Dr. Brendan Looyenga, member of and elder in Zion Protestant Reformed Church in Jenison, Michigan

# In Thy light shall we see light

Tucked into the middle of Psalm 36 is this article's title, which is arguably one of the most profound phrases in all of Scripture. Expressed as a sort of *paradox*, this phrase conveys a wealth of truth about God, His Word, and our Lord Jesus Christ.<sup>1</sup> To grasp its richness, it will be helpful to understand a few things about the nature of light as a creation of God and then to see how light is used as a metaphor for deep theological meaning throughout Scripture.

My intentions for the next few articles in this rubric are to explain a bit about the science of light, and then to explore the storehouse of passages in Scripture that either use this word or refer to a related concept. From this study, we will see that light is one of the most typologically rich words in the Bible, suiting its status as the first of God's creatures. With both the science and the theology in mind, we will return to the paradoxical character of our title—and of light itself—to understand the meaning of the psalmist in Psalm 36:9.

### The science of light

The material creation is composed of two fundamental components: energy and matter. Although there are many different properties that characterize each of these fundamental components, the simplest distinction between them is that matter has mass whereas energy does not. This distinction helps us to distinguish between physical elements like gold and silver, which can be measured on a scale, and “pure” energy like light, which has no mass and therefore cannot be weighed on a scale.

It is interesting to note that both energy and matter appear immediately in the Genesis 1 account of the first day of creation. Though light is the primary focus of God's creative act on the first day, reference is also made to the Spirit moving upon the “face of the waters,” which implies the presence of the elements—the matter—that compose water. Precisely what variety and complexity of matter was created along with light

on the first day is a mystery, but it is clear that in the very beginning God created energy and matter. From these two basic building blocks He formed the rest of creation in the following five days.

Because matter has physical properties that we can identify with our senses, it is probably the more intuitively grasped of the two fundamental components of the creation. All matter is made up of atoms, which in turn are composed of the same basic particles: protons, neutrons, and electrons. Like all matter, these particles have measurable mass (though it's very small!) that remains constant. Although these basic particles can be arranged into many different atomic elements (118 have been discovered thus far!), which can themselves be combined to make a truly endless variety of molecules, matter is “simple” in terms of its physical makeup.

Energy, on the hand, is a much more variable category because there is no single set of basic building blocks or simpler components that can be invoked as a unifying principle. Though different types of energy may have overlapping *properties*, they remain distinct in terms of what they do and how they are detected. Consider, for example, the forms of energy we call light and sound. Light energy is detected by the photoreceptors in our eyes and allows us to see the creation around us in all its beauty and complexity. Sound energy is detected by the small hair cells in our ears and allows us to hear what is going on in the creation around us. Though distinct from one another, both light and sound energy are produced as waves, which means they occur at different frequencies and amplitudes that create variety in what we see or hear. The difference between red light and blue light is in their distinct wavelengths, which is similar in concept to high-pitched sounds and low-pitched sounds that also differ in wavelength. So, while there are similar concepts and properties that can be used to distinguish the different forms of energy, defining the category as a whole is difficult.

The simplest definition that encompasses all forms of energy is “the capacity to do work.” This is somewhat of an abstract definition, so an illustration of what this means is helpful.

The easiest way to think about “doing work” is by

<sup>1</sup> A *paradox* is something that at first glance seems to be contradictory, but when understood correctly expresses a well founded truth.

moving something heavy. Anyone who has moved a heavy box of books from the basement up to the main floor of his or her house knows intuitively that it takes energy to make that trip up the stairs. The heavier the box and the faster that one moves it up the stairs, the more energy that is required to do the work of moving it. In mathematical terms, we would say that the energy required to do this work is the product of mass times acceleration, which gives scientists and engineers a handy way to measure how much energy is required to do any given sort of “work,” from moving individual molecules to huge steel beams required to build a highway overpass.

How physical measurements of the energy required to move objects relates to light is perhaps not obvious at first glance, since we do not usually think about using light to do the work of moving things around on the scale of everyday life. Shining a flashlight on your couch, for instance, does not make it move across your living room! But if enough light energy could be stored in another form, it might be possible to convert that stored energy into something that could move your couch around your house. To understand how this is possible, we need to delve briefly into both the physics and chemistry of light.

Much of the discipline of physics is focused on how different forms of energy relate to one another and how one form can be converted into another. Physicists typically define six fundamental kinds of energy, each of which can be broken down into a multitude of different categories. Light energy is a form of *radiant* (or electromagnetic) energy, a category that also includes infrared energy, microwaves, and radio waves. All forms of radiant energy are produced as waves that can be detected with devices that are tuned to their specific wavelength, most of which are invisible to the human eye. Radiant energy readily interacts with matter and can be absorbed (or emitted) by materials with a physical composition that corresponds to the specific wavelength of energy being studied. The process is complex but occurs all around us every moment of the day whether we realize it or not.

This is where chemistry becomes important, because the study of molecules helps us to understand how the energy in light can be converted into something that is more obviously physical in nature. Chemical reactions are essentially exchanges of energy from one form to another. The bonds that connect the individual atoms of a molecule together are something like miniaturized batteries that store different amounts of energy depending on the atoms involved. A chemical reaction involves the rearrangement of these bonds

such that energy is either absorbed or released into the surrounding environment.

Perhaps the best example of chemical reaction that releases energy is a combustion reaction in which some material is burned. A wax candle is a good example. When a spark is used to ignite the wick of a candle, it begins to burn in an ongoing chemical reaction between oxygen from the surrounding air and the hydrocarbon-rich wax of the candle. This combustion reaction converts the wax and oxygen into carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) and water (H<sub>2</sub>O) while also releasing light and heat—both forms of pure radiant energy.

Now take this concept one step further as we consider how *work* is being done by light through its conversion into mechanical motion through chemical intermediates. Light from the sun shines on the earth and is absorbed by plants. Through the marvelous process of photosynthesis (which is essentially like running combustion in reverse), this light energy is converted into chemical energy through the production of sugars that can be stored in the roots, seeds, or fruits of a plant. When a person consumes and digests a piece of fruit or bread made from seeds of grain, the sugars in that food undergo another chemical reaction that allows muscle cells to contract, which in turn allows arms and legs to move about. Through this conversion of chemical energy into mechanical energy, a person can move a couch across the living room—thus “doing work.” All this work was made possible by the sunlight that was used to drive the chemistry of photosynthesis; so in effect, the energy of light was indirectly used to “do work.”

The sorts of energy transformations described in the examples above are what make life on earth possible. Without a continuous source of light energy from the sun and the presence of key chemicals like water and oxygen, it would not be possible to sustain biological life on earth, or anywhere else for that matter. The life-giving power of the sun, which has been recognized by people in every era since the beginning of time, is an absolute necessity for our existence. All of God’s living creatures—even those living in the darkest caves and underground environments on earth—depend either directly or indirectly on sunlight for their survival. It is no wonder, then, that the first of God’s creatures is such a common and powerful metaphor in His Word!

In our next article, we will turn to the theology of light and consider the many different ways that this word is used as a metaphor in Scripture. As a prelude to this transition, we end this article with a fine quotation that points our hearts and minds to the greatness of our Creator, the Lord of light.

In short, our pastor noted that Calvin, with Augustine,



would think of God as one thinks of the sun. All other lights in this world are derived from the sun. One does not first think of other lights as though they shone in their own power, in order after that to investigate open-mindedly whether the sun exists. So one cannot first think of the facts of the universe, and especially of the mind of man, as though they were possibly not God-dependent but self-sufficient as so many self-powered light bulbs, in order then to inquire whether God exists. One just does not look at light bulbs to find the sun. Knowledge of the sun must precede, and be the foundation of, light bulbs. So one does not look at creation to find a Creator, but rather the latter is the

foundation of the former. Therefore true knowledge of creation demands a true knowledge of the Creator.

All the facts of the universe are of necessity God-created, God-dependent facts. Therefore men ought to see that God is man's Creator and his Judge. "For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse" (Rom 1:20).<sup>2</sup>

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2 Cornelius Van Til, *The Reformed Pastor and Modern Thought* (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co, 1980), 9.



## Go ye into all the world

Rev. Richard Smit, missionary of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America, stationed in Manila, Philippines

# The three-self formula and PRCA foreign missions (5)

Previous article in this series: September 1, 2021, p. 474.

A second example of the PRCA commitment to the three-self formula in foreign missions is the PRCA work in Singapore. After several years of developing contact with the Gospel Literature and Tracts Society (GLTS) of Singapore, in 1979 synod approved the calling of a missionary to serve in Singapore. It was clear to the synod that the GLTS needed, as they earnestly requested, a missionary to preach the gospel to them and to instruct them in the Reformed faith and practice for the goal of the establishment of an indigenous church. Rev. Arie denHartog was called and sent by the Doon (IA) PRC to labor as a PRCA missionary in Singapore among the members of the GLTS and other converts to the Reformed faith brought by the Lord into that gathering of believers and their seed.

Rev. denHartog was called to the work in 1979. He with his family left Sioux Falls, South Dakota, on January 29 and arrived in Singapore by way of Chicago, Amsterdam, and Bangkok on February 1, 1980. From 1980 until January 1987 he served enthusiastically in Singapore with his wife and family. The labors in Singapore were foreign mission labors: with those who in their generations had never heard the gospel. In addition to working among the relatively young members of the GLTS, themselves recent converts to Christian-

ity and the Reformed/Presbyterian faith from idolatry and superstitions, the missionary labored with Hindus, Buddhists, Roman Catholics, and, according to his May 1980 report, even briefly a Marxist. The missionary was assisted with the pastoral work in the congregation by elders from the PRCA, on short-term assignments. He labored in Singapore during its significant renaissance from a developing country into a top-notch commercial, technological, banking, and academic center in the entire world.

The missionary labored with a clear understanding of the goal of the foreign mission labors in Singapore. His conviction regarding the three-self formula was stated clearly in a report to synod that "in any mission field, the missionary must seek to encourage autonomous and indigenous development." Again, he wrote that "in the development of the church on the mission field, we must recognize the indigenous character and autonomy of the local church." The missionary must lead in such a way that the mission group "becomes an autonomous and indigenous church."<sup>1</sup> By "autonomous" and "indigenous," the missionary meant self-governing, self-supporting, and self-propagating. These statements early

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1 PRCA Acts of Synod 1981, 149-150.

in the work in Singapore (1981) are significant because they are in harmony with what the PRCA synod explicitly adopted two years later in 1983 in the “Policy for Missions in Jamaica.”

According to this understanding of the three-self formula and Rev. denHartog’s conviction on the matter, the PRCA through its missionary labored and led the GLTS. Evidence of this can be seen early on in the work through a report that the missionary gave to the PRCA through the *Standard Bearer* in the March 1, 1981 issue. Regarding the development of the GLTS to the goal of a church institute that would be self-governing, the missionary reported that

we are very thankful for the large amount of work the leaders of the GLTS do. They also take a great part of the pastoral work. Though they are not yet officially officebearers in the church, they perform very much of the labors of the officebearers. We long for the day when these brethren can be officially ordained as officebearers in the church. We need this.... The Lord has raised up in the GLTS men who are well qualified to be officebearers.... From the start the work of the church on the foreign mission field must be carried on by the saints whom the Lord gathers. The Lord Jesus gathers the church as a local and autonomous church.... In all of our labors we therefore give as much of the work as possible to the leaders of the church here, we allow them to make as many of the decisions...themselves as they are able to make....<sup>2</sup>

This quotation demonstrates that the missionary encouraged, led, and prepared the men of the mission group to embrace their role and duty as future officebearers in the church for their own future self-government as a church institute. The eventual fruit of that preparation and leadership led to the organization of the First Evangelical Reformed Church in Singapore on January 24, 1982, with five elders and three deacons. With the approval of the calling church and concurrence of synod, the missionary continued his labors with the First ERCS in the duties of their pastor while the congregation remained vacant. A second congregation was established later in June 1987: Covenant Evangelical Reformed Church.

Not only were the congregations “self-governing,” but they were also characterized by being “self-propagating” from the outset. Two examples can be observed in the same report by the missionary. The first example comes from a description of the general attendance at public worship services:

At the same time, it is a great thrill to see capacity

audiences each Lord’s Day. Several new people are attending our worship services regularly as well as being involved in other activities in the GLTS. We are always amazed by the fact that the sole means through which new people come to the worship services is that of personal invitation and encouragement of members of the GLTS. While we certainly believe that it is through the instrumentality of the preaching of the gospel that Jesus Christ is pleased to gather His church, it is evident again and again that the members of the church have a vital part and calling in the work of the gathering of the church. The church grows through zealous witness of the saints and the living testimony of their lives as they go forth from the preaching of the gospel.<sup>3</sup>

In addition to the zealous witness of the members, a second example of “self-propagation” of the indigenous church is the desire of men to serve in the office of the ministry of the gospel. With the growth of the work and the ERCS, there was an obvious need for native pastors that the missionary noted in his May 1980 report. Only a few months after his arrival, the missionary was already advising and mentoring several men in the GLTS for possible training for the ministry of the Word. By the time that the missionary gave his report in the *SB* in 1981, one man was already in formal training in the PRCA seminary.

One of the common questions in missions is whether a developing congregation of believers and their seed can be self-supporting within their national, cultural, and economic context and with their God-given financial means. Although the PRCA was prepared to support its foreign missionary and his family fully so that the GLTS would be free to focus on the support of its own expenses and future pastors, the group still gave to the missionary and family “evidences of love and appreciation....”<sup>4</sup> In fact, the GLTS through its weekly offerings was able in God’s providence to support the missionary family’s utility expenses and the school transportation expense for the missionary children, in addition to the regular church expenses and the support of two seminary students (with families) in full-time training in Singapore. Apparently, this self-support represented a very “high percentage of their income.”<sup>5</sup> Thus, the GLTS was growing in its commitment to the self-support principle.

Of course, the development of indigenous Reformed, Christian churches in Singapore was not without some controversies, debates, and differences of opinion on

3 denHartog, “Singapore,” 260.

4 denHartog, “Singapore,” 259.

5 Rev. Arie denHartog, Report to the Consistory of the Doon PRC and the FMC of the PRCA (July 26, 1980), 6.

2 Rev. Arie denHartog, “Foreign Missions: Singapore,” *Standard Bearer*, vol. 57 (11), 260-261.

other issues. Nevertheless, we may observe in this example regarding the three-self formula the blessings of a missionary and calling church who are mutually convinced from the outset, and throughout the duration of their work, of the three-self formula. There was the blessing of a congregation that, in their development toward full institution, embraced the three-self formula and by the grace of God stood as a local, autonomous, indigenous church of the Lord Jesus Christ. There was the blessing of the resulting growth, both spiritual and numerical, of indigenous congregations and a federation by June 1987.

Moreover, this example demonstrates the relation and the role of the office of believer to the three-self formula of a Christian church. In other words, a congregation that is faithful to the three-self formula has in its membership believers, male and female, with their covenant seed, who understand and live what it means to be a Christian in the church institute to which they are bound to join and to remain faithful members thereof.

In our next article, we will observe the PRCA's commitment to the three-self formula in a third example, namely, the foreign mission work in Ghana from 1996 to 2006.



## Strength of youth

Rev. Joshua Engelsma, pastor of the Crete Protestant Reformed Church in Crete, Illinois

# Watch your mouth! (4)

Previous article in this series: October 15, 2021, p. 38.

In the previous article on the subject of communication, we began laying out some of the key principles that govern our speech. We started with the first and most important principle: We must speak the truth, not the lie.

Although speaking the truth is the most fundamental principle of communication, it is not the only one. You and I would be foolish if we concluded, “As long as I speak the truth, it doesn’t matter what I say and how I say it! The ends justify the means, so that, as long as my end goal is speaking the truth, then anything else goes!” If that is the way we think, then we are foolishly ignoring large sections of God’s Word that address other key principles of communication.

Think of your words as water flowing through pipes to a faucet in your house. Before you drink the water coming out of the faucet, you trust that it has passed through a number of filters to remove any harmful impurities. In a similar way, before the words we intend to speak pass through our lips, they must pass through a number of filters. Bypassing these filters, what spews from our mouth is sewage. The first filter that our words must pass through is the *truth-filter* (“Am I sure that the words I am about to say are true?”). But once our words pass through that filter, there are other filters they must pass through as well. Simply passing through

the truth-filter does not insure that all impurities have been removed.

In addition to the truth-filter, another filter that applies to our communication is the *necessity-filter* (“Are the words I am about to speak not only *true* but also *necessary*?”). Let’s examine that filter more closely.

### “Loose lips...”

When we addressed last time the subject of speaking the truth, we considered that one form of lying is slander. We defined slander along these lines: speaking a lie or an unproven, malicious statement about another person that injures his reputation. Slander is sin against the ninth commandment.

Here we want to consider a sister-sin to slander: gossip or backbiting. If slander is saying what is not true about a person, gossip or backbiting is when we say some unflattering truth about him. Usually we say these things to others when the brother or sister’s back is turned, and the effect is that we also needlessly injure his or her reputation.

The sin of backbiting is all too common among us. When we get together with others, we love to talk about other people’s lives and their faults and flaws. We love to dish the latest dirt that we have heard, no matter that

it unnecessarily ruins the reputations of others. How we hate the thought of others talking about us while our backs are turned, but how we love to do the same to others!

Maintaining confidentiality seems to be going the way of the dodo. To maintain confidentiality means that we are aware of some private matter or some failure of another person but we keep it in strict confidence and do not blab about it to those who have no business knowing. But, more often than we would probably be willing to admit, we do not keep the circle of people who know something as small as possible but are guilty of extending it further.

What is more, we are skilled at minimizing this sin. We might try to cover it up by sounding quite pious: “I don’t mean to gossip, but I just thought you should know about what’s going on in this person’s life.” Or we might flatter the person we are telling: “I wouldn’t tell anyone else this, but I know you can keep it a secret.” Stripping away these cover attempts, the naked truth is that we are being wickedly nosy and gossipy.

Although we are tempted to minimize this sin in our lives, what we need to have impressed upon us is that this is no minor, insignificant sin. There are many New Testament passages that warn against this sin (for example, Rom. 1:29; II Cor. 12:20; I Tim. 5:13). There are also repeated warnings in the book of Proverbs concerning the sin of “tale-bearing.” For instance, Proverbs 18:8 says, “The words of a talebearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly” (cf. also Prov. 11:13; 20:19; 26:20).

The Heidelberg Catechism summarizes the teaching of God’s Word on this matter in Lord’s Day 43 when it says “that I be no backbiter, nor slanderer,” and then warns “that I avoid all sorts of lies and deceit as the proper works of the devil, unless I would bring down upon me the heavy wrath of God.”

Is that how we think about the sin of backbiting? As a proper work of the devil? As a sin so heinous that, continuing in it, one would bring down upon himself the heavy wrath of God?

We ought to be aware of another way in which our words fail the necessity-test. We fail this test not only when we say things we ought not when our neighbor’s back is turned, but also when we say things we ought not to his face.

We might pride ourselves on being a “straight-shooter,” someone who is blunt and always cuts to the chase, someone who always speaks his mind. But this is no virtue. Proverbs 29:11 says, “A fool uttereth all his mind; but a wise man keepeth it in till afterwards.” Only the fool is a person who always says what is on

his mind, without consideration to time and place and circumstances.

Consider a few examples. Say you are dating, and you and your boyfriend/girlfriend decide to hang out with a group of friends. In the course of the conversation, your significant other says something not quite right or a little embarrassing. You decide to correct him/her on the spot and give a brief lecture on what is correct, thus mortifying your date in front of everyone else. Was what you said something on your mind? Yes. Was it true? Yes, every word. Was it important, necessary, and helpful to say it then or to say it at all? Not at all!

Or, you are at the supper table with your family. You say to your sibling, “Your breath stinks. The way you chew your food is so annoying. You’re not popular at school.” Were those things on your mind? Yes. Are they true? Yes, they might be. Was it important, necessary, and helpful to say them then or to say them at all? Most likely not!

Too often we speak unnecessary words without thinking!

### Think!

Rather than being used for sinful gossip or backbiting, our words must pass through the necessity-filter.

What lies behind the idea of speaking when necessary is a concern for our neighbor’s name and reputation. According to Proverbs 22:1, “A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favour rather than silver and gold.” According to Lord’s Day 43, the ninth commandment requires that I “defend and promote, as much as I am able, the honor and good character of my neighbor.” Speaking when necessary means that we have an eye on the neighbor’s good name.

At times, when it is mentioned that we are seeking to defend the neighbor’s reputation, the notion is scoffed at as if we are only concerned about the reputations of men and are seeking to prop them up. Certainly it is true that the honor of men may not be our ultimate concern. But yet the neighbor’s reputation *is* and *must be* a concern. The law of God demands it.

Out of concern for the neighbor’s name, we seek to maintain confidentiality when necessary. Proverbs 25:9 says, “Debate thy cause with thy neighbour himself; and discover not a secret to another” (cf. also Prov. 17:9). The idea of maintaining confidentiality could be taken the wrong way by promoting a culture of silence and secrecy so that words that need to be said and issues that need to be addressed are not. That is not proper. The idea of maintaining confidentiality simply means that there are certain things that may not be broadcast wide-



ly and certain things about my neighbor that I ought not gossip about to others.

If a brother commits a sin privately that we are aware of, we are called to speak to him alone, without spreading the matter to others (cf. Matt. 18:15). If the sin is of a public nature, by its very nature it will be known to others, yet we still must be on guard against sinfully spreading to others what has happened. And for the rest (weaknesses or annoying traits in another), it is best to keep them to ourselves.

Consider some of the following things as they apply to the necessity of your words:

- Who am I? Am I the right person in the right position to say these things?
- To whom am I talking? Is this the right person/group to speak to about this issue?
- What is it that I want to say? Is it regarding something important or unimportant?
- Is this the proper time to address this issue? Is there a better time and circumstance to raise the issue? Is this a matter of urgency or can it wait?
- What is going on in my heart? Am I motivated by sinful motives, such as pride or jealousy or revenge? Or do I truly have the neighbor's wellbeing in my heart and want to be helpful?

Listen to what one of our spiritual fathers has to say on this issue:

Over against all this lying and slander and falsifying a man's words and boasting of self stands the admonition of the Word of God that we shall always speak the truth in love concerning one another and concerning ourselves, before the God of our salvation. But what does this imply? Does it mean that we shall speak the truth about our neighbor all the time and in all circumstances? Does it mean that always and everywhere I shall say all that I know about him? God forbid. This certainly would not be speaking the truth in love. Does it mean that I am obliged to publish all that I know about myself? Also this not true. Of course not (Herman Hoeksema, *The Triple Knowledge*, 3:419).

In conclusion, speaking when necessary means that we must learn to *think* before we speak. Too easily words come tumbling out of our lips without any forethought, and that is often when our words get us into trouble. The idea of thinking before we speak has even been turned into a helpful acronym:

T—is it *true*?

H—it is *helpful*?

I—is it *important*?

N—is it *necessary*?

K—is it *kind*?

Covenant youth, THINK before you speak!



## News from our churches

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

**Special note:** We are looking for information on and pictures of your church library! Please send them to me at [cjterpstra@sbcglobal.net](mailto:cjterpstra@sbcglobal.net). Thanks!

### PRC news (denominational)

- Classis East met in regular session January 12 at Providence PRC in Hudsonville, MI. Look for the report on that meeting in an upcoming *SB*.

- **Minister calls:**

On December 19, 2021 Rev. C. Spronk *declined* the calls from Doon PRC (IA) and Hudsonville PRC (MI).

On December 19, 2021 Rev. J. Langerak *accepted* the call to Covenant of Grace PRC (Spokane, WA).

Rev. J. Marcus continues to keep busy preaching and teaching throughout the PRC. He remains eligible for a call to the churches too. Let's remember him and his family in our prayers.

- **Missions**

**India** (from Georgetown PRC—late December update): *Our fellow saints request our prayers as they await the renewal of their official license to receive foreign money for the support of the GHF [Grace Foster Home]. ...Eleven new children who were rescued from abusive situations have been sent to GHF. The congregation is enjoying their special Christmas celebrations of singing and fellowship. New officebearers have been*

*installed. The translation of the Three Forms of Unity into the Odia dialect is completed. These 3 Creeds (Heidelberg Catechism, Canons of Dordt, Belgic Confession) will now be distributed in parts of the Odisha State in India.*

**Myanmar:** Rev. Titus has been battling illness as well as other struggles over the last few months due to the instability in that country. Let's be in prayer for him and the saints there to whom he ministers.

**Philippines:** Rev. D. Kleyn and his wife Sharon spent three weeks in the States visiting family and friends over the holidays. In addition, they spent time with Doon (IA) PRC, the calling church for this field of labor. He preached there on Old Year's Day, New Year's Day, and January 2.

#### ● Seminary

By the time you read this, the PRTS will have finished the 2022 Interim course on Christian Education (Jan. 3-11) and faculty and students will be ready to start the second semester on January 18. Remember before the throne of grace the daily needs of the seminary.

Sem. M. Koerner (finishing his junior year) will be taking his senior internship later this year in Randolph (WI) PRC under the mentorship of Rev. E. Guichelaar. That internship runs from July 1 to December 31. A committee from the congregation has already been appointed to look for housing for Sem. Koerner.

### PRC news (congregational)

**First PRC-Edmonton:** Her annual congregational meeting was held Friday, January 14, at the home of Al Stikma. The congregation voted on the 2022 budget and was also invited to take part in an information/question period. And, in case you didn't know, they will continue to meet at Braeside Presbyterian Church (6 Bernard Drive, St. Albert) at 1:00 P.M. and 6:00 P.M. for an indefinite period of time.

**Loveland (CO) PRC:** Do we appreciate what our church janitors do to keep our buildings clean and comfortable? Probably not as much as we ought to. Here's a note from an end-of-the-year bulletin that reminds us to appreciate them more: *The pews and carpets in the sanctuary are getting cleaned tomorrow morning beginning around 9 A.M. so the sanctuary will be off limits. The congregation is also encouraged to pick up any large pieces of trash off the ground before leaving the evening service. Thanks for your help in this matter!*

**Lynden (WA) PRC:** On Monday evening December 20 the congregation had a Christmas sing-along with Peter Wildeman and Joost van Belzen at the Lynden PRC. Afterwards there was opportunity to purchase CD's and music. I'm wishing more of us could have participated in this!

**Southeast (MI) PRC:** As this church continues to look for a new building in which to move in the southeastern Grand Rapids area, a recent bulletin noted that the Council's Long-Range Planning committee was looking at two properties that were brought to their attention. In the meantime, they continue to meet at Adams CS in Wyoming.

**Unity (MI) PRC:** This update from her Building Committee regarding building plans was found in one of her December bulletins: *We have been working on several plans and options for our church building. We have been discussing doing the project in phases or as a complete structure. Building costs remain high so we are looking into what best fits as far as designs and options available to us. The Council has asked us to present them with three design options, along with costs, for their review. The Bldg. Comm. is working on drawings, utilizing a CAD program one of our members has access to, thus enabling us to present ideas to the Council (and then the congregation) before incurring the costs associated with an architect. In doing these committee drawings, we have heard several ideas from both the congregation and Council and are always willing to hear more suggestions from you. We will keep you updated as much as possible going forward.*

### PR Christian school activities

**Covenant CHS (Walker, MI):** The Student Council again sponsored its Gift Card Drive in December to help those who have need in the area Protestant Reformed churches. Those who wanted to participate could send to the school money or gift cards to grocery stores, gas stations, etc. A blessing to see this spirit of giving encouraged by the young people during the holidays.

**Heritage CHS (Dyer, IN):** To benefit the athletic department, an alumni boys and an alumni girls basketball game fundraiser was held on Friday, January 7—along with a bake sale. All alumni who played basketball at Heritage were invited to come out and help support HCHS athletics. Arrenellos pizza and desserts were available for purchase in the concession stand. I wonder who won. Depends on the age and condition of those alumni, I suppose.

**Heritage CS (Hudsonville, MI):** Over the holidays, faculty, staff, parents and children, and supporters all had the opportunity to give for the cause of Myanmar missions and the work of Rev. Titus. A wonderful cause supported by generous giving! May the Lord use it for the good of the labors there.

**Hope PRCS (Walker, MI):** Keep in mind the 75th anniversary of Hope PRC School on Saturday January 22 starting at 6 P.M.! The program will be held at Cov-

enant CHS followed by an open house and refreshments at Hope School. Rev. J. Engelsma (a graduate of the school) is the guest speaker.

**Sioux Falls, SD:** Saturday, February 19, is the date set for the annual Pinewood Derby, sponsored by the Sioux Falls School Association. The event will be held in the Heritage PRC fellowship hall. Those in the vicinity should get their kits and start making those fast(er) cars!

**Redeemer Christian School (Zeeland, MI):** On January 11 the Board of this new school invited supporters and interested parties to a special dinner at the new RCS building (the former Beaverdam Reformed Church). Their goal was to use this time as a ‘meet and greet’ as well as for a tour of the new facility. RCS is also accepting applications from members of the Protestant Reformed Churches for Administrator and Teachers for Grades PreK-8 for the 2022-2023 school year. Interested applicants should visit [www.redeemerchrschool.com/teach](http://www.redeemerchrschool.com/teach) for more info.

**Need for teachers!** This notice was recently placed in a PRC bulletin. Because of its ongoing relevance, we place it here too: *It is evident that there is currently a great need for teachers in our good Christian schools.*

*Let us pray to our heavenly Father to supply us with more teachers. The young people, in particular, are encouraged to examine their gifts and abilities and consider whether God calls them to the blessed calling of a Christian school teacher.*

## Music notes

The **Protestant Reformed Student Orchestra (PRSO)** will hold its annual concert on Friday, February 4, at St. Cecilia’s Music Center in downtown Grand Rapids, MI.

The 2021 **Hope Heralds** CD, “Declare Your Praise” remains available. The CD can be purchased at Covenant Christian High School, Heritage Christian School, the Reformed Book Outlet, or the Protestant Reformed Seminary, or by emailing Karen Daling at [thedalings@sbcglobal.net](mailto:thedalings@sbcglobal.net). Cost is \$10 in person, \$12 if shipped. Word is they are going fast, so you may want to act soon.

**Grace PRC Young People** are planning another “Grace Night of Music” on February 19 as a fundraiser for the YP convention. They are looking for musical talent and those willing to perform a special number. Contact Jodi Koole at 616-724-8778 if you are willing to participate.

## Announcements

### Resolution of sympathy

The Council and congregation of Southwest PRC express our Christian sympathy to Mrs. Grace Kuiper in the death her brother, **Harry Kok**, who died at the age of 84. “I am the resurrection and the life, he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live” (John 11:25).

Rev. D. Noorman, President  
Tom VanderWoude, Clerk

### Resolution of sympathy

The Council and congregation of Hope PRC express their sympathy to Elder Joel Minderhoud, his wife Val and family in the death of his mother-in-law and their grandmother **Mrs. Hennie Gritters** on December 7, 2021. “But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children’s children” (Psalm 103: 17).

Rev. Jonathan Mahtani  
David Moelker, Clerk

### Resolution of sympathy

The Council and congregation of Doon PRC express our Christian sympathies to Warren and Cheryl VanGinkel and Warren and Marshonn Boon and their children and grandchildren in the death of their father, grandfather and great-grandfather, **Edwin VanGinkel**. “Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints” (Psalm 116:15).

Warren Boon, Vice President  
Paul DeJong, Clerk

### Resolution of sympathy

The Council and congregation of Hope PRC express their sympathy to Elder Steve Langerak, his wife Brenda and family, and the extended family in the loss of his mother, **Mrs. Beverly Langerak**, on December 4, 2021. “Truly my soul waiteth upon God: from him cometh my salvation: he is my defense; I shall not be greatly moved” (Psalm 62:1, 2).

Rev. Jonathan Mahtani  
David Moelker, Clerk

## Announcements continued

### Resolution of sympathy

The Council and congregation of Doon PRC express Christian sympathies to Jim and Brenda Regnerus and family in the death of their mother and grandmother, **Henrietta Gritters**. “Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Hebrews 12:2).

Warren Boon, Vice President

Paul DeJong, Clerk

### Classis West

Classis West of the Protestant Reformed Churches will meet in Redlands, CA on Wednesday, March 2, 2022, at 8:30 A.M. the Lord willing. All material for the Agenda is to be in the hands of the stated clerk by January 31 (30 days before classis convenes). All delegates in need of lodging or transportation from the airport should notify the clerk of Redlands' Consistory.

Rev. J. Engelsma, Stated Clerk

### Call to aspirants to the ministry

All young men desiring to begin studies in the Protestant Reformed Theological Seminary in the 2022-2023 academic year should make application at the March 17, 2022 meeting of the Theological School Committee.

A testimonial from the prospective student's Consistory that he is a member in full communion, sound in faith, and upright in walk, and exhibits the qualities and personality necessary for a gospel minister; a certificate of health from a reputable physician; and a college transcript must accompany the application. Before entering the seminary, all students must have earned a bachelor's degree and met all of the course requirements for entrance to the seminary. These entrance requirements are listed in the seminary catalog available from the school or on the seminary's website (prcts.org).

All applicants must appear before the Theological School Committee for interview before admission is granted. In the event that a student cannot appear at the March 17 meeting, notification of this fact, along with a suggested interview date, must be given to the secretary of the Theological School Committee before this meeting.

All correspondence should be directed to the  
Theological School Committee,  
4949 Ivanrest Avenue SW  
Wyoming, MI 49418

Joel Minderhoud, Secretary



The November 2021 issue of the *Protestant Reformed Theological Journal* has been published! The first three articles are the written version of speeches given at the Classis West Officebearers' Conference in September 2021.

- "The Spirit of Freedom" (Rev. S. Key).
- "The Doctrine of Sanctification from Leviticus" (Rev. M. Kortus).
- "In the Way of Our Obedience" (Rev. J. Engelsma).
- "A Centennial History of the Protestant Reformed Theological Seminary: 1925-1939" (Prof. D. Kuiper)
- A copy of, and comments on, the only letter that John Calvin ever sent Martin Luther (Prof. C. Griess).

- Several book reviews.

The *Journal* is available free of charge. A digital version can be found at [prcts.org/journal](http://prcts.org/journal). For a print copy, call Sharon at (616) 531-1490 or email [seminarysecretary@prca.org](mailto:seminarysecretary@prca.org).

The Protestant Reformed Seminary admits students of any race, color, and national or ethnic origin.