

THE STANDARD BEARER

**AUGUST
2024**
VOLUME 100, NUMBER 19

Magnifying Christ

MEDITATION | **REV. JOHN MARCUS** | 459

Reflections on Synod 2024 and the Experience of Salvation (1)

EDITORIAL | **REV. JOSHUA ENGELSMA** | 461

Nahum: The Coming Judgment of Nineveh (1)

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES | **REV. RONALD HANKO** | 464

Rain

A WORD FITLY SPOKEN | **REV. JUSTIN SMIDSTRA** | 468

Of Jesus Christ, True God and Man, the Only Savior of the World

BELIEVING AND CONFESSING | **PROF. RONALD CAMMENG** | 469

High Eyes

STRENGTH OF YOUTH | **REV. RYAN BARNHILL** | 471

A Glimpse into the Current Work of the FMC Myanmar Semi-Annual Report: June 2024

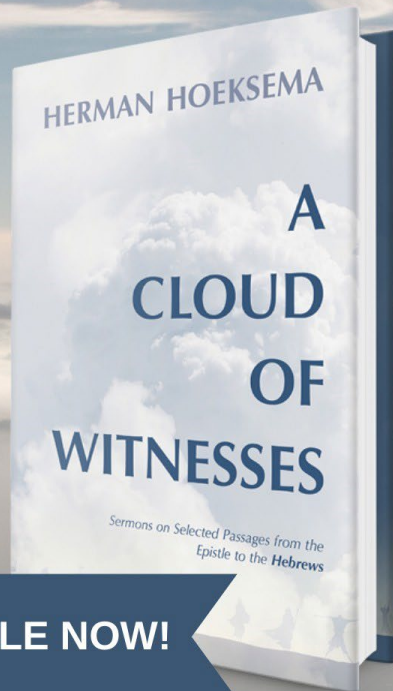
PERTAINING TO THE WORK OF THE CHURCHES | 473-74

The Gysbert VanBaren Family

REMEMBERING THE DAYS OF OLD | **MR. JAMES HOLSTEGE** | 476



A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE



AVAILABLE NOW!

“Often...we read the theology of a great churchman like Herman Hoeksema and so call him a theologian. But in reading his sermons, we are reminded that **his first job and calling was to preach.**

Students of theology might be better served reading more sermons than works on theology. Thankfully, **in this volume the reader gets both.**”

– **Douglas J. Douma**

pastor of First Presbyterian Church (Unionville, NY),
author, and founder of Sola Appalachian Christian
Retreat

Order **online** at rfpa.org or **in-store** at Reformed Book Outlet



The *Standard Bearer* (ISSN 0362-4692 [print], 2372-9813 [online]) is a semi-monthly periodical, except monthly during June, July, and August, published by the Reformed Free Publishing Association: 1894 Georgetown Center Dr., Jenison, MI 49428-7137.

Postmaster Send address changes to the *Standard Bearer*, 1894 Georgetown Center Dr., Jenison, MI 49428-7137.

Reprint and online posting policy

Permission is hereby granted for the reprinting or online posting of articles in the *Standard Bearer* by other publications, provided that such reprinted articles are reproduced in full; that proper acknowledgment is made; and that a copy of the periodical or Internet location in which the reprint or posting appears is sent to the editorial office.

Editorial policy Every editor is solely responsible for the contents of his own articles. Letters to the editor should be limited to 600 words, be written in a

brotherly fashion, and be in response only to published articles (not to published letters). More extensive exchanges on a significant topic of broad interest may be included as guest contributions at the editors' discretion. Letters and contributions will be published at the editors' discretion and may be edited for publication. All communications relative to the contents should be sent to the editorial office.

Advertising policy The *Standard Bearer* does not accept commercial advertising of any kind. Announcements of church and school events, anniversaries, obituaries, and sympathy resolutions will be placed for a \$10 fee. Announcements should be sent with the fee to: RFPA, Attn: SB Announcements, 1894 Georgetown Center Dr., Jenison, MI 49428-7137 (mail@rfpa.org). Deadline for announcements is one month prior to publication date.

Annual subscription price

Print: \$37 USA / \$52 international
Digital: \$22 / free to print subscribers

The Reformed Free Publishing Association maintains the privacy and trust of its subscribers by not sharing with any person, organization, or church any information regarding *Standard Bearer* subscribers.

Editorial office

Prof. Barry Gritters
4949 Ivanrest Ave SW
Wyoming, MI 49418
gritters@prca.org

Business office

Mr. Dwight Quenga
1894 Georgetown Center Dr.
Jenison, MI 49428-7137
616-457-5970
dwight@rfpa.org

United Kingdom office

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

rfpa.org / prca.org



MAGNIFYING CHRIST

REV. JOHN MARCUS

Pastor of Peace PRC in Dyer, Indiana

According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death. For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain—Philippians 1:20-21.

Everyone has desires. Those desires relate to such things as church, marriage and family, careers, schooling, vacations, money, and even eating and drinking. But of our many desires, which one is chief? Which desire rules all the others?

The inspired apostle exemplifies what our chief desire ought to be both in life and in death: that Christ be magnified!

It may seem strange that Paul talks about his personal desire in this letter to the Philippians. But we need to understand what he wrote was inspired by the Holy Spirit for our instruction.

Although the apostle was in prison for his faith at the time of his writing, he didn't complain or become angry about his circumstances. Instead, he rejoiced because he knew that Christ would be magnified.

Just as Paul desired, we should all desire that Christ would be magnified. He implies this desire when he says, "Christ shall be magnified" (Phil. 1:20). These words tell us what is certainly true; but they also express his own "earnest expectation and...hope" (v. 20). The apostle wanted it to be so.

"Magnified" literally means "to make greater, or cause to be greater." When we look at something through a telescope, it becomes greater. Not that it literally grows, but we see a bigger and clearer image of it. It is one thing to see the sun with the naked eye and to appreciate its power. But if we use the right

kind of telescope, we can see intense bursts of energy coming off the surface, massive eruptions of solar material, magnetic fields, and a host of other features. Magnifying the sun through a telescope allows us to see how amazing and powerful it is.

The apostle's great desire was for Christ to be magnified. He wanted us and all the saints to see Christ more clearly. He wanted us to see how humble and obedient He was to take upon Himself a lowly human nature. He wanted us to see how exalted Christ is as He rules over all of history and our own personal circumstances. He wanted us to see how glorious Christ is in Himself and how gracious He is toward us. His desire was that Christ be magnified.

How is Christ magnified? The apostle says, "Christ shall be magnified *in my body*" (v. 20). Christ would be magnified in the whole of his life as that life came to expression in his body: "whether it be by life or by death" (v. 20). As Paul continued to live and respond to life's circumstances, or whether he came face to face with death, Christ would be magnified in his body. How he responded would serve as a lens that allowed others to see Christ more clearly.

We do not know how each of us will respond to the many circumstances of life; but the principle still holds: when we respond to life and death in a godly way, Christ is magnified in our bodies. He is magnified when people see Christ's image reflected in us.

Christ is magnified when others see humility and patience in submitting ourselves to God's will. He is magnified when we know how to be abased and how to abound. He is magnified when others see in us the strength to do all that God has called us to do. The reason Christ is magnified in these things is that we would never do these things in our own strength. The

apostle confesses, and we confess with him, “I can do all things *through Christ* which strengtheneth me” (Phil. 4:13). Not simply that Christ does it and we remain passive. But Christ strengthens us so that we do it.

Is it our great desire in life and in death that Christ be magnified in our bodies?

In truth, Christ will be magnified in us. Every child of God can have the same confidence that the apostle Paul had. He expresses his confidence in the inspired words, “Christ *shall be* magnified in my body.” It mattered not whether he was set free and continued to live to preach the gospel, or whether he died by execution at the hands of Caesar, he remained confident that Christ would be magnified.

By mentioning the two extremes of life and death, the apostle means to include all the circumstances of life. No matter what we face, in the measure that we manifest love, Christ will be magnified. In the measure that we do good works to the glory of God, Christ will be magnified. In the measure that we reflect Christ’s image, He will be magnified in our bodies. In our goals, the attitudes we display, the words we speak, the things we do, at home, at work, in the church, and even on our death bed, Christ will be magnified in us.

We can be confident of this because God always causes Christ to be magnified in us His people. God works to conform us to the image of Christ. The apostle expresses that truth in Philippians 1:6: “Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.”

It is true that we have only a small beginning. So many things we say, and do, and think do not magnify Christ. But when God begins a good work in us, He will continue to work in us. He will work in us so that we are in fact conformed to the image of Christ. He will cause our love for the saints to “abound yet more and more” (Phil. 1:9), so that we look not on our own things, but “on the things of others” (Phil. 2:4). He will cause us to speak the word without fear of our adversaries (cf. Phil. 1:10, 28). He will give us boldness to be faithful witnesses. He will work in us to behave in a way “that becometh the gospel of Christ” (Phil. 1:27). He will change us so that we truly begin to reflect the image of Christ.

Our confidence that Christ will be magnified does

not arise from our own strength; our confidence is in Christ. The words “as always,” indicate that God has shown Himself faithful in the past; “so now also” indicates that God will continue to be faithful to His promises in the present. Paul has an earnest expectation and hope that Jesus Christ will supply the grace of the Holy Spirit along the way. So he says, “I know that this shall turn to my salvation *through* your prayer and *the supply of the Spirit* of Jesus Christ” (v. 19). The Holy Spirit will see to it that Christ is magnified in us.

When our great desire is that Christ would be magnified, that will show itself in our confession.

Having the desire to magnify Christ is what makes us say, “to live is Christ” (v. 21). To live is all about Christ. But this confession is not an abstract truth concerning Christ; our confession concerns our personal relationship to Christ. So we say with the apostle, “for *to me* to live is Christ.” We confess that Jesus Christ is our personal Savior.

The world says, “To me to live is all about myself. To me to live is money and pleasure and fame. Take these things away from me and life is not worth living anymore.” But by God’s grace we say, “To me to live is all about *Christ*. I am chosen in *Him* from eternity. *He* redeemed me with *His* precious blood. *He* gave me spiritual life by *His* irresistible grace. *He* preserves that life in me. And now I want *Him* to be magnified in the whole of my life.” Take Christ away and we are of all men most miserable. But if we have Christ, we have everything.

When by God’s grace we are able to confess, “For to me to live is Christ,” we will also be able to confess “to die is gain.”

The world might say in its delusion, “My life is hopeless; I am better off dead.” Or, they might take the opposite view and say, “My life is all about the present; I cannot bear the thought of dying.”

But if God has begun a good work in us, then death will by no means set us back. Rather, death will carry that glorious work to its goal. Death does away with the old man of sin. Death takes away all the pain and sorrow we experienced in this valley of tears. Death brings us into the very presence of Jesus Christ to enjoy perfect fellowship with Him. Yes, to live is Christ; but to die is great gain!

When our great desire is that Christ be magnified, we can be sure that we will one day see His glorious greatness. He will come for us and take us to be with Himself.

Until that day comes, may Christ be magnified in our bodies.



REFLECTIONS ON SYNOD 2024 AND THE EXPERIENCE OF SALVATION (1)

REV. JOSHUA ENGELSMA

Pastor of Crete PRC in Crete, Illinois

INTRODUCTION

For many years, the editors of the *Standard Bearer* have provided a summary of the decisions of the Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches in the July issue of the magazine. Due to the length of this year's Synod and the responsibilities involved, I was not able to put together such a summary in time. Readers interested in a summary of the work of synod are encouraged to consult the daily news reports that are found on the denominational website (prca.org/about/church-government/synod). And, to gain an accurate knowledge of what synod decided, please read carefully the published 2024 *Acts of Synod* when they become available.

Now, rather than providing a belated summary, I intend in this and in a few other editorials to focus on one set of decisions. Those decisions have to do with a case of doctrinal error that was adjudicated by Synod 2024.

Briefly, the history of the case is as follows. In late 2020 to early 2021, a Protestant Reformed minister wrote a series of articles that touched on the subject of good works, their utility, and their relation to the experience of our salvation. In 2021, the minister's consistory judged statements in the articles to be in error and required of him a public apology, which apology was made. In 2022, another individual protested the action of the consistory, believing that the body erred in

requiring an apology of the minister for the contested statements. Over time, the disagreement came to center on the following three statements:

- Statement #1: "Scripture teaches that something must be done that we may be saved."
- Statement #2: "We must accurately distinguish between a right to life and the possession of life. The former must be assigned to the obedience of Christ, that all the values of our holiness may be entirely excluded. But certainly, our works, or rather these, which the Spirit of Christ worketh in us, and by us, contribute something to the latter."
- Statement #3: "Hence, I conclude, that sanctification and its effects, are by no means to be slighted, when we treat of assuring the soul as to its justification."

After lengthy correspondence, the individual and the consistory agreed that they were at an impasse, and the individual appealed the case to Classis East. Classis East made decisions related to the case in October 2023, but decided not to enter into the doctrinal matters. Following protests, Classis East ruled on the doctrinal statements in February 2024. Not satisfied with the ruling of Classis East, the consistory involved made appeal to Synod 2024. Synod ruled that Statement #1 (when referring to our good works) and Statement #2 are in error, and that Statement #3, although not a clear statement of orthodoxy, is not erroneous.

My intention in this and the following articles is not to give a full-blown explanation of the case itself nor a regurgitation of the grounds given by synod for its decisions. Instead, I want to use this as a springboard to speak more generally about some of the key doctrines involved in the case. Particularly, I want to speak of how the doctrines of Christ's saving work, faith, and good works relate to the believer's experience of salvation.

THE WORKS OF JESUS

The whole of our salvation, including our experience of that salvation, is grounded in Jesus Christ alone. He merited it for us by all His saving works.

Throughout His earthly ministry, Jesus worked. He said, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work" (John 5:17). From the beginning to the end of His life, He was working. No man has ever worked as Jesus worked. He was always busy, active, laboring, doing, obeying.

In this connection, we ought to consider the distinction often made in Reformed theology between the active and passive obedience of Jesus. The language of "active obedience" and "passive obedience" is not found in our confessions, but the basic idea is embedded in them. The distinction has its drawbacks, in that the work of Jesus is one, unified whole that cannot be divided. At the same time, the distinction is helpful in setting before our eyes the full scope of the saving works of Jesus.

First, we speak of the *passive* obedience of Jesus. His passive obedience refers to the suffering that He willingly endured for us, especially His suffering on the cross and His experiencing the torments of hell. The suffering He endured was the punishment that we deserved on account of the guilt of our sins. Jesus took upon Himself that guilt, and therefore it was necessary that He endure to the full the punishment that God's justice demanded. To speak of this as His passive obedience might seem strange, as it might lead us to think that Jesus was totally inactive. But the point is not that Jesus was inactive; He was very active in His suffering. "No man taketh it [Jesus' life] from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again" (John 10:18). The language of passive obedience is intended to convey the obedience of Christ in His *suffering*.

Second, there is His *active* obedience. Jesus' active

obedience refers to His willing performance of all the demands of the law of God. Lord's Day 23 of the Heidelberg Catechism makes reference to this when it speaks of the basis of our justification being not only the "perfect satisfaction" of Jesus (His passive obedience) but also His "holiness" (His active obedience). Romans 5:19 contrasts Adam's sinful works with Jesus' saving works: "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous."

His active obedience includes His lifelong submission to the obligations of the Old Testament ceremonial and civil laws. "But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law" (Gal. 4:4). Throughout His life He kept that law. This was evident already from His birth, when He submitted to circumcision the eighth day and when He was redeemed with two turtledoves at 40 days old (Luke 2:21-24). Throughout His life He kept the law of the feast days and sacrifices, for example, observing the Passover every year. He kept the law of the Sabbath, always worshiping in the synagogue and doing only works of present necessity and mercy. He paid the taxes necessary for maintaining the temple (Matt. 17:24-27). Although He challenged the leaders of the Jews on their man-made additions to the law and their idea that they were saved by their keeping of the law, Jesus did not destroy the law but fulfilled its every obligation. "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill" (Matt. 5:17).

The active obedience of Jesus refers especially to His fulfilling the obligations of the moral law of God. God's just demand was that we obey Him perfectly out of a heart of love for Him and for the neighbor. This obligation, which we could never fulfill, Jesus has fulfilled. All His life long He never transgressed a single commandment, but rather fulfilled every obligation of the law. He was perfectly motivated at all times by love for the Father and for the neighbor. As one man put it, obedience learned something about itself in the obedience of Jesus.

While this distinction is certainly not unheard of in our circles, it seems that of late we have come to appreciate it better, especially the active obedience of Jesus. As one individual told me recently (I paraphrase), "I love to hear about Jesus' active obedience!"

THE ALL-SUFFICIENT SAVIOR

Full salvation is found in Jesus and His many saving works.

By His saving works Jesus did not merit in part, leaving some part for us to merit. He did not make salvation available, leaving it to us whether we would be saved in reality. Jesus is the full and complete Savior. He saves His people wholly from their sins.

This is the gospel. Peter said to the Jewish leaders in Acts 4:12: “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.” In I Corinthians 1:30, Paul ascribes to Jesus every aspect of salvation: “But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.”

The Reformed confessions emphasize the truth that all our salvation is found in Jesus Christ. The Heidelberg Catechism in Lord’s Day 11 warns that “we ought not to seek, neither can find salvation in any other,” and then says, “for one of these two things must be true, either that Jesus is not a complete Savior, or that they who by a true faith receive this Savior must find *all things* in Him necessary to their salvation.” Article 22 of the Belgic Confession says, “We believe that, to attain the true knowledge of this great mystery, the Holy Ghost kindleth in our hearts an upright faith, which embraces Jesus Christ with all His merits, appropriates Him, and seeks nothing more besides Him. For it must needs follow, either that all things which are requisite to our salvation are not in Jesus Christ, or, if all things are in Him, that then those who possess Jesus Christ through faith have complete salvation in Him. Therefore, for any to assert that Christ is not sufficient, but that something more is required besides Him, would be too gross a blasphemy; for hence it would follow that Christ was but half a Savior.”

The all-sufficiency of Jesus as Savior applies to every aspect of salvation. Sometimes in Reformed theology salvation is distinguished as “the work of Christ *for* us” and “the work of Christ *in* us,” or as “redemption accomplished” and “redemption applied.” Sometimes the distinction is made between “meriting” and “appropriating” (cf. Canons II, Error 6). Some have used the distinction between “the right to life” and “the possession of life.” These distinctions are legitimate and, like the distinction between the active

and passive obedience of Christ, give us a sense of the breadth and wonder of our salvation.

However, the use of these distinctions may in no way take away from the all-sufficiency of Jesus as Savior. When we distinguish “the work of Christ *for* us” and “the work of Christ *in* us” or “redemption accomplished” and “redemption applied,” the focus of both is on the all-sufficiency of Jesus. We may not ascribe all to Jesus in the former, only to displace Him in the latter. Jesus not only accomplished our full redemption by all His saving works in His life and death, but Jesus also is the One who saves us in our own lifetime by applying those saving benefits to us. To be united to Jesus the Savior is to have all the blessings of salvation in Him in principle. Jesus regenerates and savingly calls us. Jesus gives us faith. Jesus justifies us. Jesus sanctifies us. Jesus preserves us. Jesus glorifies us.

The same is true when we use the distinction between “meriting” and “appropriating” or the distinction between “the right to life” and “the possession of life.” Jesus merited the fullness of salvation. And, while it is proper to speak of our appropriating His saving benefits by faith (more on this in a future article), we must not lose sight of the fact that the faith by which we appropriate the blessings of salvation is itself the gift of God and that in this too “it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do” (Phil. 2:13). Similarly, Jesus has given us the right to life, but He is also the One who brings us into the possession of that life, whether that be understood in the sense of our conscious experience of salvation in this life or the full possession of our salvation in everlasting glory.

This is the gospel truth of gracious, unconditional salvation!

The truth of Jesus’ all-sufficiency as Savior is the reason for rejecting all our works as contributing to our salvation or being done for salvation. This truth was in mind when Synod 2024 judged Statement #1 (“Scripture teaches that something must be done that we may be saved”) to be erroneous when the “something [that] must be done” refers to our good works rather than the works of Jesus. And it is for the same reason that Synod rejected as erroneous Statement #2: “We must accurately distinguish between a right to life and the possession of life. The former must be assigned to the obedience of Christ, that all the values of our holiness

may be entirely excluded. But certainly, our works, or rather these, which the Spirit of Christ worketh in us, and by us, contribute something to the latter.”

AS A MATTER OF EMPHASIS

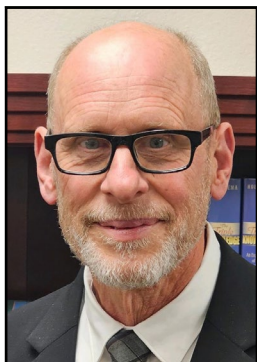
Since the truth of Jesus as the all-sufficient Savior is the gospel, was the heart and soul of the preaching of the apostles, and is the overwhelming emphasis of the Reformed confessions, this must be the heart and soul, the overwhelming emphasis, of our preaching and writing.

Some might object and say, “What about the call to live a life of good works? What about practical instruction in godly living?” Certainly in our preaching and writing we must call God’s people to a life of good works. Certainly we must give practical instruction in godly living. These things have a place, an *important* place, in our preaching and writing.

But I hope and pray that God’s people do not walk out of church Sunday after Sunday and say, “I don’t think our pastor said anything wrong, but it seems like the overwhelming emphasis week after week is on what we must do!” Rather, I hope and pray that God’s people walk out of church and say, “It is clear to me that the overwhelming emphasis is on Jesus the Savior!” There would be something seriously wrong if we ministers and our congregants tire of preaching that has as its heart and soul Jesus and His saving works.

Far from leading the churches into antinomianism, far from cutting the nerve of a life of good works, this emphasis on Jesus and His saving works motivates believers to godly living. If we believe, *truly* believe, that the motivation of good works is grateful love (cf. Lord’s Day 32), then let us hold before our hearers the love of God revealed in Jesus the Savior.

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES



NAHUM (4) THE COMING JUDGMENT OF NINEVEH (1)

REV. RON HANKO

Minister emeritus in the Protestant Reformed Churches and member of Covenant of Grace PR Fellowship in Spokane, Washington

⁸But with an overrunning flood he will make an utter end of the place thereof, and darkness shall pursue his enemies. ⁹What do ye imagine against the LORD? he will make an utter end: affliction shall not rise up the second time. ¹⁰For while they be folden together as thorns, and while they are drunken as drunkards, they shall be devoured as stubble fully dry. ¹¹There is one come out of thee, that imagineth evil against the LORD, a wicked counsellor. ¹²Thus saith the LORD; Though they be quiet, and likewise many, yet thus shall they be cut down, when he shall pass through. Though I have afflicted thee, I will afflict thee no more. ¹³For now will I break his yoke from off thee, and will burst thy bonds

in sunder. ¹⁴And the LORD hath given a commandment concerning thee, that no more of thy name be sown: out of the house of thy gods will I cut off the graven image and the molten image: I will make thy grave; for thou art vile—Nahum 1:8-14.

Nahum has spoken of God’s anger in general terms in verses 2-6. Now, in verses 8-14, he focuses on Nineveh as the target of God’s anger. He describes the coming of the Lord for judgment first in terms of a flood (v. 8) and then in terms of a fire (v. 10).

The description of Nineveh’s judgment as an “overrunning flood” is appropriate in light of Isaiah’s

description of the coming of Nineveh and Assyria against Judah: “The LORD spake also unto me again, saying, Forasmuch as this people refuseth the waters of Shiloah that go softly, and rejoice in Rezin and Remaliah’s son; Now therefore, behold, the Lord bringeth up upon them the waters of the river, strong and many, even the king of Assyria, and all his glory: and he shall come up over all his channels, and go over all his banks: And he shall pass through Judah; he shall overflow and go over, he shall reach even to the neck; and the stretching out of his wings shall fill the breadth of thy land, O Immanuel” (Is. 8:5-8). Judah had forsaken God, the fountain of living waters (Jer. 2:13). They had wanted to drink of other waters, the waters of Egypt and Assyria (Jer. 2:18), and God had sent those foreign waters as an overwhelming flood that swept all away. Now, having used them to chastise His people, God would bring judgment against Assyria and Nineveh like a flood.

Nahum returns to this figure in chapter 2:6: “The gates of the rivers shall be opened, and the palace shall be dissolved.” Nahum’s prophecy was fulfilled literally: through a storm and flood God gave the Akkadians and Medes access to the city. The Greek historian, Xenophon, describing Nineveh’s capture, says that its enemies were unable to take the city either by assault or siege, taking it only when a terrible storm had terrified the inhabitants, a storm Xenophon ascribes to the Greek god, Zeus (Xenophon, *Anabasis*, 4.12).

Of such a flood of judgment we sing in Psalm 18:

Jehovah’s thunders fill the heaven,
The dreadful voice of God Most High;
With shafts of light the clouds are riven,
His foes, dismayed, in terror fly.

The raging torrents overflow,
And sweep the world’s foundations bare,
Because Thy blasts of anger blow,
O Lord of earth and sea and air.
Psalter #34, stanzas 7, 8

Twice God says through Nahum that He would make an utter end, and He did. If Nahum prophesied around 650 BC, then less than forty years later in 612 BC Nineveh would fall and with it the Assyrian Empire. Not only would it fall to the Akkadians and Medes, but it would be so completely destroyed that nothing would remain of the city; even its location would be forgotten until found and excavated in modern times by Austen Henry Layard in 1847-49.

Nor would Nineveh ever again be inhabited. It had been founded after the flood by Nimrod, the mighty hunter (Gen. 10:11), the great-grandson of Noah, nearly 2,000 years before and had been continuously inhabited all that time. It had been the greatest city of the ancient world, so large that it was “of three days journey” when Jonah visited it (Jonah 3:3). It was the capital of

one of the great empires of the ancient world. That came to an “utter end” with the fulfillment of Nahum’s prophecy and was prophetic of the “utter end” of all the kingdoms of this world.

Not only would the city be destroyed but its inhabitants would be pursued with darkness, another reference to storm

and tempest, but also a description of the despair and hopelessness Nineveh’s fall would bring to the Assyrians. They had brought darkness into the land of Judah and darkness would pursue them.

Darkness in Scripture is always associated with judgment (Ps. 18:9-11), but it also associated with hell, the place of eternal punishment. Hell is outer darkness, the place where the light of God’s grace and favor does not shine (Matt. 8:12). The Ninevites would not only be pursued by the darkness of despair when they saw their city overrun and suffered the brutalities of war, but they would be pursued by darkness even after death: they would be pursued by darkness forever.

Even when not suffering the darkness of war, conquest, and subjugation, the unbelieving and ungodly have darkness within themselves: “But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness.

**THE NINEVITES WOULD
NOT ONLY BE PURSUED BY
THE DARKNESS OF DESPAIR
WHEN THEY SAW THEIR CITY
OVERRUN AND SUFFERED THE
BRUTALITIES OF WAR, BUT
THEY WOULD BE PURSUED
BY DARKNESS EVEN AFTER
DEATH: THEY WOULD BE
PURSUED BY DARKNESS
FOREVER.**

If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!" (Mat. 6:23). Most horrifying, but a fulfillment of Nahum's prophecy that reaches far beyond the fall of Nineveh.

Believers, those who trust in God and whom He knows and loves, may not forget that there is only one reason that they do not walk in darkness and in the shadow of death (Is. 9:2)—three hours of darkness on the hill called Golgotha. There the Son of God was pursued into darkness, not only the darkness that came on the land, but the darkness of being forsaken of God, a darkness we can only imagine. Truly, "none of the ransomed ever knew how deep were the waters crossed; nor how dark was the night that the Lord passed through ere He found His sheep that was lost" ("The Ninety and Nine," Elizabeth Clephane, 1868).

Verse 9 repeats God's threat to make an utter end of Nineveh. That would have been unbelievable when Nineveh was at the height of its power under Sennacherib, and the Ninevites themselves would not have believed it. Speaking of Nineveh's end, God has in mind those objectors who would point to Nineveh's long history, to its conquests, power, and wealth. Nineveh's own reaction to the Word of God would have been, "I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow" (Rev. 18:7).

Nevertheless God's Word stood and Nineveh was never restored, never again a city. Its site is nothing but a low hill, partly excavated; its bricks have become once again the mud and clay from which they were made; its language was unreadable until more modern times; its monuments are museum pieces around the world; its people are no longer identifiable as the Assyrians of old; its empire only remembered as a rather brief episode in the history of the East. God made an "utter end" of Nineveh, and not long after Nahum prophesied. Nothing could possibly be imagined against the Lord that would thwart His purpose or leave His Word unfulfilled.

Nahum's prophesy of Nineveh's fall is prophetic of the fall of all the kingdoms of this world at the end of time. That is not as evident here as in chapter 3, where Scripture's language is similar to that of Revelation 17 and 18 and the description of Babylon's fall there. Revelation uses a different name for the city of this world, the name Babylon, but it is one and the same city with Nineveh in wickedness, in drunkenness, in whoredoms, in gross materialism, and in its end.

Nahum's word is addressed, however, not to Nineveh, but to God's people and is meant to assure them that Nineveh's end will also be an end to all that

they suffer. Judah is assured that Nineveh's cruelties would not go on forever, and God's people in every age of the world are assured that their enemies will be destroyed and the persecution they have suffered will not go on forever: "affliction shall not rise up the second time." If that was true of Nineveh, how much more will it be true when the kingdoms of this world become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ.

Verse 10 continues the thought of verses 8 and 9 that

there would be an end of Nineveh. Nineveh's destruction is compared to a wildfire sweeping across the stubble of a wheat field that has already been harvested. The wheat is already gone, suggesting again the deliverance of God's people, who are the wheat in God's field, the wicked and unbelieving being the chaff consigned to the fire, and even the stubble burned.

The rest of the verse is a description of Nineveh's stubbornness and insensitivity. Nineveh was like an impenetrable thicket of thorny brambles or bundle of thorny vines twisted together, untouchable and of no use to man or beast. Nineveh, in its hard-hearted opposition to the kingdom and people of God, was like a drunkard fallen into a stupor. Like those thorny brambles, it would be fuel for the fire of God's anger and, like a sleeping drunkard, unaware of its coming judgment.

**JUDAH IS ASSURED
THAT NINEVEH'S
CRUELITIES WOULD NOT
GO ON FOREVER, AND
GOD'S PEOPLE IN EVERY
AGE OF THE WORLD
ARE ASSURED THAT
THEIR ENEMIES WILL
BE DESTROYED AND THE
PERSECUTION THEY
HAVE SUFFERED WILL
NOT GO ON FOREVER:
"AFFLICTION SHALL NOT
RISE UP THE SECOND
TIME."**

Nahum's words echo those of Jeremiah regarding Babylon: "And I will make drunk her princes, and her wise men, her captains, and her rulers, and her mighty men: and they shall sleep a perpetual sleep, and not wake, saith the King, whose name is the LORD of hosts"(Jer. 51:57). Alas, Babylon! Alas, Nineveh! Alas, all the kingdom of this world!

Verse 11 describes the man who was the leader of Nineveh's stubborn resistance to the kingdom of God, a man who is literally a "Belial counselor" (the KJV has "a wicked counsellor"). This is a reference, historically, to the greatest of Assyria's kings, Sennacherib, who ruled Assyria from 705-681 BC. His depredations and blasphemies are described in II Kings 18:13-37. It was he who made Nineveh the greatest city of the ancient world. As Robertson says, explaining this verse, "The womb of wickedness which is Nineveh has produced a horrid monstrosity, a Son of 'Belial.'"¹

It was Sennacherib who besieged Jerusalem during the days of Hezekiah. It was his blasphemies that Rabshakeh shouted at the citizens of Jerusalem. It was his letter that Hezekiah spread before the Lord. It was he against whom Isaiah also prophesied and whose army, 185,000 strong, was destroyed by the angel of God (II Kings 19:35). It was Sennacherib who was assassinated by two of his sons shortly thereafter.

Nahum is the only prophet to use the word "Belial." The name means "worthless one," and is used elsewhere in the Old Testament to describe the wickedest of men, Eli's sons (I Sam. 2:12ff.); Nabal, whom even his servants called a "son of Belial" (I Sam. 25:17); Sheba, an instigator of rebellion in the days of David (II Sam. 20:1); and the two false witnesses produced by Jezebel to testify against Naboth (II Kings 21:10, 13). The name is used in Psalm 41:8, 9 to refer to Ahithophel, the counselor who betrayed David, and who was a picture of Judas Iscariot. It is used in the New Testament in II Corinthians 6:15 to refer to the great enemy himself: "What concord hath Christ with Belial?"

Though a direct reference to Sennacherib, the name also includes his successors, Esarhaddon (II

Kings 19:37; Ezra 4:2; Is. 37:38) and Ashurbannipal (the Asnappar of Ezra 4:10), who along with Sennacherib were the greatest of Assyria's kings and the last of her kings. The name also describes all those who set themselves against the Lord and against His kingdom and who turn enmity against God into open opposition. It is, therefore, also the name of the great enemy of God's people in the last days, Antichrist, the man of sin, though the Bible does not use the word to describe him.

Of Antichrist and of Satan whom he serves it can be said, "There is one come out of thee, that is, out of the kingdoms of this world, that imagineth evil against the LORD, a Belial counsellor." He will be the one "who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God" (II Thess. 2:4).

To Sennacherib and all who are like him the Word of God through Isaiah applies: "Because thy rage against me, and thy tumult, is come up into mine ears, therefore I will put my hook in thy nose, and my bridle in thy lips, and I will turn thee back by the way by which thou camest" (Is. 37:29). None of the kingdoms of this world, not even the gates of hell can prevail against the kingdom of God. No one, not Belial himself, can imagine anything against the Lord. In their opposition to the Lord and to His Christ, they become a laughingstock and God has promised to break them with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel (Ps. 2:4, 9), as He did Assyria.

To them and to us God says, "Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him" (Ps. 2:10-12). Few give heed, but there are, by God's grace, always those who do put their trust in His Son, not only among the rulers and judges, but also among the common folk.

1 O. Palmer Robertson, *The Books of Nahum, Habakkuk and Zephaniah* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1990), 74.



RAIN

REV. JUSTIN SMIDSTRA

Pastor of First PRC in Holland, Michigan

Among the great, unsearchable, and marvelous works of Almighty God, which we can so easily overlook, is His work of giving rain upon the earth and sending waters upon the fields (Job 5:9-10). The King of heaven and earth rules over the mighty waters. He has both appointed the boundaries of the sea and “made a decree for the rain” (Job 28:26). He makes the dark rain clouds His chariot and walks upon the wings of the storm wind. “For he saith to the snow, Be thou on the earth; likewise to the small rain, and to the great rain of his strength” (Job 37:6). “Hath the rain a father? or who hath begotten the drops of dew?” (Job 38:28). The gentle rain, and the torrential rain, every drop rolls from His fingers and obeys His direction. When it rains, it is the Lord who is “opening his good treasure” (Deut. 28:12). With this bounty of providence, He enriches the earth with “the river of God” (Ps. 65:9) and “fills the pools” (Ps. 84:6). He waters the ridges. He settles the furrows. He blesses the springing thereof (Ps. 65:10). He gives the thirsty ground to drink the “water of the rain of heaven” (Deut. 11:11). He makes creation’s lifeblood course through the veins of the earth, so that the “land shall yield her increase” (Lev. 26:4), providing “food to all flesh” (Ps. 136:25). Truly, the apostle says “He left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness” (Acts 14:17). How great and powerful is our God! “Are there any among the vanities of the Gentiles that can cause rain? (Jer. 14:22).

The Lord gives rain when and where He pleases. He causes the rain to fall “on the wilderness, wherein there is no man” because it pleases Him to do so (Job. 38:26). He “sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust” according to His good pleasure (Matt. 5:45). But the unjust will give account for their unthankful use of God’s good gift. May God’s people receive every drop of rain with thanksgiving!

Throughout covenant history, this bounty of providence—whether too much or too little—has often been an agent of God’s judgment. In the days of Noah, the Lord broke up the fountains of the deep and opened the windows of heaven. With the mighty rain the righteous Judge brought the end of all flesh, cleansing the earth of man’s wickedness (Gen. 7:11-12). God gave Israel the land of Canaan, a land flowing with milk and honey, for it drank of the “water of the rain of heaven” (Deut. 11:11). But when His people forsook His laws, He shut up the heavens to chasten them and turn them from their sin (I Kings 8:35). Elijah prayed and “it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months” (James 5:17). Atop Mount Carmel the people confessed, “The LORD he is the God” (I Kings 18:39). And Elijah prayed, “and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit” (James 5:18). The psalmist sings: “Thou, O God, didst send a plentiful rain, whereby thou didst confirm thine inheritance, when it was weary” (Ps. 68:9).

Scripture uses rain to portray the plenteousness and richness of God’s blessings upon His people in and through Jesus Christ, as well as His power to restore and renew His people when they have departed from Him. Hosea proclaimed, “Come, and let us return unto the LORD...his going forth is prepared as the morning; and he shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth” (Hosea 6:1, 3). The prophet Isaiah uses the fructifying power of rainfall as a figure for the effectual power of God’s Word: “For as the rain cometh down...and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please...” (Is. 55:10-11).

Do you see, believer, the gentle rain bringing forth

the green new life of spring? So the Word of God is powerful to bring renewal to your life, powerful to expel sin, powerful to bring forth fruits of holiness. His Word will not return to Him void. Moses, inspired by the Spirit, begins His sermon on song thus: “My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass” (Deut. 32:2). So ought the doctrine of the gospel of Christ to drop like gentle, nourishing rain upon the soil of the contrite and believing heart, causing it to yield an increase of the fruits of the Spirit.

Perhaps most glorious of all is the prophecy of

Christ and His kingdom in Psalm 72:6 “He [Christ] shall come down like rain upon the mown grass: as showers that water the earth.” Jesus came down like rain at His first advent. He came gently and lowly, to rescue, redeem, and restore poor lost sinners such as we are. At His second advent He will again come down like rain, with power, to renew all things! The bodies of His saints, cut down like grass, He shall raise again to the newness of life incorruptible. The old shall pass away. He shall renew the face of the earth. “And he shall reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end” (Luke 1:33).

BELIEVING AND CONFESSING



OF JESUS CHRIST, TRUE GOD AND MAN, THE ONLY SAVIOR OF THE WORLD SECOND HELVETIC CONFESSION, CHAPTER 11H (2)

PROF. RONALD CAMMENGA

Emeritus professor of Dogmatics and Old Testament in the Protestant Reformed Theological Seminary and member of Southwest PRC in Wyoming, Michigan

THE CREEDS OF FOUR COUNCILS RECEIVED.

And, to say many things with a few words, with a sincere heart we believe, and freely confess with open mouth, whatever things are defined from the Holy Scriptures concerning the mystery of the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ, and are summed up in the Creeds and decrees of the first four most excellent synods convened at Nicea, Constantinople, Ephesus and Chalcedon—together with the Creed of blessed Athanasius, and all similar symbols; and we condemn everything contrary to these.

THE SECTS.

And in this way we retain the Christian, orthodox and catholic faith whole and unimpaired; knowing that nothing is contained in the aforesaid symbols which is not agreeable to the Word of God, and does not altogether make for a sincere exposition of the faith.

The creeds or “symbols” produced by the early ecumenical councils, which dealt with various trinitarian and Christological heresies, were largely driven by the determination to preserve the truth concerning Jesus the Savior. Always the question that the early fathers asked was, “How does this teaching impact the biblical revelation concerning Jesus? What are the implications of this teaching for that which qualifies Jesus to be the complete and effectual Savior of dead sinners who cannot save themselves?” That is what compelled them to fight the good fight for the truth concerning Jesus.

There is some overlap of the SHC and the closing paragraph of the Belgic Confession of Faith (BCF), Article 9: “Therefore, in this point we do willingly receive the three creeds, namely, that of the Apostles, of Nicea, and of Athanasius; likewise that which, conformable thereunto, is agreed upon by the ancient fathers.” The difference is that the BCF, besides referencing the Apostles’ Creed and the Athanasian Creed, refers only to one ecumenical creed, the Nicene Creed. The SHC refers to three other ecumenical councils, besides that of Nicea. Many congregations have the good practice of reading

one of the ecumenical creeds at special evening worship services. This promotes acquaintance with confessional heritage, passed down to us from the early church.

All of these creeds were produced by *ecumenical* councils. They were ecumenical because officebearers from the worldwide Christian church were invited to attend, church leaders from every country where Christianity had a presence. Not all were able or allowed to attend. Travel was arduous and often dangerous. For various reasons, some rulers forbade church officials in their realms to attend. Nevertheless, at all the ecumenical councils there was a sufficiently widespread representation that the councils could legitimately be called ecumenical councils.

The first ecumenical council was the Council of Nicea in AD 325. The members of this council were summoned by the emperor Constantine to resolve the Arian controversy. The issue was whether God the Son was “begotten” by the Father out of His very being, or else was created out of nothing, as the first creature by whom all the other creatures were made, and thus Himself a creature who had a beginning. Opposition to Arius was led by Athanasius. The council rejected the teaching of Arius and his disciples. Jesus was not “like” God, as Arius taught, but He was and is God.

The second ecumenical council was the Council of Constantinople in AD 381. It ratified and expanded slightly the Nicene Creed. It also condemned the error of Apollinaris, who taught that Christ had a human body and soul, but that the divine Logos replaced the human mind. The council condemned Apollinarianism on the ground that for Jesus to be a complete Savior of men, He must be a complete human being—human in every respect, sin excepted. The council expanded the Nicene Creed by affirming the double procession of the Holy Spirit: “And I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of Life, who proceeds from the Father *and the Son*; who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified, and who spake through the prophets.” Second, the council expanded its concluding article on the church: “And I believe one holy catholic and apostolic church. I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins; and I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come.”

The third ecumenical council was the Council of Ephesus in AD 431. The council was convened by the Roman emperor, Theodosius II. It affirmed the

Nicene Creed and went on to condemn the teaching of Nestorius. Nestorius taught that the Virgin Mary may be called the *Christotokos*, the “Christ-bearer,” but not the *Theotokos*, the “God-bearer.” Nestorius so emphasized the distinction between Christ’s human and divine natures that he separated them.

The fourth ecumenical council was the Council of Chalcedon in AD 451. Meeting only twenty years after the Council of Ephesus, the Council of Chalcedon was convoked by the emperor Marcian. The principal purpose of the council was to reassert the decisions of the Council of Ephesus against the teachings of Eutyches and Nestorius. Eutyches taught that Christ’s human nature was absorbed into the divine, as a drop of vinegar is swallowed up in the ocean. For all practical purposes he denied the real human nature of Christ. The Creed of Chalcedon, sometimes referred to as the Chalcedonian Definition, is renowned for its statement about the relation of Christ’s divine and human natures that they are “to be acknowledged in two natures, without confusion, without change, without division, without separation.”

In addition to the four ecumenical councils and creeds, Bullinger refers to “the Creed of blessed Athanasius.” Though likely not written by Athanasius, the Athanasian Creed affirms biblical orthodoxy with respect to the Trinity and to the true deity and real humanity of Christ. The creed, also referred to as the *Symbolum Quicunque*, after its first word in the Latin original, is officially recognized by the Belgic Confession in article 9. It begins by asserting, “Whoever will be saved, before all things it is necessary that he hold the catholic faith.” According to verse 3, “And the catholic faith is this: That we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity.”

The final paragraph of chapter 11 of the SHC once again deals with the sects that deny the truth concerning Jesus Christ, who is true God and true man. In the four preceding paragraphs on the sects in the chapter, heretics and heresies were spelled out. In this concluding paragraph, Bullinger contents himself with asserting that any who deny the teachings of the four ecumenical creeds and the Athanasian Creed reject the Christian faith, for in these creeds “nothing is contained...which is not agreeable to the Word of God, and does not altogether make for a sincere exposition of the faith.”



HIGH EYES

REV. RYAN BARNHILL

Pastor of Heritage PRC in Sioux Falls, South Dakota

“Hate” is a strong word. When the Lord gives us a list of seven sins that He hates (Prov. 6:16), we ought to sit up and take notice. Topping that list at #1 is the sin of pride. Abominable pride! Pride is an attitude of superiority over against others and even God Himself. Proverbs 6 refers to a “proud look.” In the original Hebrew, “proud” is the word “high,” and “look” is the word “eyes.” Thus, the title of this article, and a fitting description of pride, is “high eyes.” It is good for us as youth to examine ourselves with respect to this sin that infects each one of us, to be reminded of the Lord’s hatred for it, and to have set before us the positive calling to be humble.

A ROOT SIN

The description of “high eyes” is fitting for the sin of pride. Sometimes a proud person has high eyes or a raised look on their physical face: a head tilted up with eyes peering down the nose at others; in such a case, the windows of the eyes give a glimpse into the pride within. But whether or not this is true of someone, high eyes can be taken *figuratively* and are true of a person *within*. The sin of pride is the high eyes of the heart with which we look down on other people—the elevated look that arrogantly peers down upon those we deem lower than us. Pride is like climbing a mountain: the higher you climb in your estimation of yourself, the smaller other people around you are going to be. Scripture often associates pride with someone who is lifted up. For example, read how Israel was warned against pride during times of prosperity: “Lest when thou hast eaten and art full, and hast built goodly houses, and dwelt therein; and when thy herds and thy flocks multiply, and thy silver and thy gold is multiplied, and all that thou hast is multiplied; then thine heart be lifted up, and thou forget the LORD

thy God, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage” (Deut. 8:12-14).

Pride is nothing new. This sin has a history that can be traced back to the beginning. In heaven, at the dawn of history, some angels proudly and rebelliously attempted to dethrone God, lifting themselves up against Him. On earth, shortly after God’s creation of all things, Adam and Eve ate of the tree forbidden them, replying with a “we shall” to God’s “Thou shalt not”—nothing short of exalting themselves against God’s word. Pride has left its dirty fingerprints all over history ever since the fall of Adam and Eve.

The abomination of high eyes continues to live on today, plaguing you and me daily. Young person, when is the last time you have examined yourself regarding pride? How does it manifest itself in *your* heart and life? Do you consider yourself above others in your sports talent, academic ability, social skills, or spiritual disciplines? Have you ever looked down with disgust upon someone whose public sin was exposed, esteeming yourself better than him/her? Have you ever spread gossip about someone else’s faults, thereby positioning yourself to look holier than the person about whom you gossiped? Have you ever presented yourself as no good at something, with the hope that the friend with whom you are talking will compliment you, further exalting your already exaltation-hungry heart? Have you ever wished that others would take note of how humble you supposedly are, so that you could be on a pedestal in their eyes? Have you disregarded your parent’s counsel or refused to heed their instruction, lifting yourself above them? Have you ever become inflated within because of the doctrines you hold or the practices you have in your church and denomination? Oh, how pride manifests itself in so many ways!

However, we must think of pride not simply in a *horizontal* way, but also, and even primarily, *vertically*. When we are proud, we seek to elevate ourselves above *God*. When, with our high eyes, we peer down the nose at the neighbor, we peer down the nose at *God*. Sins against the neighbor *are* sins against God. Pride is a sin against God Himself, which is part of the reason (as we'll come to shortly) that the Lord hates this sin so much. Whether the neighbor is involved or not, pride within us can really be distilled down to what happened in the garden: the self-exaltation of saying "yes" where God says "no," or saying "no" where God says "yes."

Because of the horrible nature of pride, it comes as no surprise that it lies at the root of so much other sin. The root nature of pride is evident in that it is listed *first* among the seven sins that the Lord hates: "A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, an heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, a false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren" (Prov. 6:17-19). Pride is the root, and all the other sins mentioned grow out of that root. Pride leads to the other six sins. That is instructive. If you struggle with lying, for example, you must understand that the sin underneath it is pride. We do well to remember this when we confess and deal with the sins in our lives: pride is usually, if not always, their origin.

JEHOVAH'S HATRED

Jehovah hates the proud look: "These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him: a proud look..." (Prov. 6:16, 17). *Hate*: a stronger word could not be used. Jehovah despises pride. It is an abomination to Him, something He loathes. But even if we were not told here that Jehovah hates pride, we would gather that truth from the sheer number of times Scripture warns against it (small sampling: Prov. 8:13; 11:2; 13:10; 16:18).

Of course, pride is an abomination to Jehovah! After all, He is the thrice-holy God. He is spotlessly pure, and in Him is no sin at all. With His whole being He is opposed to all sin. God hates pride because it is sin. Further, God detests pride because it is a root sin that leads to so many other loathsome sins. Additionally, God abhors pride because it is an attitude of superiority over against Him—and what could be more stinking in His divine nostrils

than *that*? God's justice requires that this sin committed against His most high majesty be punished with extreme punishment of body and soul. Are you not then very thankful for the gospel, namely, that God in His justice poured out His burning wrath upon Christ for our sin of pride? Rather than making us suffer for our sins, God in mercy gave Christ in our place. Good news!

The command comes to you and me: repent of your pride! With an eye to God's mercy in Jesus Christ, confidently raise your prayer to heaven, confessing with brokenness your self-exaltation and high eyes. Look intently upon the One who was torn and broken for your pride, finding your salvation alone in Him.

And then, in light of that cross, and in dependence upon the power of the Christ who hung there, go forth showing that *you* hate the very sin which *Jehovah* hates. Do not normalize it, reasoning that "everyone struggles with it." Do not downplay it as something not as serious as other sins. Do not coddle it as a comfortable friend in your life. Say, with God's Word, "This is an abomination to me, and I will fight against it and flee from it!"

ITS OPPOSITE

But now let's be positive. The negative side of the coin is pride. The positive side is humility. Humility is the opposite of pride. If pride is high eyes, humility is low eyes: lowliness of mind and heart.

Who had lowliness of mind and heart like Jesus Christ? In His whole life and ministry, never could He be said to have had high eyes, but always and perfectly the low eyes of humility. With lowliness of mind and heart, He descended all the way to the depths of the cross, where He shed His blood to wash away every proud look of those who belong to Him.

Philippians 2:5 says, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." What was the mind of Christ Jesus? A mind of self-emptying. Let this mind be in *you*! Humility is low eyes, and low eyes can only look one direction when it comes to other people—*up*. As Philippians 2:3 says, "Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves." Young people, in your athletics, your academics, your spiritual disciplines, your everything, the direction is *up*—esteeming others better than yourself. In your talking about others, in your conversations with your parents,

in your denominational affiliation, in all things—let your mind be one of *self-emptying*.

Humility is fueled by the knowledge of who God is and who we are.

God: He tells the number of the stars, and He calls them all by their names (Ps. 147:4). God: He sits upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; He stretches out the heavens as a curtain, and spreads them out as a tent to dwell in. Have you not known? Have you not heard, that the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, faints not, neither is weary? There is no searching of His understanding (Is. 40:22, 28).

But you and I? We are little...just specks. We are frail creatures of the dust. What are we by nature? Dead; apart from Jesus Christ, no different than the

worst monsters among human beings in history. What are we by pure grace? Chosen, redeemed, and heaven-bound—and none of it of our own deserving. Will not all this knowledge drive us to the depths of humility so that we view others better than ourselves? Will not this knowledge bring us especially to look *up* with humility, exalting and worshiping our glorious God?

Let us bow the head, reader, and pray the following:

Father, I confess to Thee my pride. Forgive me for the sake of Jesus Christ, who in humility died for my high eyes. And, Father, root out my pride! Fill me with humility, not only in relation to my neighbors, but especially in my relationship with Thee. Grant it for Jesus' sake. Amen.

PERTAINING TO THE WORK OF THE CHURCHES IN COMMON—FOREIGN MISSIONS

A GLIMPSE INTO THE CURRENT WORK OF THE FMC

REV. RYAN BARNHILL

Pastor of Heritage PRC in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, and secretary of the Foreign Mission Committee

The Foreign Mission Committee (FMC) consists of ten men from the Iowa/Minnesota/South Dakota area, normally divided evenly between elders or ex-elders and ministers. The FMC meets in Doon PRC's council room on the third Tuesday of every month. The Constitution of the FMC sets forth the committee's duties as follows:

The committee shall carry on such investigation, study, correspondence, and propaganda as may prove beneficial in locating a field of labor.

Once a field of labor has been located, the committee shall present to synod a concrete plan, along with an estimation of expenses, whereby this field may be opened and a missionary called to labor within it.

The committee shall be responsible to see that all plans and instructions authorized by synod shall be carried out in the field of labor.

The past year or so has been marked by transition for the FMC regarding the mission field in the Philippines. Synod 2023 approved “the decision of Doon PRC's council and the FMC to begin the process

of withdrawing the missionaries.” Synod 2023 also directed “the Doon council and the FMC to close the mission field in the Philippines and take the necessary steps to bring the work to a completion.” The interested reader can find the grounds for these decisions in the 2023 *Acts of Synod* (pp. 57-60). The FMC is thankful for the profitable and brotherly relationship enjoyed not only with the missionaries laboring in the Philippines, but also with the brothers and sisters in the Protestant Reformed Churches in the Philippines (PRCP). The FMC is grateful for the selfless and tireless labors of the missionaries in the Philippines through the years. The men of the committee also continue to pray that God would bless the PRCP and prosper the work of preaching and spreading the gospel in that region. The FMC is glad to report that the transition of the missionaries to the States, and the transition from the FMC to the Contact Committee, have both gone well.

Among its other labors, the FMC's main work in the past months has been investigation, study, and

correspondence with a view to locating a field of labor. The committee has been actively seeking opportunities in lands abroad where the Lord may be pleased to open a door. To that end, the FMC has been communicating with an evangelism committee in one of our churches that is corresponding with contacts in Africa; the FMC has also been in correspondence with someone in Peru.

Of note is the FMC's investigation of contacts in Mexico. What follows is a recounting of the work in this regard.

In July of 2023, the FMC reached out to First PRC (Grand Rapids), which is involved with work in Mexico, to see if there were ways the FMC could assist in the labors. In September of 2023, First PRC's Mexico Committee asked the FMC whether it would be interested in communicating with a contact in Axtla de Terrazas, Mexico, named Pastor Sergio Vazquez. This Axtla contact is distinct from those in Mexico with whom First PRC has been working.

With the invaluable translating help of Pastor Doner Bartolon, a friend of both the PRCA and Pastor Vazquez, the FMC began communicating with Pastor Vazquez in the fall months of 2023. The FMC learned that Pastor Vazquez has been for the past eighteen years a minister in a local congregation in Axtla called Emanuel, and has over the years become increasingly convicted of Reformed truths. Pastor Vazquez is a member of the National Baptist Convention as well as the Regional Baptist Convention,

although he is ostracized by some pastors for his Reformed convictions. Emanuel has a mission work about an hour away in Ahuacatlan.

The FMC decided to send a delegation to Axtla for further investigation. The delegation consisted of Revs. Barnhill and Marcus, who departed for Mexico in mid-January of 2024. The delegation gave four speeches (on the doctrine of the church and missions), preached two times in Emanuel, engaged in conversations with Pastor Vazquez and the officebearers, visited in many homes of congregants, and had opportunity to speak in Ahuacatlan. While in Mexico, the delegation learned that the mission in Ahuacatlan is led by a missionary from America who works closely with Pastor Vazquez.

The delegation reported to the FMC that the trip was fruitful, by God's grace. The people both in Axtla and Ahuacatlan warmly welcomed Revs. Barnhill and Marcus, and the messages brought were well received. The trip was an opportunity for both parties to begin learning about one another. The FMC continues to have communication with this contact and is currently discussing a possible future path. We covet your prayers for the FMC in this work.

But we also ask you to pray for the FMC more generally. Reader, we have a marvelous Savior who has done wonderful things for us, of which we are glad. Pray that the Lord would give us an open door where we can preach the glorious gospel of grace!

MYANMAR SEMI-ANNUAL REPORT: JUNE 2024

The Council of Hope PRC (Grand Rapids, MI) would like to provide an update on the past few months on the saints in Myanmar. There have been many questions and concerns about the saints and the church in Myanmar, showing the support and care that our sister churches have for these dear saints. Throughout these difficulties, the concern and encouragement truly has demonstrated the unity of Christ's church. The Myanmar Committee (Hope's Council) would like to express our appreciation to our sister churches throughout the denomination for their continued prayers and financial support for the saints in Myanmar.

Each month Hope's Myanmar committee has continued to hold a video conference with Rev. Titus to

keep in touch. Due to the danger of being out later in the day, the officebearers have not been able to join the meeting. Rev. Titus communicates to the officebearers all the encouragement and information that has been covered in the meeting after the meetings. Each meeting Rev. J. Mahtani [Hope's former pastor] opens with Scripture reading, a meditation, encouragement, and prayer. Rev. Titus comments often how he appreciates the encouragement from these meetings and also all the prayers of all the saints. Each meeting the committee inquires about the spiritual and physical health of Rev. Titus, his family, his officebearers, the other members of his congregation, and his contacts throughout the country. Rev. Titus also reports on his many activities as a faithful



Rev. Titus' family

minister of the gospel, including regular preaching, pastoral labors, Bible translation, and outreach work.

It has now been a little over three years since the military overthrow of the democratically elected government. Every meeting we are reminded of the difficulties that these saints face, yet also reminded of God's faithfulness in controlling all events. Rev. Titus often comments on how he can see God's work even in controlling these wicked men. In the last six months, the biggest change/concern has been over conscription law. This law forces young men and women to at least two years of military service if called up, effective immediately. The idea behind this law is that the military is losing numbers and needs more people. The military is planning on using these young people to be on the front lines of the military, so the Freedom Fighters would have to shoot over or kill these civilians to get to the military. In addition, these civilians would be the sacrificial lambs for any mines or other deadly bombs in the path of the military. Ultimately, the military would use these citizens more as bodyguards to protect the military fighters.

There are a few ways around these laws that have been investigated and could be utilized depending on the situation. The first is by sending the young people back to school, because if you are in school, you cannot be conscripted. So, a few of the college-aged youth have been enrolled back in school. The second is by paying a fee that would make you exempt; but that would also make it more difficult to flee if necessary. This would be utilized if Hope PRC of Myanmar deemed it safe and profitable to

do so. As can be imagined, the young people are anxious and often despair. Rev. Titus has brought them the Word of God to comfort and lift them up.

Hope PRCM continues to monitor the situation day by day. They continue to be prepared to flee if the situation gets worse. So far, the Lord has protected the saints from all harm and from the conscription law. Each month, the military is gathering 50,000 citizens to fight. The Freedom Fighters have killed many of the leaders and those that are gathering the citizens to fight. Rev. Titus has made friends with a county chief in Yangon who has said he will try to protect the young people from being called to go to fight. Our sovereign Lord continues to guide and control all these events for the good of His people.

On top of all the turmoil in Myanmar, there are difficulties in everyday life for the saints as well. The weather is very hot, and with a lack of clean drinking water, many people have died from dehydration. At the writing of this article, the high for the day is 104°F with a low of 84°F with high humidity. Kap Mang, a close friend of Rev. Titus and a pastor whom we have supported for years, found out cancer has reached his brain and sensible conversation is no longer possible. Rev. Titus' wife, Certe, had a problem with her thyroid, but medication has seemed to make it much better. Rev. Titus' health is good as well as the rest of the congregation, for which we give thanks to God.

Despite the tyranny of the military and widespread crime and social disorder, Rev. Titus and his congregation are spiritually strong. Hope PRC of Myanmar has still been able to worship together twice each Sunday. Rev. Titus is not able to conduct catechism, which gives him great grief, but he is still very thankful to be able to worship on the Lord's Day. The church still attracts frequent visitors who testify that the gospel gives them peace. Rev. Titus continues to revise his translation of the Old Testament and is currently in I Chronicles. The young people are actively involved in the church as well and are working on putting Rev. Titus' KJV translation into a phone app for the people in Myanmar to read. Rev. Titus says this puts more pressure on him to get through his translation.

The Myanmar committee and the Council of Hope PRC (Grand Rapids) have worked closely with Rev. Titus and the officebearers to offer encouragement and

help wherever needed. Through all this turmoil, there is much weight on Rev. Titus and the officebearers of Hope PRC in Myanmar. They ask for our continued prayers, and they ask that God will give them wisdom in the face of these difficult times and decisions. Rev. Titus and the members of his congregation continue to trust in

God and in His perfect plan. May we too place our trust in the Lord and continue to remember these beloved and beleaguered saints in Myanmar in our prayers.

“And they that know thy name will put their trust in thee: for thou, LORD, hast not forsaken them that seek thee”—Psalm 9:10.

REMEMBERING THE DAYS OF OLD



THE GYSBERT VAN BAREN FAMILY

MR. JAMES HOLSTEG

Member of Southeast PRC in Grand Rapids, Michigan and administrator at Eastside Christian School in Grand Rapids, Michigan

Written by Denise (VanBaren) Haan with help from Agnes VanDrunen (1911-2005) and several other VanBaren family members.

A family tree is full of names and dates, but I wanted more than that. I wanted to know the stories behind those names. The family tree recorded that my great-great-grandfather was the first VanBaren to come to the United States in 1856 at age 36, that he married at 45, and had his first child at age 47. It said his wife passed away when their youngest child was only one year old, and held no record of a second wife. But what about the story? How did he manage to raise his family on his own? How was it for the children, and what did they do next? There had to be more.

Finding the story is often the hard part. So much is lost to time. But when I asked my mom, Clara VanBaren, she told me about a tape recorded by my great-Aunt Agnes who lived from 1911-2005. I remember Aunt Agnes well from when we used to go to church together, and she was an amazing cook! She had recorded the story I was looking for—the story of her grandfather. Suddenly 1856 did not seem so long ago.

So, I leave you in her capable hands, to hear the VanBaren family history as told by Agnes (VanBaren) VanDrunen and I'll start as she did with a song.

Jehovah's mercy floweth like a river,
From everlasting, and abideth ever
On those that love and worship Him with awe,
His righteousness shall bless the habitations
Of children's children through the generations
That keep His covenant and obey His law.

Psalter #444, stanza 7
Netherlands Reformed edition

Jehovah's truth will stand forever,
His covenant-bonds He will not sever.
The word of grace which He commands
To thousand generations stands.
The covenant made in days of old
With Abraham He doth uphold.

Psalter #425, stanza 5

My [Agnes VanDrunen] grandfather Adrian VanBaren was born August 24, 1820, in Slingeland, South Holland in the Netherlands. He immigrated to America in 1856 at the age of 36 with his older brother, widowed sister, and her two teenage children. Grandfather Adrian married nine years later at age 45 and was 47 years old when their first child Antje (Annie) was born on March 30, 1866 in South Holland, IL. The second child, Jan (John) was born two years later in 1868. My Pa, Gijsbert (Gise), was born six years after that in 1874. Adrian's wife Bertha died when her youngest child Gise was only a year old in 1875, leaving his sister Annie who was not quite nine to help care for her brothers John (6) and Gise.

My father Gise and his brother John helped their father

(Adrian) on the small farm as they grew up and so did not have the opportunity of getting any formal education beyond the third grade. Later, Pa attended a Business College of which he often spoke. Uncle John did learn to read and write, but my father's sister Annie never attended school and could not read or even write her name.

It was in Harvey, IL that Pa (Gise) met Ma (Alice De Bok), who worked in the Hasselman's store. Ma excelled in arithmetic because of her experience as a clerk. (Adding machines were unheard of in those days).

Pa and Ma were married in 1894 at a triple wedding ceremony in the parsonage of Rev. J. Robbert of the Christian Reformed Church of Roseland, IL. After expressing their desire to be joined in marriage, the minister suggested that they get married at the same time as the Duco Jellemas and the Peter Clousings, none of whom had met before. A lasting friendship developed, and the three couples celebrated their "Golden Wedding Anniversary" together in 1944.

My oldest brother, Arthur, was born in 1894 and fifteen months later in 1896, my brother Frank was born. After this a little girl was born, and Ma and Pa decided to call her Bertha. The joy of having a baby girl turned to sorrow after only one year when she died. In 1902 Gilbert was born. John was born in 1908. Next another daughter (me, Agnes) was born in 1911. I had the privilege of being reared with five brothers because six years later in 1917 my younger brother Gerrit arrived.

We were not just a family of five boys and one girl, but we also had a wonderful Uncle who lived with Ma and Pa for 35 years. We loved Uncle John, Pa's brother. He was like a father to us.

John, Gerrit, and I (Agnes) slept upstairs. When there was a thunderstorm, Uncle John would sit with us until the storm subsided. Even though Uncle John had very little formal education (3rd grade), he could read well enough that he taught me to read even before I attended school. There is a bit of humor in the fact that each evening I would bring my book to him so that he could help me with my reading. Occasionally an "unclaimed jewel" of the neighborhood would visit our home and, of course, on those evenings he would push me aside and say, "Go away—no reading tonight."

Uncle John was an inspiration in my life. He was a God-fearing man who loved the Lord and quoted many passages from Scripture. One who confessed the Lord

to many—both at home and in the world—but never stood before the church to confess his faith.

Each Saturday afternoon I went to catechism and walked about three miles to the First Christian Reformed Church of South Holland, IL. My Ma taught me the questions and answers because it was Dutch, which made it very difficult for me. I remember helping Ma with the dishes and at the same time memorizing the answers to the questions.

I am thankful that I was born into this covenant family. For Ma and Pa teaching us the way that we should go—knowing Proverbs 22:6, "Train up a child in the way that he should go and when he is old, he will not depart from it."

During the years of Ma and Pa's marriage, Pa and his brother John continued farming and after Pa retired, he and Ma would drive to the farm each day where their five sons farmed together in peace and harmony.

1926 was very stormy not only in the church but also in our home because of the formulation of the "Three Points of Common Grace" by the Synod of the Christian Reformed Church in 1924. Pa disagreed with the Three Points of the CRC while Ma, whose roots were sunk deeply in the CRC, did not think that the difference was great enough to leave the denomination that she loved dearly.

My three older brothers were already married and decided to affiliate with the Protestant Reformed Church while the three younger children were torn between going to church with Pa or Ma.

Pa, Ma, John, Gerrit, and I had left the First CRC in 1924 and affiliated with the Bethany CRC because it was an all-English speaking daughter church of First CRC. In 1926, Arthur and his family affiliated with South Holland PRC, as did my father. It was decided that the baptismal papers of John, Gerrit, and Agnes would remain at Bethany CRC until we were of age to make our own choice.

John was married in 1931 and chose to leave the CRC—the girl he married, Grace Smits, was already in the PRC of South Holland.

When I was married to Joe VanDrunen in 1932 during the great depression (cf. below), his parents and two sisters were members of the First CRC, so I decided to go with my husband. Although I had studied and searched the Scripture to really know what God's Word

taught, and even though I was thoroughly convinced that the CRC was wrong, I felt that I could believe the way I knew was right and still belong to the CRC.

I learned much from hearing my father quote Bible texts showing that the three points of the CRC were in error, even though I was disgusted at times to hear the arguing with the various people who came to our home. I was always learning as I listened, and through all this God was leading and directing my life.

The first four months of our married life were spent in Harvey, IL where we lived in an upstairs apartment. Because the people who lived downstairs were very disagreeable and quarreled often, we decided to move to a bungalow that cost \$25 a month—the same as the upstairs apartment. Living there was of short duration. It was so cold in that house because the furnace was located at one end of the 50-foot basement and there was no forced air in those days (one day I spent all day in the bathroom because it was the only warm room in the house). And so we moved again, this time across the street from Ma and Pa. We lived in the home of old John VanDrunen whose wife had passed away. We lived there until 1945 when our two-bedroom home was completed (at a cost of \$3,800).

I was a homemaker for 13 years, hoping and praying that we would have children, but it did not please God to give us children for reasons we could not understand.

Since we did not have children of our own, I thought it would be wonderful to be able to teach covenant children in a Christian school. I taught eight years, which made my life busy, but, oh, I enjoyed every minute of it. In 1954 we learned that my husband Joe had Multiple Sclerosis. The shock was great, but God always gives the grace He has promised. We lived one day at a time, looking forward with confidence in the God of our salvation whose mercies are new every day.

Joe, who had farmed with his father and his brother-in-law Henry Dirksen, had to leave his work because of his affliction. I was a substitute teacher at Cherry Street Christian School in Zeeland until I applied for a job at General Electric in Holland working in Personnel Practices. I worked for General Electric for 13 years until, at age 57, I quit working to care for my husband who could no longer be alone all day. Joe was in a wheelchair for many years and for 13 years was unable to get in and out of bed without using a lift.

During the 29 years that we lived in Michigan, we

were members of five different churches. In 1973, we left the CRC and went to the Protestant Reformed Church of Holland, Michigan. After moving to Hudsonville, our membership papers were transferred to Hudsonville PRC. Joe was not able to attend the church worship services for many years but listened to cassette tapes and sermons on the radio.

The years of our married life were not always in pastures green, but He who knew what was best for us in kindness led us where there were shadows. Not always by the still waters; oftentimes the heavy tempests blew, and over our souls the waters and billows went. So, whether we dwell on the hilltops high and fair or in the sunless valleys where the shadows lie, it does not matter, for our heavenly Father is there.

Praise the Lord for He is good,
For His mercies ever sure
From eternity have stood
To eternity endure.
Let his ransomed people raise
Songs to their Redeemer's praise.

Psalter #292 (Psalm 107), stanza 1

That song ends Aunt Agnes' story. What a treasure to hear about her childhood in her own words. I had found in it some answers: how my great-grandfather Gise was raised by nine-year-old Annie after his mother died, how Annie was never given an opportunity to go to school and learn to read or write, and how she had to take care of her father and two brothers instead. What a large family tree came from that humble beginning!

But there was still more to the story, and I kept searching. From other family members, I learned more about what life would have been like for my great-great-grandfather Adrian, who my aunt Agnes had spent little time talking about in her recording. The relatives told me Adrian had settled in the "Low Prairie" (South Holland, Illinois) where he raised his family. The Low Prairie had a lot in common with the "High Prairie" (Roseland) in that both hosted many Dutch immigrants in the 1850s. The land was heavily timbered, but also had a lot of swamp land and prairie grass. Rivers and creeks with no outlets would often overflow and flood the trails that ran east and west. By the time Adrian arrived in Illinois, some ditches were being dug to provide much-needed outlets, but there was more work to be done. The farmers in the area joined together in the Low Prairie—going



*Gysbert VanBaren family:
John, Arthur, Agnes, Frank, and Gilbert
Alice, Gerrit, and Gysbert*

even as far as Northwest Indiana and Michigan City—to dig ditches up to six feet deep and wide to drain the land. Some of these ditches are still working today. The persistence and ingenuity of these farmers who used only shovels, stakes, a level, and a good eye of the land was what made the area a successful farming community.

This irrigation work also made it possible for Adrian's son, my great-grandfather Gise, to settle in South Holland, IL, and farm for a living. As Gise's children grew, all five of the sons (Art, Frank, Gilbert, John, and Gerrit) moved out and got their own houses near Gise on State Street. Farmland was being purchased all over the place, especially where the land was drained. The five sons chose to purchase land in the Glenwood and Lynwood areas, about 10 miles south of their homes. A newspaper article noted that Gise VanBaren introduced "onion sets" to plant in the clay ground of his son's new farms. These produced well for them, and through the years that followed, the family became the largest onion supplier in the region. The sons grew and sold their own onion sets under the label "VB"—Very Best Onion Sets.

During the war years (1941-1945) the VanBaren family continued to do well with onion sets because of the "Victory Gardens" program promoted by the government, which had a lot of families around the USA wanting (or needing) to grow their own onions. The VanBaren

brothers continued to farm, adding carrots and tomatoes to the onions, selling produce to Campbell's Soup, and peddling it at markets in Chicago. They also raised sugar beets, which qualified them for extra sugar rations.

After the war, the market for onion sets decreased dramatically. Additionally, in 1950, father Gise (age 76) and the eldest brother Art (age 55) died. Their deaths were followed in 1954 with brother Frank's passing at age 58, and in 1962, brother John died at age 54. So many gone in such a short time changed the job market for the remaining relatives. The widows were taken care of, but the families did begin a set of new directions. Some stayed with farming a bit longer, but all eventually found other work.

Most (if not all) of the people in the PRC who can trace their family history back to a VanBaren will find that their grandfather or great-grandfather was one of Aunt Agnes' five farming brothers (Arthur, Frank, Gilbert, John, or Gerrit). Many of the VanBarens knew Aunt Agnes who, because she did not have children of her own, especially loved her many nieces and nephews.

And that brings the story back to today, taking us full circle, revealing God's plan. In each of the victories and tragedies I learned about, I was reminded of Genesis 50:20: "God meant it unto good." His plan, and that good, is something we often cannot see at the time, but is often revealed to us when we look back at those faded names on a family tree and hear their stories.

Gise VanBaren b. 1874 had 7 children including the 5 brothers in Aunt Agnes' story. Most if not all of the VanBarens in the PRC count one of these 5 brothers as their grandfather, great-grandfather, or great-great grandfather.

Arthur b. 1894

Frank b. 1896

Bertha b. 1900 (died as a young child)

Gilbert b. 1902

John b. 1908 (John, born in 1908 is Rev. Gise's father and is John G. and Denise's grandfather)

Agnes b. 1911

Gerrit b. 1916

ANNOUNCEMENTS

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Council and congregation of Loveland, Colorado PRC express Christian sympathy to Dennis and Sharon Griess and Bob and Patti Bos in the death of their sister and sister-in-law, **Carol Bos**, who was taken to her heavenly home on April 21, 2024. May we all find comfort from Psalm 73:26, "My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion forever."

Vice President, Robert Brands

Clerk, Joel Moore

THE STANDARD BEARER

1894 GEORGETOWN CENTER DRIVE
JENISON, MICHIGAN 49428-7137

PERIODICAL
POSTAGE
PAID
AT JENISON,
MICHIGAN

ANNOUNCEMENTS

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

With thanksgiving we praise God for His continued blessings upon our parents and grandparents, **Gaylen and Laura TeSlaa**, who will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary on August 28, 2024. We give thanks for their godly example of love and faithfulness that they have shown to their family, friends, and church family. "The LORD shall bless thee out of Zion: and thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem all the days of thy life. Yea, thou shalt see thy children's children, and peace upon Israel" (Psalm 128:5-6).

Jeff and Bethany TeSlaa

Todd and Karla VanBaren

Drake, Avery, and Cooper
Sioux Falls, South Dakota

HELP NEEDED AT COVENANT

The School Board of Covenant Christian High School (Grand Rapids, MI) is addressing the future needs of our administrative team due to growing enrollment, staff size, and retirements. There are needs that must be filled in the areas of Curriculum and Instruction, Student Life and Management, School Business Office, and the position of Administrator. Individuals interested in applying for any of these positions or seeking more information about the positions are encouraged to contact Mr. Rick Noorman, Administrator, (ricknoorman@gmail.com) or Mr. Dave Moelker, Chairman of the Education Committee (dmoelker9@gmail.com).

SEMINARY CONVOCATION

September 4 at Byron Center PRC, 7 P.M. Prof. C. Griess will speak on Colossians 2:8-10, "The Spoiled Pastor." All are invited and encouraged to attend.

CLASSIS EAST

Classis East will meet in regular session on Wednesday, September 18, 2024, at 8:00 A.M., in the Georgetown Protestant Reformed Church, Hudsonville, Michigan. Material for this session must be in the hands of the stated clerk no later than August 19, 2024.

Rev. C. Spronk, Stated Clerk

CLASSIS WEST

Classis West of the Protestant Reformed Churches will meet in Hull, Iowa, on Wednesday, September 25, 2024, at 8:30 A.M., the Lord willing. All material for the agenda is to be in the hands of the stated clerk 30 days before classis convenes, that is, by August 26, 2024. All delegates in need of lodging or transportation from the airport should notify the clerk of Hull's consistory.

Rev. J. Engelsma, Stated Clerk

RFPA ANNUAL MEETING

September 26 at Southwest PRC, 7 P.M.



REV. WILBUR BRUINSMA

- | | |
|------|--|
| 8/4 | Watching for Christ's Return, I Thess. 5:1-6 |
| 8/11 | The Beginning of Birth Pains, Matt. 24:7, 8 |
| 8/18 | Nation Against Nation, Matt. 24:6, 7 |
| 8/25 | Lawlessness in Society, Matt. 24:12, 13 |
-

