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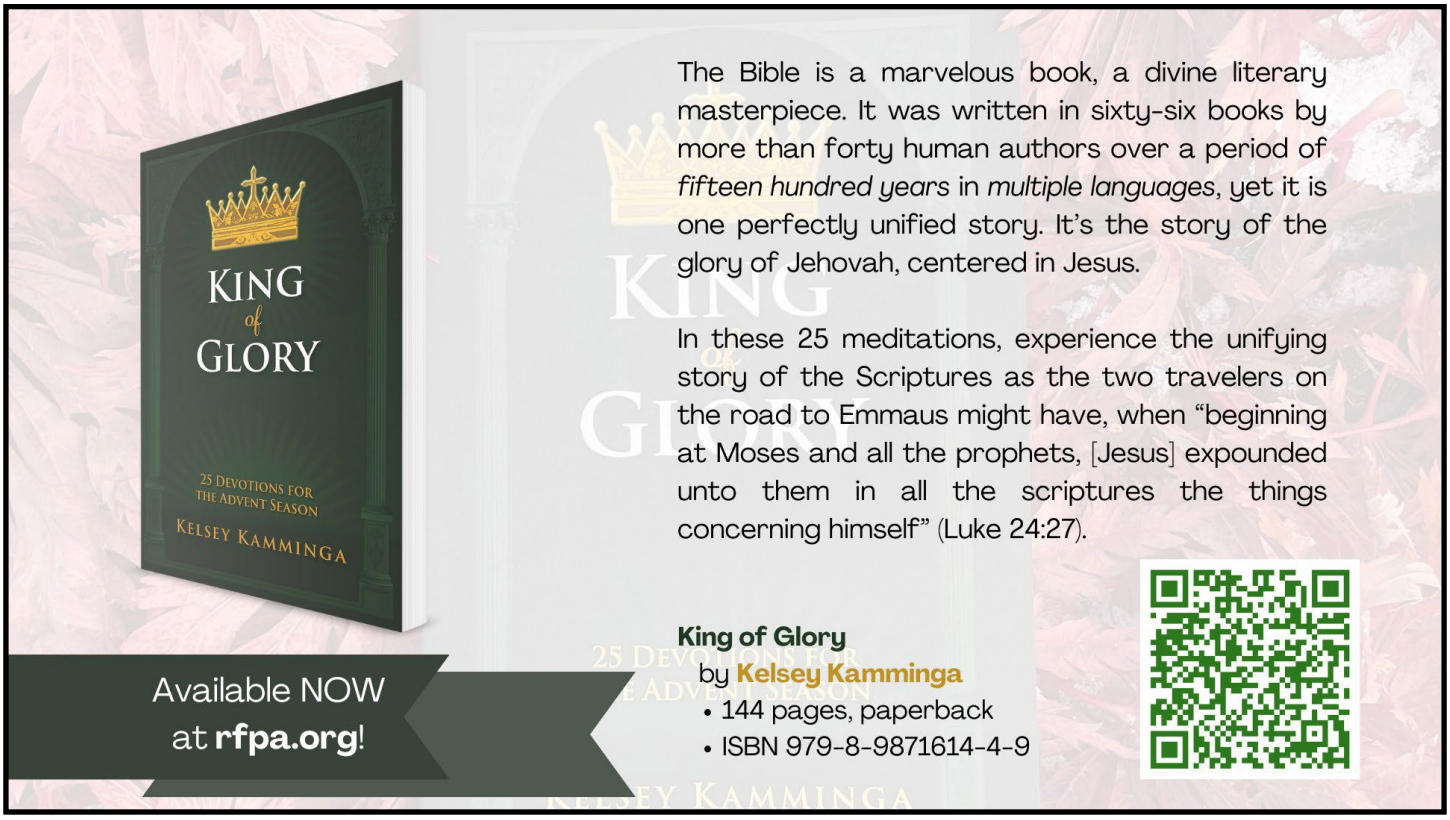
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PRAYER DAY THOUGHTS*

GERRIT VOS (1894-1968)
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...Give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me: Lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the LORD? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain—Proverbs 30:8, 9

Agur asks the Lord for food that will be convenient for him. What does that mean?

An answer to this question is possible, provided we are willing to be led by God's evaluation of things and relationships. And certainly this is not unseemly, if we remember that this God is our GOD, who created us. Therefore He is the only absolutely competent one to judge of our convenience.

Generally speaking it must be evident to all that our convenience is that state where all our needs are fulfilled. This would give the general idea. Man is a creature and, hence, dependent. From this dependency spring his needs. Are these fulfilled, then a state of tranquility, of convenience is born.

However, the text does not speak of this general idea but is narrowed down considerably by the word "food." From this word "food" we note that Agur is seeking the state of convenience for the body. Because oftentimes this word food or bread is mentioned for all the needs of the body. We all know that were the Lord to fulfill our prayer literally when we say, "Give us this day our daily bread," we would die of thirst, exposure, and general misery. Our body needs more than bread if we are to be convenient. But bread, meat or food is questioned as the more important of the species that is mentioned as the representative need for all the wants of the body.

Now, according to God's ordinances of creation, there is a certain, determined need for every creature: man, animal, herb, and tree, yea, even of all the inanimate creation. And for man we might broadly speaking say that his body needs sustenance, raiment, and shelter. They are his needs without which he cannot be convenient. To go without them entirely or in part means poverty and, hence, suffering for man.

Let us emphasize, however, that our needs are determined according to the law of our life that God Himself has set. It is also here the law of God. Not our law. Were we to attempt to determine the law of the needs of our life, we always would make these needs very great. And therefore, let us remember that evidently radios, automobiles, pianos, pastries, beautiful and many changes of raiment, costly and large houses, etc., do not belong to our needs. Neither does life insurance or "a penny for a rainy day." No, for they are riches.

Oh, we will admit that many of the above-cited things are given to us, and we also admit that most of the time our heavenly Father gives a hundred-fold more than our needs, but that does not alter the fact that they are very determinedly not our needs.

Ah! when only we see the true relationships that God made, how humble we become! Then our needs dwindle down to the really fundamental and every crumb and luxury above them heightens our song of praise to our bountiful Father above.

The song of sweet meekness toward God our provider.

Therefore, let us note also that Agur says, "Feed me!"

Remember, dear people of God, that this feed me belongs to the part that is convenient for me. It is a very integral part of the food convenient for me.

The words "feed me" remind us of the bird in the cage that received its convenient food: a little cup of

* This meditation is a reprint from the *Standard Bearer,* Vol. 31, No. 12 (March 15, 1955), p. 265.

water and a little box with seed. That is all. Does the bird know whether or not it will receive many more cups of water and many more boxes with seed? No, beloved, but listen. It is fed for today and listen again: its warbling song is condemnation of either our anxiety for the morrow or our murmurings of today, where we undervaluate God's gifts or overvaluate our needs.

Ah, let us learn the lesson of childlike trust and confidence from the feathered singers and say, "Father, Thou knowest my needs, for Thou art my Creator. Fulfill them today, for I say unto Thee: Feed me! I am helpless without Thee; I acknowledge Thee as the mainspring also of my daily bread and of all my wants for today. Feed me and clothe me and take care of me, for I am utterly dependent on Thee. And I trust Thee, for Thou hast given me Thy wonderful promise that my bread and water shall be sure. With Thee and Thy care for me as my provider I shall sing my lifelong day! Hallelujah, praise the Lord!"

Does this mean, beloved that we may sit and rest and let work be hanged? Of course not. It belongs to the food and the phrase: Feed me! It also includes that I work for my daily bread and that I plan for my daily bread. It includes that the Lord would graciously strengthen me and give me all the necessary means for my daily task. But even here it requires of us that we walk with God the lifelong day in the consciousness of utter dependency on our Creator. That is the life that counts and that is also the only life that brings true convenience, true tranquility.

One more observance must be added, however. For it is possible that the Lord wants me to suffer. When I ask that neither riches nor poverty be given me, it does not mean that I will force my will upon the Lord. Neither does it mean that I have a right to my convenient food. And lastly, neither is this always the way toward the coming of God's kingdom.

Therefore this must be added. When I have finished with my prayer for food convenient for me, I must say also, "Not my will but Thy will be done. If it is necessary, Lord, that I must lie at the rich man's door, full of sores and destitute of clothing and food, then give me grace to bear it for Thy name's sake."

Therefore we learn in the first place that this petition is an utterance of childlike trust and confidence.

In the second place, the message of our text tells us that if we have seen the Lord and have been taught wisdom, we also are aware of our own weakness. The man who is truly wise does not say, "Let things come as they may! I do not care! I will praise God anyhow!" For that is not only foolish, but also very decidedly superficial.

No, beloved, when heavenly wisdom has shined in our hearts, we have seen our sins and our weaknesses. Then we know how treacherous we are by nature. There are depths of sin and weakness in the heart of man that are positively staggering. It reminds us of the lament of Jeremiah when he said, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" (Jer. 17:9). Also David, when the light of God's law had shined in his heart, beheld hidden corners of which he became suspicious, corners where sin lurked, so that it caused his outcry: "Who can understand his errors? Cleanse thou me from secret faults!" (Ps. 19:12).

A truly wise man distrusts himself. Far be it from him therefore to say in arrogant boldness, "Let come what may; I shall always in piety praise God, be it in poverty or in prosperity." He knows his weakness. Therefore Agur prays, "Father, give me neither poverty nor riches!"

Poverty is that condition where the Lord places His creature beneath and below the convenient part according to His own ordinances of creation. On the contrary, riches are the life that is above the standard of God's ordinances. These ordinances never mean that I must have two houses in order to be happy. I really need only one. Riches are the dollar that we do not need. Poverty is the condition when we receive barely enough to live and really too much to die. When God lowers His own standard for our creaturely life, we experience poverty; when He heightens that standard, we are bathed in luxury and have riches. Here again it will be advisable to emphasize that poverty is not a lack in our budget. Poverty is not that we have to do without an auto, a radio, or piano. Poverty is not even that we have to do without work and must receive our sustenance through the deaconage. You have diligently sought for work and could not find it; you put your plight prayerfully before the deacons of Christ's church and they provided your convenient food. You ate and were satisfied. Hence, you are not in poverty.

Poverty is when you shiver of the cold in threadbare garments. Poverty is when your cheeks become hollow from hunger and starvation; when your heart breaks when the children of your bosom cry for food and must go to bed hungry, for there is none. That is poverty. And that poverty Agur has in mind when he prays.

Is that not plain? Let us prove it from the text. Agur describes poverty as that state where you are in danger of stealing. He calls it the state where you are in danger of taking God's Name in vain. The picture is clear. Poverty, beloved, is that state where you have exhausted all the means to acquire all you need for a bare existence and where all things failed you. Consequently you went and stole a loaf for crying children and, knowing that it is against God's own law to steal, you said in the bitterness of your heart, "There is no knowledge with the Most High. He brought me into this miserable state. I now steal and do not care. It's God's fault." And you are committing the double sin of taking what is not your own and abusing God's holy Name.

And Agur knew the perfidy of his heart. He was aware of this weakness in his nature. He knew he was able to fall into these miserable, godless depths of despair where we do no longer reason with God's commandments, but where we run riot and fall into the snares of the devil.

The same is true of the state of riches.

Agur knows that they are strong legs that can bear up prosperity. He knows beforehand that he will not be able to stand riches.

"Father," he says, "I am afraid that when Thou givest riches to me, I may become so full, that I will deny Thee, the very source of them, and say, 'Who is God anyhow? Am I not the one who built all this Babel?'"

Ah, beloved, is this not true of all of us? When we have everything our hearts desire, when want seems far from our dwelling, how the prayer of praise and adoration of God is stifled upon our frozen lips! How cool we grow to the Almighty, who is yet our Redeemer. We are so apt to then forget Him who gives all this riches. So easily we become proud and say that we were the source of our own prosperity. Then we say that our ingenuity and our wisdom by far surpasses the poor struggling of the brother: the stupid one. Why do not people imitate our wisdom and our striving and our industry? Then they also would be rich. Look me over! I am it. And where is God then? He is far from our thoughts. So false we are and weak.

And Agur knows it. He knows himself a brute and foolish. That is the appraisal of self when we have seen the Lord. And that is the reason why he also is afraid of riches. Allow me to remark at this stage that thanks to the Almighty we have not experienced poverty during our time. It is necessary to remind ourselves of this. No one has shivered of the cold or gone hungry. God provided our bread every day and gave riches of extra dainties besides, all through these many years. The horror of China's terrible famines were absent from our shores, when thousands of little corpses of children lined the roadways.

No, we may say that the Lord has provided riches for us in the past. More than any country on earth is America the land of plenty. Let us remember this prayer of Agur.

Let us remember it especially now when prosperity is with us.

A childlike trust and confidence in Father bountiful and a knowledge of our own treacherous heart are comely in the child of God.

"Father, feed us with food convenient!"

He waters the hills with rain from the skies,
And plentiful grass and herbs He supplies,
Supplying the cattle, and blessing man's toil
With bread in abundance, with wine and with oil.

The trees which the Lord *has planted are fed,*
And over the earth their branches are spread;
They keep in their shelter the birds of the air,
The life of each creature the Lord makes His care.

The Lord makes the night, when, leaving their lair,
The lions creep forth, God's bounty to share;
The Lord makes the morning, when beasts steal away
And men are beginning the work of the day.

Thy creatures all look to Thee for their food;
Thy hand opens wide, they gather the good;
Thy face Thou concealest, in anguish they yearn;
Their breath Thou withholdest, to dust they return

The Psalter, 2024 ed, Psalm 104B



CALVIN ON CLOTHING

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INTRODUCTION

Last time we focused on John Calvin's important sermon on Deuteronomy 22:5 (the Bible's condemnation of cross-dressing). In that sermon Calvin had important things to say that apply to transgender behavior and transgender activism in the church. Among many other important points Calvin made, one was that the ninth commandment demands *honesty* in clothing. Therefore, a person must not use his clothing to lie to others about the sex and gender he has been created by God to be.

Does that same ninth commandment have anything to say to the rest of us about how we dress? What does it mean for all of us to be honest with our clothing? In addition, does Calvin see any other biblical principles that speak to how we dress? Calvin developed a biblical doctrine of predestination. Did he also develop a biblical doctrine of clothing?

In his sermon on Deuteronomy 22:5 Calvin took the occasion presented by the text to teach about clothing in general, why we wear clothing, what to consider before we dress, and how to be truly honest before God and others in our dress (in a way very different from the way our age thinks of being honest with our dress). In addition, in many other places throughout Calvin's voluminous writings he spoke about clothing. And since Calvin was at once biblical, theological, and pious, he spoke about clothing in such a way that united the head, the heart, and the behavior. In this article I give five main aspects of Calvin's doctrine of clothing.

BEAUTY IS GOD'S GIFT

Calvin believed and taught that God created many things in this life not only for necessary use (utility), but also for our delight (beauty). In fact, Calvin said, some things God created even "seem to serve delight more than necessity."[1] But how does one know which sorts of things God intended to be used not only for necessity, but also for aesthetic enjoyment? Calvin's answer was that the natural qualities of the things themselves indicate God's created purpose. Thus, things that contain colors, smells, textures, sounds, and tastes can be used also for their delightful beauty.

> Has the Lord clothed the flowers with the great beauty that greets our eyes, the sweetness of smell that is wafted upon our nostrils, and yet will it be unlawful for our eyes to be affected by that beauty, or our sense of smell by the sweetness of that odor? What? Did he not so distinguish colors as to make some more lovely than others? What? Did he not endow gold and silver, ivory and marble, with a loveliness that renders them more precious than other metals or stones? Did he not, in short, render many things attractive to us, apart from their necessary use?[2]

Calvin explicitly applied this to clothing. God commands that we wear clothing, and He also created the products out of which clothing is made. Though clothing was certainly given to us as a necessity, for Calvin it had a function beyond necessity. "The purpose of clothing, apart from necessity, was *comeliness* and decency."[3] "Comeliness" here means what is pleasant to the eyes, that is, attractive; as well as what is well-ordered and appropriate. According to Calvin, it is a good thing to have clothing that is made up of colors and textures that are delightful and ordered well if one is able. Being dowdy is not in itself holy. Among the other things we need to consider when we think about our clothing, we ought to thank and praise God for the gift of beauty that

1 *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. F.L. Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), 3.10.1.

2 *Institutes*, 3.10.2.

3 *Institutes*, 3.10. 2.

can be expressed in clothing. Has anyone reading this praised God for the beauty of colors and textures well-ordered and appropriate when shopping for clothing, whether at a department store or at Goodwill?

THE FALL AFFECTS OUR APPRECIATION OF BEAUTY

Yet, God's good creation of beauty that can delight us is not the only principle that ought to inform our thinking about clothing. The reality of the fall means that other principles beyond the notion of enjoying the beauty God has created must "hedge in" our clothing choices. Dressing ourselves must take into account the evil desires of our own hearts as well as those of our neighbors. In a different context, Calvin connects this depravity to our appreciation of beauty and faithfully explains how our depraved natures so quickly ruin God's good gifts:

> Our nature is so corrupted that we cannot look upon anything that is termed fair and beautiful, but that instead of being provoked to love God and to praise him for his goodness, and for bestowing of so many benefits upon us; we offend him.[4]

One offense is idolatry and another is self-love, and we will get to those. But what springs to Calvin's mind first here is sexual lust. While Calvin did not forbid a man allowing the "elegance of her form"[5] to play a part in a man's choice of a wife, he understood that the eye, "provoked by an evil mind," so often affected men's gazing upon women in general, that the eyes became "enticers to beguile us and work our destruction."[6] Calvin is thinking of males at this point of course. Yet he does not pass over the females when it comes to sexual lust, even if they are not as prone in this direction. Says Calvin, "nine women out of ten who possess it [beauty] are proud, and fond of men, and unite lust with elegance of form."[7] Whatever you think of Calvin's percentages there, let us acknowledge that the depravity within makes it difficult to look at a beautiful woman rightly, as it makes it difficult to be a beautiful woman with a pure heart—that is, without desiring the attention of men or puffing oneself up over less attractive women.

Clothing should be used in such a way so as not to exacerbate these evil desires in others or in ourselves. That affects how we think of beauty with our clothing. And honesty! In his sermon on Deuteronomy 22:5 it is precisely because of our twisted desires that Calvin appeals to the ninth commandment. The ninth commandment requires honesty in our clothing; clothing should not lie. The contemporary mind hears that and immediately thinks of self-expression, being proud and unashamed of who I am inside by expressing that in my clothing. And while Calvin would allow a limited self-expression in clothing, he treats the outward appearance very differently. For Calvin, dealing *honestly before God* in our dress means dressing in such a way that we are honest about *how much sin lives in us that needs to be tamped down*! We need to be honest about the fact that we have disfigured God's image in us and dress in the light of that reality. "For as often as we put on either shirt or coat, we be put in mind that our Lord commands us to hide ourselves, because his image is disfigured in us: and our clothing of ourselves ought to make us think upon the sin of our father Adam."[8] Rather than using our clothing to express our own sinful desires or to illicit sinful desires in others, we ought to use our clothing to mute these desires in ourselves and others. This is honesty in dress for Calvin: dressing in such a way that we truly reckon with how easily sinful desires rise in all of us.

Rather than using our clothing to express our own sinful desires or to illicit sinful desires in others, we ought to use our clothing to mute these desires in ourselves and others.

4 *Sermons on Job*, sermon 111.

5 Quoted in, Graeme Murdock, "Calvin, Clothing, and the Body," in *Proceedings of the Huguenot Society*, XXVIII (4), 2006, 484.

6 *Sermons on Job*, sermon 111.

7 Commentary on Ezekiel 16:15, T. Myers, transl. (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1948), 111.

8 *Sermons on Deuteronomy*, facsimile ed. 1583 (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1987), 774.

Applying these two truths to our clothing choices, 1) that we ought to appreciate God's creation of beauty and delight in it, and 2) that we ought to deal honestly with our disfigured desires and those of the neighbor, demands careful thought and wise balance in the child of God. This is worthy of more thought and discussion.

MODESTY

Of course, to deal honestly with the wicked desires within us and others, we need to think about *modesty* when we consider clothing. As you might expect, Calvin points us here. God forbids us, he says, "to lay snares for our neighbor's chastity by lascivious attire."[9] And if we immediately complain that we will have to go against the grain of our day to dress rightly, and that we will have to spend so much time looking for clothes that fit properly and are beautiful, and that sometimes we will look different from the world around us,[10] Calvin figured as much. "Many people use the age as an excuse, or the place they live. 'That is the way life is,' they say. 'What am I to do? Should I enter a conspiracy against public morals? Should I wage war on my country and on my age?'"[11] Calvin's answer was, well, "yes."

MODERATION

But sexual lust is not the only lust of the flesh that must be considered when we think about clothing after the fall. There is the lust of pride that carries with it the heart's demeaning of others who are not able to purchase the clothing we are able to purchase. There is also idolatry of the earthly so that in our love for clothing we (in the words of Calvin) "befog our minds" to the point that heavenly things can scarcely enter in. Calvin therefore also calls us to *moderation* with earthly goods, and with *clothing* in particular. Moderation is restraint from excess that would lead us away from God and righteousness rather than to Him and His righteous ways. Calvin asks, "Where is our gratefulness toward God for our clothing if in the sumptuousness of our apparel we both admire ourselves and despise others.... Where is our recognition of God if our minds are fixed upon the splendor of our apparel?"[12] If we are so concerned with how we look and are purchasing clothing constantly to gaze at ourselves in the mirror while comparing ourselves to others, God is not in our thoughts. Instead, we must use clothing with moderation so that we do not fall in love with our clothing or ourselves. If we are tempted to adore the gift more than the giver, we need to give prayerful consideration to the question, "Am I exercising moderation here?"

Calvin therefore also calls us to moderation with earthly goods, and with clothing in particular. Moderation is restraint from excess that would lead us away from God and righteousness rather than to Him and His righteous ways.

Calvin reminds us that we must always live before the face of God and not forget that this God "has greatly commended abstinence, sobriety, frugality, and moderation, and has also abominated excess, pride, ostentation, and vanity."[13] God calls us to possess and use earthly things in such a way that we are able to love Him and others in the having and using of them. God give us wisdom and a right heart!

In his writing on moderation and clothing Calvin also asks us if we are able to be content when we do not have the funds to purchase the clothing we desire:

> They who have narrow and slender resources should know how to go without things patiently, lest they be troubled by an immoderate desire for them. If they keep his rule of moderation they will make

9 *Institutes,* 2.8.44.

10 Does anyone else think Christians ought to stop wearing yoga pants in public?

11 *Calvin's Ecclesiastical Advice*, M. Beaty and B. Farley, trans. (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 1991), 85.

12 *Institutes,* 3.10.3.

13 *Institutes,* 3.10.5.

> considerable progress in the Lord's school…. He who is ashamed of mean clothing will boast of costly clothing…let all those [who pursue piety]…learn by the Apostle's example, how to be filled and to hunger, to abound and to suffer want (Phil 4:12).[14]

We do not easily let go of our idols. If it would deeply pain us to have our nice clothing taken away so that the one watching our response "would think his very limbs had been taken away from him,"[15] then we are not living in moderation and with a right heart before God. Is the heart set on God or on the clothes?

Similarly, it is worth asking ourselves whether or not the *amount* of clothes we are accumulating is affecting our hearts before God this way. Maybe our clothes are not ostentatious or inordinately expensive. However, are we buying more and more in an attempt to fill some hole in our heart? Calvin asks bluntly, "Do you think so many clothes are intended for one body?" And he asks if we are as concerned to "cultivate the soul" in many virtues and graces as we are to "cover the body" with many articles of clothing.[16] Clothing is to help us; be careful clothing does not become a spiritual hindrance.

CLOTHING AND CALLINGS

Finally, leaving behind the effect of the fall on how we think of clothing, let's take note of Calvin's positive insight on how clothing relates to the callings God gives us. The doctrine of vocation (one's calling from God in life) is one of the great doctrines recovered in the Reformation. Strikingly, Calvin turned to it when he developed his doctrine of clothing. Calvin made two points here.

First, Calvin returned to the ninth commandment and honesty when he thought about station and calling. One ought to dress in such a way that his/her clothes honestly reveal the stations and callings God has given. In other words, we ought not attempt by our dress to act as though we have a place we do not have. A minister should generally dress like a minister, not a construction worker. A sixty-five-year-old grandmother should dress like a mature woman, not like a teenager. Someone with little money should not attempt to dress "as though he went to play an enterlude."[17] Now to be sure, Calvin and the society of his day had more rigid expectations of various classes, and we want to be careful in this age where there is more social mobility and where one can buy designer clothing at discount prices. Yet there still is a heart issue we can appreciate in our day as well. We ought not attempt to deceive others by our dress but be honest about the life God has given us.

Second, Calvin makes the point that our dress should not only reflect our callings, it should also *help us carry out our callings*. "The magistrate will discharge his functions more willingly, and the head of the household will confine himself to his duty" if he also dresses in such a way that the clothing itself calls him to his duty.[18] There was a time when I attempted to prepare to preach on Sunday mornings in sweatpants and a t-shirt, but it did not work very well. I had a harder time "getting into" my sermon, especially right away. But it helped to wear my suit even as I was preparing. While that might not be the case for all preachers, this is the kind of point Calvin is making here. It makes me wonder what kind of clothing helps students fulfill their calling at school.

CONCLUSION

As Christians, all our lives ought to be lived *coram Deo,* and few have done better than Calvin to call us to that and to help us think through how to do so from the head to the heart to the outward life. Calvin had a theology of clothing that was doctrinal, scriptural, and practical without being legalistic. In his reminding us that God created beauty and that it honors Him when His people love rightly ordered beauty; in his informing us that our recognition of beauty is warped by sin and so we have to be careful to keep our clothing from instigating wrong desires in ourselves and others; in his calling us to modesty, moderation, and to consider the calling and stations God has given us in life, Calvin helps us to consecrate even our getting dressed to the One who, before we even wake up and think about what to wear, has clothed us with the white robes of His righteousness.

14 *Institutes,* 3.10.5.

15 *Calvin's Ecclesiastical Advice*, 85.

16 *Calivn's Ecclesiastical Advice*, 84.

17 *Sermons on Deuteronomy*, 774. An enterlude is a play. His point is, one should not try to show himself in a different class than he is actually in by gaudy dress.

18 *Institutes*, 3.10.6.



NAHUM (12) GOD'S JUDGMENT OF NINEVEH

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Previous article in this series: October 1, 2025, p. 10

Behold, I am against thee, saith the LORD of hosts; and I will discover thy skirts upon thy face, and I will shew the nations thy nakedness, and the kingdoms thy shame. And I will cast abominable filth upon thee, and make thee vile, and will see thee as a gazingstock. And it shall come to pass, that all they that look upon thee shall flee from thee, and say, Nineveh is laid waste: who will bemoan her? whence shall I seek comforters for thee?—Nahum 3:5-7

Nahum 3:5-7 are a judge's summing up after the evidence has been presented, the verdict pronounced, the punishment set. God, as Judge, says that Nineveh's fall will reveal His implacable anger against all wickedness. Nineveh's fall was just retribution, but also a revelation of the righteousness of God. He is never a disinterested Judge.

His dealing with Nineveh will also uncover her great wickedness. Just as it is today, the cultural accomplishments, monuments, palaces, military might, and conquests were a facade covering Nineveh's wickedness in the same way the finery of a whore covers her wickedness. God tells Nineveh, addressing her directly as Judge, that He had not only seen and condemned her wickedness but would uncover it and leave her naked (v. 5). He would have her put in the stocks, as it were, and leave her there, pelted with filth, her wickedness exposed to all (v. 6). Under God's judgment Nineveh would find that all were against her, with none to help her or even take pity on her.

God did this to Nineveh when He gave her over to the Babylonians; but what He did then to Nineveh, He did to all the nations of the world when He sent His Son into the world and the world rejected and murdered Him. "If I had not come and spoken unto them," Jesus said, "they had not had sin: but now they have no cloke for their sin" (John 15:22). The false piety of unbelieving Judaism, the pretended justice of Rome, the hypocrisy of Jew and Gentile alike were all stripped away by Christ's coming, words, and work, and they were all left without excuse. As Jesus said the day before He was crucified, "Now is the judgment of this world" (John 12:31).

That is the reason why so many were involved in the capture, trial, and crucifixion of our Lord: Jew and Gentile, Pilate, Herod, the leaders of the Jews, both secular and religious, even the people among whom He walked, whose bodies He healed and whose bellies He filled. The cloak of piety, justice, religion, and love for others had to be stripped away that all the world might become guilty before God (Rom. 3:19) and that by the grace of God some few might see that salvation is of God alone.

God does on a smaller scale and through earthly events in Nineveh what He did at Calvary and what He will do again when the world ends. Then, too, every mouth will be stopped, every secret uncovered, all wickedness will be judged, and that which was done in darkness will be revealed in the light. "For there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known" (Luke 12:2). Only those who have found refuge in Christ will escape the just retribution of that coming day.

Nahum 3 is not just about one ancient city, but about what Augustine called the "Earthly City" or "City of Man"; not just about the destruction of an ancient people and culture, but about God's work of bringing eternal ruin upon all the peoples of this world and their vaunted cultures. Nahum 3 is a prophet saying in his small voice what an angel says with a strong and

equally prophetic voice in Revelation 18:2, 3: "Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird. For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies."

Living still in the kingdoms of this world, God's people must live antithetically, obeying the voice of the same angel, "Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues. For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities" (Rev. 18:4, 5).

Notable in Nahum 3, as well as in chapter 2:13 is God's addressing Nineveh directly, as He did her king in the last verses of chapter 1. Whether this word of God ever reached Nineveh we do not know, but it is evident that it would have done no good if it had. But the purpose of God's addressing Nineveh was not any hope that the Ninevites would listen or repent. Rather, His word against Nineveh and the harsh language He uses are for the sake of His people, assuring them that Nineveh would fall and they, long oppressed, would be delivered.

That word of God to Nineveh is for us also. When it seems as though wickedness is dominant in our society, that it will never come to an end, but will continue to grow; when it seems as though violence and lies will never cease, then we too must hear the word of God against Nineveh and all who are Ninevites at heart: "I am against thee, saith the Lord of hosts."

NAHUM (13)
NINEVEH LIKE THEBES

Art thou better than populous No, that was situate among the rivers, that had the waters round about it, whose rampart was the sea, and her wall was from the sea? Ethiopia and Egypt were her strength, and it was infinite; Put and Lubim were thy helpers. Yet was she carried away, she went into captivity: her young children also were dashed in pieces at the top of all the streets: and they cast lots for her honourable men, and all her great men were bound in chains—Nahum 3:8-10

Nahum 3:8-10 make reference to populous No, describes its situation and what happened to it, assuring Nineveh that her end would be the same as No's. No was an Egyptian city, better known as Thebes, located about 500 miles south of the Mediterranean Sea on the banks of the Nile River. Its ruins are within the limits of the modern city of Luxor. The temples of Karnak and Luxor, now ruined but some of the most visited sites in modern Egypt, were part of its former glory.

No is mentioned in Jeremiah 46:25 and three times in Ezekiel 30:14-16. It was at different times the capitol of Egypt and one of the great cities of ancient times. The King James Version translates the reference to the city in Nahum as "populous No," which it was,[1] but the word "populous" may also be a reference to one of the gods of Egypt[2] and part of the name of the city. Then verse 8 would read, "Art thou better than No-Amon, that was situate among the rivers, that had the waters round about it, whose rampart was the sea, and her wall was from the sea?" Some of the modern Bible versions translate the verse this way.

No's or Thebes' location is referred to in verse 8 because the location made the city nearly impregnable. It was located at a place where the Nile, referred to as the sea in Nahum, divided into many rivers and streams, which had to be crossed in order to assault the city. Thebes was "situate among the rivers, that had waters round about it." The city itself was on the banks of the Nile, at that point two to three miles wide, which functioned as a rampart and wall for the city, exactly

1 Thebes may have been before its conquest the largest city in the world of that day with 75,000 inhabitants, a hundred gates and a city circumference of twenty-seven miles.

2 Amon or Amun, also known as Amun-Ra, was the Sun god of Egypt and the king of their gods and Thebes was the center of Amun-Ra's worship.

as God's word through Nahum said. Thebes' "rampart was the sea, and her wall was from the sea."

Not only was Thebes' situation ideal for defense, but any invaders would have to travel down the Nile and face the threat of attack by Thebes' allies, Egypt to the north (the reference is to the delta or northern area of Egypt, known as Lower Egypt, with its center in Memphis), Ethiopa (Cush) to the south, Lubim or Libya to the west, and Put (hard to identify precisely, but almost certainly the desert tribes to the east of the Nile and of Thebes). Verse 9 says that her strength was infinite, and by human standards it appeared to be so.

Robertson describes the impossibilities faced by an invader:

> Four hundred miles down from the Nile Delta an invading army from the north had to march. To the right and to the left they had to expose their flank to retaliatory assault from kindred nations friendly to Thebes. Having finally arrived before the massive city, twenty-seven miles in circumference, the heated glare of a horizontal wall of water blinded them everywhere they looked. Surrounded by rivers, streams, canals, and lakes formed by the Nile as it distributed over the broadened delta, any invader would have to be overwhelmed by the sight that greeted their eyes. A field of massive statues, memorials, temples, and great halls with no equal in the world stood before them. On both sides of the Nile they observed structures made of stones almost 300 tons in weight, and colossi weighing up to 900 tons apiece. If they had been fully informed, they would have known of the tunneled "valley of the kings and queens" beyond the many carvings in the western cliffs.[3]

Yet Thebes, Nineveh's chief rival, became for all of its protection one of the great conquests of the Assyrians. Ashurbanipal of Assyria in 663 BC with his armies, traveled 1,200 miles from Assyria to assault the city of Thebes and conquered it in spite of its impregnable defenses and many allies. He boasts of his conquest in an inscription found in the city of Nineveh:

> This city, the whole of it, I conquered it with the help of Ashur and Ishtar. Silver, gold, precious stones, all the wealth of the palace, rich cloth, precious linen, great horses, supervising men and women, two obelisks of splendid electrum, weighing 2,500 talents, the doors of temples I tore from their bases and carried them off to Assyria. With this weighty booty I left Thebes. Against Egypt and Kush I have lifted my spear and shown my power. With full hands I have returned to Nineveh, in good health.[4]

Nahum 3:10 describes what the sack of Thebes by the Assyrians meant for Thebes' citizens. Thebes' citizens were carried away captives, her children were slaughtered (dashed in pieces in the top of the streets), and her nobles were sold into slavery. Her people enslaved and dragged far away to Assyria and her children destroyed, Thebes was the object of what today would be called genocide. Fallen, Thebes never regained her former glory.

God is saying to Nineveh, therefore, "Your defenses are not as sure as those of Thebes, which you conquered. The Tigris is by no means the kind of rampart that the Nile was to Thebes. You've seen the might and glory of Thebes, greater than your own. You boast of your power and glory, when a city greater than yours fell into your hands? You Assyrians conquered Thebes, and now you think that though Thebes could not stand against you, you will stand against Me?"

Egypt would later boast anew of its defenses: "My river is mine own, and I have made it for myself" (Ezek. 29:3). Assyria had its own boast, having conquered Egypt and its principal city, "I have digged, and drunk water; and with the sole of my feet have I dried up all the rivers of the besieged places" (Is. 37:25). Through Isaiah God had answered Assyria's boasts as He would answer Egypt's: "Hast thou not heard long ago, how I have done it; and of ancient times, that I have formed it? now have I brought it to pass, that thou shouldest be to lay waste defenced cities into ruinous heaps. Therefore their inhabitants were of small power, they were dismayed and confounded: they were as the grass of the field, and as the green herb, as the grass on the housetops, and as corn blasted before it be grown up" (Is. 37:26, 27). God who had given Assyria its conquests would make Assyria a conquest of the Babylonians.

During the days of Isaiah, God had answered Assyria's (Rabshakeh's) boasting by leaving Sennacherib's army a field of corpses and by sending Sennacherib's sons to assassinate him. Now He

3 O. Palmer Robertson, *The Books of Nahum, Habakkuk and Zephaniah* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1990), 113.

4 James B. Pritchard, ed., *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament with Supplement* (Princeton: University Printers, 1950), 294-95.

promises to do the same to the city of Nineveh, the capitol of Assyria, still at the height of its power. As Thebes had fallen to Assyria, so would Assyria fall to her enemies by the sentence of the Almighty; and the fact that Nahum prophesied not long after the fall of Thebes only adds weight to God's words through him.

The prophesied fall of Assyria was not only a demonstration of God's sovereignty over the nations and not only His judgment on Assyria's wickedness, but also deliverance for His people. He had spoken of that deliverance in answer to Rabshakeh and his master: "And the remnant that is escaped of the house of Judah shall again take root downward, and bear fruit upward: For out of Jerusalem shall go forth a remnant, and they that escape out of mount Zion: the zeal of the LORD of hosts shall do this" (Is. 37:31, 32). Now He speaks of it again through Nahum, though not expressly in this chapter, for there was no need to say it again: "God is jealous, and the LORD revengeth; the LORD revengeth, and is furious; the LORD will take vengeance on his adversaries, and he reserveth wrath for his enemies" (Nah. 1:2), while to His people He is, then and always, "good, a strong hold in the day of trouble; and he knoweth them that trust in him" (1:7).

The similarities between Nahum's prophecy and the word of God in Revelation 18 are unmistakable. Revelation 18 is preceded by a description of the three great enemies of God, of His Christ and of His people: the dragon (chapter 12), the beast (chapter 13) and the great whore (chapter 17). This is followed by a description of their downfall in reverse order: of the great whore whose name is Babylon in chapter 18; of the beast and the false prophet in chapter 19; and of the dragon, the Devil, in chapter 20. Nahum does much the same, showing us Belial, the Devil, and his principal servant, the king of Assyria, an Old Testament picture of the beast, followed by Nineveh herself, the great whore of Nahum's day. Though not in the same order as Revelation 18, God also shows through Nahum the judgment and downfall of these enemies.

Both are prophetic, but though Nahum's prophecy reaches to the end, the prophecies of Revelation are given in days when the reality of his prophecies are seen to be far-reaching and ageless. What Nahum saw we see in clearer detail and with greater horror, for the atrocities and wickedness of Nineveh will pale in comparison to those of the last days. We see the beginning of this already, and some of us will see the final reality of which Nahum saw only the shadow.

Yet the wickedness of the nations always brings down on their own heads the righteous wrath of God, no matter how secure they may seem in their wickedness. The certainty of Nineveh's destruction matches the certainty of the fall and desolation of the kingdom of the beast and dragon in the last days, for, "He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity: he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints" (Rev. 13:10).

When that day comes and Nineveh's fall is fulfilled in the fall of all earthly kingdoms to the Lord and His Christ, then the song of the saints will be in answer to the call of Revelation 18:20, "Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets; for God hath avenged you on her." For them Nineveh's fall is good tidings, for it portends the fall of the kingdoms of this world that will be the beginning of a blessedness which eye has not seen nor ear heard, neither has entered into the heart of man to understand, the fulfillment of all that God has promised His people and obtained for them through the shed blood of His Son.

Nineveh will be destroyed always. God's people will be delivered from their enemies always. How true the words of Psalm 11 (Psalter #11A, 2024 ed.):

> In God will I trust, though my counselors say,
> O flee as a bird to your mountain away;
> The wicked are strong and the righteous are weak,
> Foundations are shaken, yet God will I seek.
>
> The LORD in His temple shall ever abide;
> His throne is eternal, whatever betide,
> The children of men He beholds from on high,
> The wicked to punish, the righteous to try.
>
> The LORD is most righteous, the Lord loves the right,
> The evil He hates and will surely requite.
> The wicked His anger will drive from their place,
> The upright in rapture shall gaze on His face.

This all centers on Calvary, where the Son of God, delivered into the hands of the Ninevites of His day, was oppressed, brutalized, and killed, His death becoming the judgment of Nineveh and her citizens and the salvation of the citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem.

Nahum does not mention the coming of the Messiah and His power over the nations in chapters 2 and 3, but the believing Jews of His day would have understood that full deliverance from their enemies would come only with Messiah's appearance on the scene of history. Nahum's contemporaries did speak of this coming Savior of God's people: "Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS" (Jer. 23:5, 6).

One thinks of the book of Judges where there are also few explicit references to the coming of the Messiah, but where the whole book shows the need for Him. There were men in Israel in the days of the judges who could deliver Israel from heathen oppressors and foreign nations—Othniel, Ehud, Shamgar, Gideon, and all the others—but there was no one in Israel who could deliver Israel from her own sins, which were the reason for her troubles with Cushan-rishathaim, Eglon, Sisera, and her many other oppressors. Though unspoken, therefore, the focus of the book of Judges is on the need for One greater and better than these earthly deliverers, and so it is in the prophecy of Nahum.

Nineveh's oppression of Israel and Judah was the result of their own sins, God's chastisement for sin, and only God Himself who had used the brutal and godless Assyrians to chastise His people could provide a deliverance for them that would make such chastisement forever unnecessary.



HORSE

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Steam blasts from his flared nostrils in the early morning cool. Hooves scrape dirt as he paws the ground impatiently. Thunder rolls as heavily muscled bodies rush across the field, fletched arrows rattling at their sides, riders holding fast to spear and shield. Trumpets blast amid the clash of battle noises, yet the horse "mocketh at fear, and is not affrighted; neither turneth he back from the sword…. He saith among the trumpets, Ha, ha; and he smelleth the battle afar off, the thunder of the captains, and the shouting" (Job 39:19-25).

The heaviness and sheer power of the horse make it a force to be reckoned with in war, and thus a terrible instrument of divine judgment. It was a grizzly scene when Jezebel was thrown from the window and trampled, "some of her blood…sprinkled on the wall, and on the horses" (2 Kings 9:33). It will be an even grizzlier scene when the blood of the winepress of God's wrath flows like a river so deep it reaches to the bridle of any horse that happens to walk through it (Rev. 14:20).

As an instrument of divine judgment, the horse serves also as a symbol of the driving forces of history. A "pale horse" followed by death and hell, a "black horse" carrying a merchant with a scale in his hand, a "red horse" with a man of war holding an unsheathed sword, all led by a "white horse: and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer" (Rev. 6:1-8). The running of these four horses and their riders reaches its apex when at last heaven is



"opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True.... And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean" (Rev. 19:11-14).

Horses, however, due to their immense strength and beauty, can also become a significant source of temptation. The threat is so serious that, long before Israel had a king on the throne, the law made clear no king shall "multiply horses to himself," nor return to Egypt "to the end that he should multiply horses" (Deut. 17:16). Not that this law was obeyed. One of the first indicators that all was not well in the kingdom of Solomon is that, in addition to his many wives, he had "forty thousand stalls of horses for his chariots, and twelve thousand horsemen" (1 Kings 4:26).

The danger was that faith would be transferred from God to the horse. Thus, the many warnings: "An horse is a vain thing for safety: neither shall he deliver any by his great strength" (Ps. 33:17); "The horse is prepared against the day of battle: but safety is of the LORD" (Prov. 21:31); "Woe to them that...stay on horses, and trust in chariots...but they look not unto the Holy One of Israel!" (Is. 31:1).

The horse could also become a source of pride, and thus, the object of worship. This was not only true metaphorically, as people looked up with starry eyes to the horsemen who fought their battles. This was true literally, which is why King Josiah, in his ruthless elimination of idolatry out of Judah, also "took away the horses that the kings of Judah had given to the sun, at the entering in of the house of the LORD...and burned the chariots of the sun with fire" (2 Kings 23:11). This godly king wanted the people to know the true God "delighteth not in the strength of a horse," but only "in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy" (Ps. 147:10, 11).

A temptation on the other side is to fear the horse. Imagine hearing the rumble of thousands of hooves striking the ground, and the clatter of chariot wheels making their way ever closer to you. Imagine the buzzing of millions of wings of locusts, whose appearance "is as the appearance of horses," who leap "like the noise of chariots on the tops of mountains," as they come to devour the crops that are your primary source of bread (Joel 2:4). Imagine the dread of hundreds of thousands of demon horses, whose heads "were as the heads of lions; and out of their mouths issued fire and smoke and brimstone," storming across the river to kill off a third of humanity (Rev. 9:17). Would you tremble? Would you break and run for your life?

God says, "When thou goest out to battle against thine enemies, and seest horses, and chariots, and a people more than thou, be not afraid of them: for the LORD thy God is with thee" (Deut. 20:1). He says again, to the fearful servant of Elisha whose eyes were staring widely at the many horses and chariots posted outside the window, "Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them." Whatever could he mean? Elisha prays, and in answer to his prayer, "the Lord opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha" (2 Kings 6:15-17). Indeed, "some trust in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the name of the LORD our God" (Ps. 20:7).

To give yourself over to unbelieving fear of, or overconfidence in the horse (or anything other than God), is not to honor the horse. It is to become like the horse. It is to turn stubbornly to your wicked course of life just as "the horse rusheth into battle" (Jer. 8:6). It is to make your back as worthy an object for the rod as the behind of the horse is for the whip (Prov. 26:3). You may be even worse than the horse, when it comes down to it. "Behold, we put bits in the horses' mouths, that they may obey us; and we turn about their whole body.... But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison" (Jam. 3:3, 8). Thus the plea of the psalmist, who has known the blessedness of yielding stubbornness to faith and finding in God a blessed Redeemer who forgives iniquity: "Be ye not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near thee" (Ps. 32:9).

In the end, God is the God of the horse, and He uses it as He will. Whether that is throwing the "horse and his rider" into the sea (Ex. 15:1), protecting Paul the Apostle with an army that includes seventy horsemen (Acts 23:23), or comparing the beauty of His bride "to a company of horses in Pharaoh's chariots" (Song of Solomon 1:9), we all know the answer to this rhetorical question of God to Job: "Hast thou given the horse strength? Hast thou clothed his neck with thunder?" (Job 39:19).



HAVING OUR GREAT SHEPHERD'S MOTIVES IN MISSIONS

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INTRODUCTION

Significant amounts of time, sweat, thought, finances, and patient work has been and continues to be expended by many Protestant and evangelical churches in foreign missions. Much effort is devoted, for example, to the area of Bible translations throughout the world into many languages that still do not have faithful translations. Along with that, much work is done to bring the Word to those who have not heard the gospel in their recent generations and who dwell in the bondage of idolatry, a cult, the occult, or a world religion.

What is of concern in this article are the motives behind much foreign mission effort. In contrast to some common motives in foreign missions, what does our Lord of the harvest teach as proper motives that guide faithful missions in His service for the gathering of His church?

SOME COMMON MOTIVES

There are several common motives that one can observe in the writings of and interviews with foreign missionaries or those involved more broadly in the support of foreign missions.

One motive among some is that churches and individual Christians must reach out to as many of the unconverted and unbelieving as possible before it is too late. This motive is molded by a pre-millennial view that Jesus Christ will return at any moment, maybe later today, maybe tomorrow, maybe next week. Before Jesus returns at any moment, the church needs to get the Scriptures and the preaching of the gospel to as many unchurched people as possible so that they have the chance to repent and to believe the promise of the gospel in Jesus Christ. The church must do that because once Jesus returns, it would then be too late for anymore to have the chance to be saved. According to this view, the church must be motivated to labor fervently to her utmost to get as many unconverted exposed to the gospel and converted as soon as possible.

Second, another motive is based on the heresy that God loves everyone. It is argued that because God loves everyone, the church to her utmost must bring that gospel to as many as possible. Everyone whom God loves must hear that message of His universal love. Missionaries must show that God loves everyone and wants to save as many as want to accept His love and so be saved. Filled with a zeal for a universal and common love of God, many expend great effort among the objects of foreign missions.

Third, another motive is based upon the heresy that Jesus died for everyone. Similar to the previous error, many proclaim that either Jesus did die for everyone to make salvation possible for everyone or that Jesus did die for everyone who hears the gospel and makes that salvation possible by His atonement for everyone who hears the gospel. Since Jesus died for everyone who hears the gospel, the church must then preach that gospel to as many people as possible in order to make salvation in Jesus Christ possible for them. Filled with a zeal for a general atonement of Jesus Christ and a "well-meant offer" of the gospel, many proclaim the gospel in the hope that as many as possible will "accept" the well-meant offer of salvation.

Fourth, another motive is that missions should improve the social and earthly situation of the unconverted. Beyond the work of legitimate and wise benevolence, this motive aims at an improvement in the level of the poor or socially oppressed to a higher or different standard of living than what they, in God's providence, have been accustomed to living.

Accordingly, the church is supposed to be motivated not only to preach the gospel, but also to include in her official work the construction and operation of day schools, vocational schools, church buildings, medical clinics, hospitals, and orphanages.

Finally, there is another motive based on the idea that true Christianity will eventually triumph among the nations of the earth. While one Anglican missionary admitted that the Christianity that will dominate the world will have a significant number of nominal, unbelieving Christians, yet society will be in all marketplaces of life, including religion, Christian. It is evident from histories of Protestant mission work throughout pagan nations and tribes that many foreign missionaries were motivated in their arduous work by this expectation of a grand victory and earthly triumph of the gospel in a golden, millennial age of Christianity. Still today, Protestant and Reformed foreign missions are motivated by this post-millennial view that, through progressive conquest of a multi-pronged, foreign mission work, true Christianity will become the dominant, universal religion for 1,000 years before the final appearing of Christ.

THE MOTIVES OF JOHN 10:16

In contrast to the aforementioned motives, our Lord gives the proper motives for foreign missions in John 10:16: "And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd."

First, in developing a proper motive for foreign missions, Jesus sets before us the "must" of God's counsel. He does this when He Himself explains that the gathering of His sheep is the work that is necessary for Him to do. The necessity for His work of bringing in the sheep is not an attempt to save as many as possible before it is too late, but the eternal good pleasure of God in election. In election, the Father chose in Christ all of the sheep and gave them to Him by name. All of those sheep, whom God has ordained to eternal life, Christ will bring in, and He will not lose even one. What continues to move Christ to gather His sheep is, not to get as many as possible before it is too late, but to gather unto Himself exactly as many as the Lord has determined and to leave without excuse unto their condemnation those who were never His sheep. To that "must" foreign missions must conform its motives.

Second, what moves Jesus to gather His sheep, and what moves us to be tools in His hand to gather His sheep unto Him, is His love. This love Jesus expresses in His words: "other sheep I have." This "having" does not mean that Jesus loosely is associated with some sheep whom He vaguely knows, but this "having" is an expression of His love whereby He has known His elect from eternity by name. Their names are written upon and in Him. These He has in perfect knowledge and love, while the rest of mankind He does not have, but curses, and will soon judge them for their wickedness and unbelief unto their eternal condemnation. Jesus gathers His elect sheep out of the nations of the earth and out of their sin and darkness unto Himself. From this perspective, the church must be motivated by that sovereignly particular and omnipotently conquering love of Christ for His specific sheep and proclaim fervently and vigorously that love of Christ for His sheep. Let this understanding of the particular and efficacious love of Christ move foreign missions unto persistent and confident labor in the service of Christ, who will thereby, throughout the New Testament, find and rescue all of His sheep, losing in the process not even one.

Third, regarding these sheep, both those whom Jesus had gathered in Old Testament history from mostly the nation of Israel, and the "other sheep" whom Jesus would gather from the nations of the earth after Pentecost, He said, "...and I lay down my life for the sheep" (John 10:15). His death on the cross, in which He laid down His life as a complete and all-sufficient atonement, was not intended for everyone, but was intended for and fully accomplished the redemption of His sheep and them alone. When Jesus laid down His life, He did so in the confidence that all those "other sheep" for whom He died must be saved and surely will be saved. This definite atonement of Jesus Christ is the proper and sure motivation for the foreign missionary to proclaim the gospel and issue the call to repent and believe. His confidence in his labors is that Christ did not shed His blood in vain, but each one for whom He shed His blood will be saved and they will be gathered unto Him in His good time.

Fourth, Jesus addresses what will gather His other

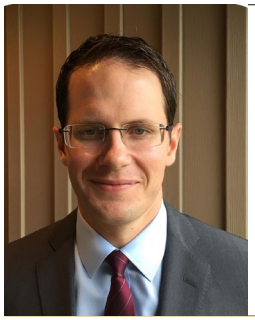
sheep among the nations of the earth. What sure power and tool motivates the true church of Jesus Christ to labor in the service of Christ to preach His Word in foreign missions? What will motivate the church to go forth in the confidence that it will surely work and serve the Lord's purpose? Jesus answers these concerns when He said, "...and they shall hear my voice" (John 10:16). Hence, the tool for us today is not continuing miracles and special revelation, as the Pentecostals teach, nor movies of Jesus and Scripture. What gathers the sheep is the voice of Jesus Christ through the preaching of the gospel by the inner working of the Holy Spirit who opens the hearts of His sheep so that, as they have been ordained to eternal life, they might believe in the Lord. Motivated by that truth of the powerful voice of Jesus Christ, the missionary must preach the Word of God patiently in true hope.

Finally, in contrast to a post-millennial view of the future, Jesus teaches that He will gather His sheep into one fold under Himself, the one Shepherd. The Lord does this in the earth when He gathers believers and their seed unto Himself in true faith in local congregations and denominations that uphold the three marks of a true church and faithfully exercise the keys of the kingdom of heaven. Nevertheless, it becomes evident through history that Jesus gathers from the nations of the earth only a remnant so that His flock appears in this life always as a "little flock" (Luke 12:32). The smallness of His flock appeared at the very time Jesus taught the truth of the Good Shepherd in John 10. Then, the majority around Him were not His sheep, but only a small minority were His sheep. That smallness of His flock will continue, as God intends, until His final appearing. This motivates foreign missionaries not to give up, faint, or be dismayed when discovering that true Christianity according to the Reformed confessions is marginalized, despised, and rejected. Instead, it should move them to labor in the wise reality that the flock of Christ is gathered through tribulation (Acts 14:22) by which the true flock's place in this world remains narrow and small. In fact, it will continue to become narrower for future generations until the anti-Christian kingdom vehemently persecutes the faithful flock of Jesus Christ.

CONCLUSION

Let foreign missions then resist the temptations of false motives that corrupt the true gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and its faithful proclamation. Instead, let us serve the Great Shepherd of the sheep according to His doctrine and be motivated by what He has done, is doing wondrously by His Word and Spirit, and must yet bring to pass shortly according to the Father's will for the final gathering of His sheep and lambs unto Himself in eternal glory.

STRENGTH OF YOUTH



THE WISDOM OF ASKING QUESTIONS

REV. NATHAN DECKER
pastor of Hope PRC in Walker, Michigan

Let's begin with a question: how much have you carefully thought about being a good asker of questions? This is a worthwhile matter to ponder, considering that being a good question asker is evidence of wisdom and spiritual strength. The Lord makes it very clear that the wise young man or woman is "quick to hear, slow to speak" (Jam. 1:19). What encourages both attentive listening and wise communication is being conscious of asking thoughtful questions.

Why do we ask questions? On the surface, the purpose may seem obvious: to gain information that is unknown. In our everyday lives, this is often the case. A student who does not grasp the material well asks their teacher questions in order to understand better. An

employee on a job site who does not know the next step in a construction project asks the foreman questions in order to learn. Questions serve the basic function of gathering unknown information. But that only scratches the surface of the purpose of asking good questions. Viewing this subject through the lens of Scripture, in connection with our relationship to fellow believers, non-Christians, and God, reveals the wisdom that goes hand in hand with being a good question asker.

One has only to think of Jesus Himself to demonstrate this point. According to His divine nature as the Son of God come in the flesh, He knew all things, even the hearts of men and what they were thinking (Matt. 9:4; 12:25). He did not need to ask about things He did not know. Yet in the Gospel accounts, we find the Lord Jesus repeatedly asking questions. Some 300 questions of Jesus—the very wisdom of God come in the flesh—are recorded in the Gospels. At the very least, this demonstrates a much deeper purpose to asking questions.

Let us consider, in the first place, the wisdom of asking good questions in connection with our walk with fellow believers. On the one hand, asking thoughtful questions is a wonderful way to express selfless and Christ-like love for others in the body of Christ. Questions take the focus off self. Questions show interest in others. Questions reveal that you genuinely care about the other person—who they are and how they are doing. What is striking is that this never truly ceases as we walk together as believers. Will godly parents ever really stop showing genuine interest in the lives of their children whom they love? Will husbands and wives ever stop growing in their knowledge of one another? Will fellow believers and friends ever exhaust understanding each other in this lifetime? To live together in covenant homes and in a covenant community means that we must always seek to show genuine love and care for one another, and this is often done through thoughtful questions.

...asking thoughtful questions is a wonderful way to express selfless and Christ-like love for others in the body of Christ. Questions take the focus off self. Questions show interest in others.

A brief caution is in order at this point: Not all questions are good questions. Some can unnecessarily make another believer uncomfortable due to the subject asked about or the manner in which it is asked. Certainly, the wisdom of Christ is needed to guide us.

On the other hand, asking questions as we live among fellow believers is evidence of humility. We do not want to be that person in the room who pontificates with authority on every subject that comes up in conversation. Such a person gives the impression of never needing help or never needing to learn from others. A humble heart recognizes the truth of 1 Corinthians 8:2: "And if any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know." With that recognition, one should never be afraid to say among fellow Christians, "I don't know. Will you help me understand?"

A biblical example that illustrates this point is the response of the Ethiopian eunuch to Philip as they were reading together from the scroll of Isaiah 53. The eunuch had a zeal for the Word of God. He had purchased a copy for himself and was reading and meditating upon it when Philip approached him. But that was not enough. He needed help and, in humility, was not afraid to ask for it in response to Philip's question regarding whether or not he understood. Luke records the eunuch's humble response in verse 31: "And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him."

This question of the eunuch is the lifelong question of the Christian, recognizing both the depth of Scripture and the need for the guidance of the Holy Spirit through the church and fellow believers. In humility, we should always be asking, "Help me understand," or, "Help me understand *better*." May this mentality govern times of family worship, gatherings for Bible study, conversations among married couples, and all of life together in the church as we seek to grow in our understanding of the Scriptures and in our walk with the Lord.

In the second place, let us consider the wisdom of

asking good questions in connection with those who are outside the church. The focus here is our personal witness to the truth of God's Word and the gospel. From a general point of view, the same principle applies: showing genuine interest in others. Effective personal witness must arise from a heart that reflects the love of Christ—a love that truly seeks the spiritual well-being of others. Those to whom we bring the gospel must know that we genuinely care for them, and this is shown, in part, by asking thoughtful questions.

More specifically, asking questions is an effective way to engage others concerning the truth. We must be careful not to think there is a single most effective method of personal witness. There is no one-size-fits-all approach. Nevertheless, it is certainly true that asking thoughtful questions is a powerful way to engage in personal witness. The encounter between Philip the evangelist and the Ethiopian eunuch is instructive here. Earlier, we noted the eunuch's question. Now consider Philip's question. When Philip heard the eunuch reading from Isaiah, his first words were not a declaration such as, "This is what Isaiah means, and this is what you must believe." Instead, he asked a question: "Understandest thou what thou readest?" (Acts 8:30) What a wise way to engage the eunuch in conversation about truth and Christ. Questions in personal witness prompt reflection, help clarify thoughts, and draw out what may be in the heart. They are effective tools for beginning the process of sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Questions express the believer's faith and trust in the Lord. Psalm 27:1 declares, "The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?" The question confidently proclaims fearless trust in God.

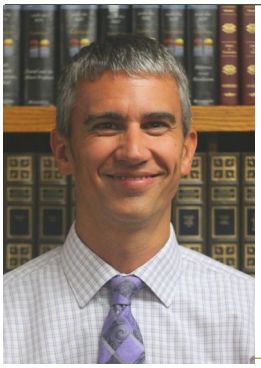
Finally, let us consider the use of questions in our relationship with God. Here we only scratch the surface, for Scripture reveals many ways in which questions are used in our walk with Him. Many of these are rhetorical questions. They are asked not to seek information, but to declare truth.

First, questions beautifully express worship and praise. One needs only to turn to Isaiah 40 to see several examples. In order to exalt God as the almighty Creator, we read in verse 12, "Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance?" In order to praise God for His great wisdom, we read in verses 13-14, "Who hath directed the Spirit of the LORD, or being his counseller hath taught him? With whom took he counsel, and who instructed him, and taught him in the path of judgment, and taught him knowledge, and shewed to him the way of understanding?" In order to extol God for His incomprehensibility, the prophet says in Isaiah 40:18, "To whom then will ye liken God? Or what likeness will ye compare unto him?" Search the Scriptures for questions to express praise and one will find them throughout.

Second, questions express the believer's faith and trust in the Lord. Psalm 27:1 declares, "The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?" The question confidently proclaims fearless trust in God.

And third, questions can express sorrow over sin and a deep understanding of its depth. The psalmist says, "Who can understand his errors?" (Ps. 19:12) in order to express that even he himself does not fully grasp of depth of his sinfulness. Similarly, Paul cries out in Romans 7:24, "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" And making clear that he understands what sin deserves before God, David writes in Psalm 130:3, "If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?" This is just a beginning in unfolding the many ways in which questions can be used to express manifold truths in our walk with God.

As we began, so we end: How much have you thought carefully about asking good questions? May the thoughts expressed in this article stimulate careful thought about being good questioners. And that to the end that we grow in wisdom and spiritual maturity in our life with fellow believers, our witness to those outside the church, and in our personal walk with Jehovah God.



HOW TO CARE FOR ONE ANOTHER

REV. GARRETT ERIKS
pastor of Unity PRC in Byron Center, Michigan

A mark of a healthy church is when members care well for one another in the love of Christ. In such a church the members build genuine, God-honoring relationships to provoke one another unto love and good works (Heb. 10:24) and to comfort one another by the comfort wherewith they have been comforted of God (2 Cor. 1:4). They do this because they love God and love the other members of the church. They want to use their experiences of God's grace in their lives to encourage and help others in their suffering and sin struggles.

If you are a Christian, you are called to do this as a prophet, priest, and king under Christ. Not only are pastors, elders, and deacons called to help and counsel others, but you all are. All church members are called to be counselors. In Romans 15:14, Paul says to the church in Rome, "And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another." As Christians, you are able to care for others because the Holy Spirit equips you. Let us put away all the reasons that we are not able to help each other. This thinking minimizes the effectual, powerful, supernatural work of the Holy Spirit in us. The Spirit equips "to admonish." This term is deeper and richer than merely rebuking. "Admonish" includes the covenant friendship idea of coming alongside to help, encourage, and reprove. This is what we are called and equipped to do when a hurting member of the church is providentially placed in our path. So we sit, weep, listen, and encourage in their suffering and/or in their battle against sin.

Paul David Tripp, a prolific author on these matters, wrote, "God uses ordinary people to do extraordinary things in the lives of others."[1] Christians do this by bringing God's Word and truth to bear on their lives. Tripp writes, "God transforms people's lives as people bring His Word to others."[2] His book is worth reading because he encourages ordinary Christians to care well for each other.

The question is, how can we do this? How do we live out the truth of the covenant in the church by coming alongside one another? Maybe you have the desire to do this, but you are not sure how to develop personally in this or you are not sure how your church can do this. I propose four things the church can do to live this out. These are not exhaustive, but they provide a place to start.

1. MUTUAL FRIENDSHIP

Hopefully we all have people in our lives that we call friends who we can confide in and encourage when we are struggling. The God of love and fellowship provides the great blessing of friendship. It is a wonderful gift. Although Jesus certainly is the Friend and elder Brother to all His people, He also had closer relationships with the inner circle of disciples: Peter, James, and John. In addition, He frequently visited the home of His good friends Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. In the Old Testament, we read of the close friendship between David and Jonathan in which Jonathan came to David and "strengthened his hand in God" by encouraging his good friend David with the words of God's promise that David would one day be king of Israel (1 Sam. 23:16, 17). I hope you have friends who can encourage you in the Lord in days of adversity (Prov. 17:17). But genuine friendships take work, especially because we are sinners.

Not all friendships are with "best friends." In the

1 Paul David Tripp, *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hand*, (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2002), 18.

2 Tripp, 19.

church where you are a member, all the members are friends in the Lord Jesus Christ. I encourage you to get to know your friends in your church family. Take advantage of the time before and after a worship service to touch base with a few people in your church that you do not regularly talk to (if you are not doing this already). Do more than ask them how they are doing. If you know something about their lives (whether good or bad), ask about it. You do not have to get into all the "weeds" with that friend, but ask, "How can I pray for you?" This is a wonderful way to learn about the needs of fellow members. If you can tell this friend is struggling greatly, pray with that person at that moment. Take the opportunity to speak an encouraging word like, "It sounds like you were trying to be Christ-like in your response to this situation." May our conversations before and after worship be opportunities to learn about the struggles and hardships of fellow church members. This means also that in appropriate ways we learn to share the burdens and struggles of our souls with others so that others can encourage and pray for us. Such conversations may open up opportunities to meet for coffee or have a phone conversation to work through a friend's struggles in a fuller and deeper way.

Another idea is to make the times of visiting with friends and family more spiritually meaningful by asking questions, listening, and opening up about difficulties in life, and sharing the great things that God has done by His grace in our lives. In this way God is glorified and you will be mutually encouraged.

2. INTENTIONAL MENTORING RELATIONSHIPS

Although you do not find the term "mentoring" in Scripture, the concept certainly is found there. What I mean by mentoring is the Titus 2 model of the "aged," more experienced men teaching the young men and the "aged," more experienced women teaching the young women. As we think about this, we might wonder if this intrudes upon the home and the instruction parents are called to provide their children. This does not. Instead, it supplements what parents do as an extension of their instruction. And this is biblical. Consider the command of Deuteronomy 6:7, "And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children…." To whom is this command addressed? It is addressed to parents. But more than this, it is addressed to the church. Mentoring relationships can and do continue after children are grown and out of the house. These relationships provide encouragement, admonition, prayer, and accountability in life.

May consistories consider creating opportunities where mature believers mentor others, helping them grow spiritually and address issues early on. Increasingly I have heard from young adults that they feel disconnected from the church because they are in between the young who are in catechism and young peoples societies and the older who are married and have families. Having an older, experienced man who takes a young man under his wing to meet with him for breakfast and talk about the issues of life is a way for a man to develop a good friendship in the church. The same is true for a young woman.

Another opportunity for mentoring is marriage. Some of our congregations have initiated marriage mentoring programs for couples who are beginning their marriages. I have heard repeatedly from the mentoring couple and the mentee couple that this was beneficial and helpful. If problems arise in a marriage, then they have someone to go to for help. The same can be true for couples who are parenting. It is good to hear and learn from other experienced parents how to deal with issues of parenting children at different stages of life.

There may be other mentoring opportunities for those who are struggling with infertility or those who struggle with the death of a child. I encourage consistories to create these opportunities for mentoring.

3. GROUP CARE

Another way to provide a church culture of caring for each other is encouraging transparency and accountability in small group settings where people can consider how to apply God's Word to their lives. In Acts 2:41-47 we read of the church in Jerusalem after the Holy Spirit was poured out in Pentecost. When you read about that church, I think you will say what I do: I want my church to be like this. This church continued steadfast in the apostles' doctrine and delighted in corporate worship. They prayed together and broke bread from house to house. They fellowshiped in small groups in their homes. In this fellowship they enjoyed

discussions about the doctrines they were learning and about what God was doing in their lives. And they prayed with and for each other. If they were doing this in Jerusalem, why not in Grand Rapids, Edmonton, and Loveland?

Having smaller groups is something the consistory can encourage with monthly Sunday night discussion groups or at Bible studies (men, women, combined), at which maybe a larger Bible study breaks into smaller, regular groups. But this can also happen organically in which some couples of the church intentionally meet regularly to discuss spiritual things, share struggles, confess sin, and pray for each other.

4. TRAINED COUNSELORS

The church will be greatly blessed by training lay counselors to bring God's Word in specific ways to those who suffer and struggle. The pastor and elders can certainly help those who are hurting in the church, but they cannot do it all, especially in larger churches. These lay counselors can work alongside pastor and elders in the church to help with the more difficult sin and suffering struggles. This allows them to collaborate with church leaders and help them address shepherding issues in the church. These trained and experienced counselors can also coach and encourage others who are mentoring or encouraging struggling members in the church. If anyone is interested in this training, please reach out to me. There are organizations that can help with this either in your local area or online.

It easily happens that we have a silo ministry in which only church leaders or trained counselors deal with all the counseling issues. Often these matters come to the church leaders in a stage of crisis. What I have outlined above is preventative care. I believe that if the church is more active in preventative care like this, the church will be stronger and healthier in her walk with the Lord. This move to preventative care aligns with the wisdom of Scripture.

In the church may we all bear one another's burdens, speak the truth in love, and help each other grow in Christ-likeness. In doing so, we reflect the heart of our Good Shepherd, who cares for His flock with tenderness and truth.

DEVELOPMENTS IN THE CASE OF *CHILES V. SALAZAR:*

U.S. Supreme Court poised to strike down the laws of 27 states prohibiting Christian counselors from advising gender transitioning minor patients to instead affirm their biological sex in accordance with biblical perspectives of sex and gender

MR. JAMES LANTING
member of Cornerstone PRC in Dyer, Indiana, is a practicing attorney

STATUTORY PROHIBITION OF CONVERSION THERAPY

In the last two decades there has existed an ideological warfare over counseling goals for children who express so-called gender confusion or gender dysphoria, which has been defined as the alleged unease, discomfort, or distress some children feel about their biological sex, leading them to supposedly identify, transition, and live as a member of the opposite sex. Progressive LBGTQ+ psychological experts and organizations insist that

such transitioning children must be uncritically supported and affirmed, and should be counseled to avail themselves of alleged transitioning treatments including drugs and surgeries.

In contrast, others, including many Christian mental health counselors, insist that minor children should be caringly counseled to reject transitioning and instead accept their natural bodies and reconcile their identity with their biological sex rather than transition to the opposite sex. This counseling perspective rejecting gender transitioning has ironically and disparagingly been labeled as "conversion therapy," purportedly defined as the therapeutic practice aiming to convert or change an individual child's believed perception of their sexual identity as different from their biological sex. Thus, rather than imprudently affirming the young child's gender transitioning, conversion therapy counseling attempts to compassionately convince children to accept and affirm their birth sexuality and forego controversial gender dysphoria treatments such as taking cross-sex hormones, puberty blockers, and even surgical removal of healthy body parts, including breasts and genitals.

Shockingly, the legislatures of some 27 states, including Colorado and Michigan, have apparently implemented LBGTQ+ ideology and passed statutes banning so-called conversion therapy. Colorado, for example, claims that there is "overwhelming evidence that efforts to change a child's sexual orientation or assumed gender identity are unsafe and ineffective." These laws, prohibiting mental health professionals from advising minors to cease transitioning to a different sex, have the support of major mental health organizations including the American Psychological Association (which claims that efforts to counsel "gender confused" children to identify with and affirm their biological sex rather than transition to the opposite sex "are associated with harmful social and emotional effects including…suicide").

CHRISTIAN COUNSELOR CHALLENGES THE COLORADO STATUTE AS UNCONSTITUTIONAL

Kaley Chiles is a Christian licensed professional counselor in Colorado who filed suit in 2022 against the State of Colorado (*Chiles v. Salazar)*, seeking to have a local federal district court declare that the state's 2019 *Minor Conversion Therapy Law* (MCTL)[1] outlawing conversion therapy is a violation of her constitutional rights to free speech and free exercise of religion. Chiles stated in her pleadings that as a "practicing Christian, she believes that people flourish when they live consistently with God's design, including their biological sex." Her complaint also asserted that her professional counseling goals include "seeking to eliminate unwanted sexual attractions, change sexual behaviors or grow in the experience of harmony with one's physical body."

Chiles explained that some clients are referred to her by churches "who uphold a biblical worldview which includes the concepts that attractions do not dictate behavior, nor do feelings and perceptions determine identity." Moreover, Chiles alleged that some of her clients "believe their faith and their relationships with God supersede romantic attractions and that God determines their identity according to what He has revealed in the Bible rather than their attractions or perceptions determining their identity." Chiles also asserted that her clients with "same-sex attractions or gender identity confusion" who "prioritize their faith above their feelings, are seeking to live a life consistent with their faith," and not being able to do so leads to "internal conflicts, depression, anxiety, addiction, eating disorders and so forth." Finally, Chiles argued that because of the Colorado MCTL statute, she has been "forced to deny voluntary counseling that fully explores sexuality and gender to her clients and potential clients in violation of her and her clients' sincerely held religious beliefs."

DISTRICT COURT DENIES CHILES' REQUEST FOR INJUNCTION

Chiles' complaint sought to have the federal district court declare that Colorado's MCTL statute banning

1 The Colorado MCTL statute defines the prohibited "conversion therapy" as "*...any practice or treatment by a licensed mental health professional that attempts or purports to change an individual's sexual orientation or gender identity, including efforts to change behaviors or gender expressions or to eliminate or reduce sexual attraction or feelings to individuals of the same sex....*" Violation of this egregious statute entails severe disciplinary actions for licensed mental health professionals (including license revocation) and fines up to $5,000 per violation.

"conversion therapy" was unconstitutional and to enjoin the state from enforcing the restriction forbidding all but gender-affirming counseling. The Court denied Chiles' request for an injunction and held that although she had standing to challenge the MCTL statute, she failed to demonstrate a "likelihood of success" of her claim that the state law violated her rights to free speech and the free exercise of religion. The judge held that the statute outlawing conversion therapy was "neutral and generally applicable," and that the law was "rationally related to Colorado's interest in protecting minor patients seeking mental health care from obtaining ineffective and harmful therapeutic modalities."[2] Chiles immediately appealed the ruling to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 10th Circuit.

U.S. COURT OF APPEALS (10TH CIRCUIT) RULES AGAINST KALEY CHILES AND DEFENDS THE COLORADO BAN OF CONVERSION COUNSELING

In September of 2024, the majority of the three-judge federal appellate panel (2-1) held that the lower district court record sufficiently demonstrated that professional studies have shown that "religious efforts [at conversion therapy] indicate there are individuals who perceive they have been harmed by these techniques." Accordingly, the majority held that Chiles' free speech claim must fail: "*We thus have no trouble concluding that the MCTL statute is rationally related to Colorado's interest in protecting minor patients seeking mental health care from obtaining ineffective and harmful therapeutic modalities.*" The two appellate judges also ruled essentially that speech by licensed counseling professionals in the course of their practice is *not speech, but conduct,* which is permissibly regulated by state health licensing departments.

The panel majority also rejected Chiles' claim that the MCTL violates her constitutional free exercise of religion rights, ruling:

> *Laws that only incidentally burden religion are ordinarily not subject to strict scrutiny under the Free Exercise Clause so long as they are neutral and generally applicable, no matter how severely that law burdens religious exercise. ...Nothing in the record suggests the MCTL's aim is to infringe or restrict practices because of their religious motivation. ...[T]he MCTL targets therapeutic practices because of their* ***harmful effect on minors****, rather than their* ***religious*** *nature* [emphasis added].

THE DISSENT

Writing in dissent, Judge Hartz vigorously disputed the majority panel's ruling. He claimed that the scientific studies and reports denouncing conversion therapy, including the pronouncements by the American Psychological Association (APA), are not trustworthy and credible, but rather are "illustrations of what happens when ideology prevails over the scientific approach." He noted that only a few decades ago the APA held that homosexuality was a mental disorder, but inexplicably now claims that therapists should affirm same-sex relationships and gender transitioning.

Judge Hartz also cited recent professional scientific studies in Europe (including the *Cass Review* commissioned by England's National Health Service) that have come to an opposite conclusion: That so-called gender-affirming care has no scientific basis, but is simply a "scientific scandal."[3] Moreover, Hartz opined that, contrary to the majority's conclusion, the evidence does not adequately support the claim that gender-affirming treatment for minors reduces anxiety, depression, and suicide risk.

In conclusion, the dissent held that there is insufficient scientific evidence to hold, as the majority did, that conversion therapy is ineffective and harmful to children, and therefore there is no rational basis justifying Colorado's ban or the censoring of Kaley Chile's therapeutic methods counseling children to affirm their biological sex in accordance with Christian biblical standards of sexuality.

CHILES V. SALAZAR NOW PENDING BEFORE U.S. SUPREME COURT

Kaley Chiles, represented by the Alliance Defending

2 The district judge apparently embraced the testimony of a Rutgers University psychologist specializing in LBGTQ+ psychotherapy and a report by the American Psychological Association which claim that 'conversion' therapies that do not affirm gender transitioning by minors are "ineffective and harmful," even allegedly causing youth suicide.

3 *See* Pamela Paul, "Why is the U.S. Still Pretending We Know Gender-Affirming Care Works?," *N.Y. Times* (July 12, 2024). The article contends that "the U.S. continues to put [woke] ideology ahead of science."

Freedom (ADF), an evangelical religious freedom nonprofit legal organization, immediately appealed the two-judge appellate ruling to the U.S. Supreme Court, which held oral arguments in October of 2025 and will presumably release its decision sometime in February or March of 2026. The issue before the Supreme Court can be formally summarized thus: *Does a Colorado law banning conversion therapy—that is, attempts to "convert" children's non-biological sexual orientation or gender identity—violate the Free Speech Clause of the First Amendment?*

Since 26 states in addition to Colorado (including Michigan)[4] have likewise banned conversion therapy, the *Chiles v. Salazaar* case has gained national attention and many are awaiting the Supreme Court's decision in this controversial ideological battle. An indication of the notoriety and importance of the case is that more than 50 organizations have filed *amicus* (friend-of-the-court) briefs in the case, either supporting Chiles freedom of religion and free speech rights or defending Colorado's egregious statute censoring Christian counselors.

After hearing the oral arguments in *Chiles v. Salazar* in October of 2025, and following the recent ruling striking down a similar Michigan statute (see footnote below), most Supreme Court legal observers are predicting that the conservative majority of the Supreme Court will overrule the 10th Circuit and find that the Colorado statute unconstitutionally violates the free speech and religious freedom rights of mental health professionals who do not subscribe to LBGTQ+ ideology. Should this occur, Christian counselors and parents of minor children across the United States will be relieved and appreciative of such a decision re-affirming religious and free-speech freedoms.

4 Curiously, on Dec. 18, 2025, while the *Chiles v. Salazar* case was pending before the U.S. Supreme Court, the Federal Appellate Court for the 6th Circuit, contrary to the 10th Circuit's *Chiles v. Salazar* decision, found the similar Michigan statute banning conversion therapy to be unconstitutional and struck it down.

INTELLIGENCE OR ILLUSION? CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVES ON AI (2)*

DR. BRENDAN LOOYENGA AND MR. BEN RAU
members of Faith PRC in Jenison, Michigan

Previous article in this series: February 2026, p. 186.

INTRODUCTION

In our first article, we described a biblical approach to engaging with artificial intelligence (AI) based on the three-fold theme of *knowledge*, *understanding*, and *wisdom*. Together these concepts provide a helpful framework for thinking about any new technology we might encounter in our world. We also covered the *knowledge* component of this framework by defining what AI is, how it came into existence, and how it works functionally.

In this article, we will cover the themes of *understanding* and *wisdom* in relation to AI. We will first identify key biblical principles to deepen our understanding of the technology, then explore some of the issues associated with the wise use of AI in different spheres of life.

UNDERSTANDING: BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES FOR AI USE

Moral Neutrality

We have all heard some version of this statement: "Technology, in and of itself, is neither good nor bad—it's neutral." The implication is that the moral weight of technology is mainly found in *how* we use it. Some Christian commentators ground this view in 1 Timothy 4:4, which states that "every creature of God is good, and

* A version of this speech was given to the Reformed Free Publishing Association (RFPA), which gathered for its annual meeting at Southwest PRC on the evening of September 25, 2025. The version printed here has been condensed for clarity, but the full speech can be viewed via the RFPA YouTube channel at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pbtJO—b_zo.

nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving." Whether human inventions are properly considered "creatures of God" may be debated, but the general principle this passage teaches is helpful. Christians may use certain forms of AI as God-given tools because the core technology behind AI is neither good nor evil.

What complicates this perspective is the reality that most publicly available AI platforms (ChatGPT, Gemini, Claude, Grok, for example.) are more than just a core technology. Each of these platforms has been trained on a specific set of information and is tuned to provide carefully filtered outputs that match their designers' worldview. What users experience in using these platforms, therefore, is not a morally neutral perspective. To better explore this issue, we will use the framework explained in the first article to identify the *purpose*, *provenance*, *pitfalls* and *potential* of generative AI platforms.

Though motivations for creating AI tools have varied widely, its underlying *purpose* is to make human tasks more efficient. AI can take tasks that previously required days of human effort and accomplish them in moments. At face value this goal seems praiseworthy, but caution is needed as efficiency sometimes competes with other goals or undermines their purposes. Also, just because something is done quickly and efficiently does not mean that it is done well.

Even more important is the matter of *provenance* (that is, the underlying foundations of a technology). Soon after ChatGPT launched in 2022, Dr. Derek Schuurman pointed out that, "technology is not neutral, and neither are the algorithms and training data used in AI."[1] Recall from the first article that AI is based on large language models (LLMs), which are enabled by massive training datasets. Most of the "language" that is being used as training data is a conglomeration of internet-sourced text and images. Anyone familiar with this content can tell you that a good portion of it is entirely subjective, or worse, factually (or morally) wrong.

The approach AI platforms use to process and weigh information helps explain the answers they generate. Statistics suggest that up to 70% of the data used to train certain AI platforms is user generated.[2] For example, think of websites like Reddit and Quora, massive forums where users post their opinions about various topics. Sites like these are the sources behind many LLM answers. Our confidence in AI answers should be informed by the same trust we put in other internet search results.

The lack of neutrality in AI goes beyond training data, however. There is also significant bias in AI "alignment" processes, which AI platforms use to determine what is right and wrong from contrasting sets of information. Alignment depends on algorithms (sets of rules written in computer code), written by AI programmers with their own worldviews and biases. Users of AI must remember that programmer bias may always impact the way answers they receive are sourced and will often conflict with a biblical worldview. Alignment is necessary in AI tools but is not morally neutral.

The last consideration is the matter of the *pitfalls* associated with AI use. The term "subgoal" often arises in connection with the ethics of AI use. Subgoals are smaller, intermediate objectives that an AI agent may establish to achieve a larger primary goal. Consider the example of asking an AI chatbot to help plan an itinerary for a trip to Alaska; a well-functioning chatbot will know to check the weather and average temperatures for the time of your trip (a subgoal) before giving you a list of potential activities.

Because subgoals are created autonomously by AI agents, they can become misaligned with human intent. This is a potential pitfall in using AI, especially if the use is associated with a technology that has *potential* to significantly impact human life, such as controlling air traffic or military hardware. While we can assume human life preservation and well-being is always paramount to humans, AI chatbots may not share that same ethical framework. If getting airplanes from one place to another as quickly as possible or eliminating an enemy target are the primary goals, how an AI agent chooses to maximize "success" might be quite troubling. While these are extreme examples as opposed to current realities, letting AI loose on a task introduces the possibility of subgoals that may not be morally neutral.

1 Derek C. Schuurman, "ChatGPT and the Rise of AI," *Christian Scholar's Review*, January 20, 2023, https://christianscholars.com/chatgpt-and-the-rise-of-ai.

2 *AI Christian Benchmark*—Mike Graham, "Evaluating 7 Top LLMs for Theological Reliability," *The Gospel Coalition*, September 2025, https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/ai-christian-benchmark.

Image of God

As we know from the very first chapter of the Bible, the image of God is a gift that was exclusively given to humans (Gen. 1:26-27). From Scripture, the Reformed confessions teach that the content of the image of God is true knowledge, righteousness, and holiness (Col. 3:10; Eph. 4:23-24). Other creatures cannot bear that image, because God gave unique *capacities* to humans making them capable of bearing His image. These unique capacities include things like verbal communication, rationality, creativity, and problem-solving. What is somewhat troubling, however, is that these capacities are exactly the things that have been programmed into AI platforms to make them appear to be "intelligent."

There is a striking parallel between the growing reliance of modern society on AI and the practice of idolatry.[3] Most of the idol gods we read about in the Old Testament were *anthropomorphic*, that is, created to look like a person (Ps. 115:4-8). Idols are made in our image and expected to serve our needs. What people desire to have and what they want to be is often reflected in their idols. One Christian writer put it this way: "AI is the most incredibly complex computational mirror. We can see ourselves in its reflection. It shows us our deepest values and mirrors our basest actions."[4]

It is incredibly easy for a technology as powerful and immersive as AI to become an idol. We let it take over our lives, and in the process displace our worship of God with worship of a machine. We ought to be very careful about this. The very fact that the capacities built into AI look so much like a human ought to make us think twice about how we use the technology in our lives.

Stewardship

Another important biblical concept that must be addressed in the context of AI is *stewardship*. Three brief things can be said about stewards: (1) stewards do not own, they manage on behalf of another; (2) a steward is accountable to his master, not an independent agent; (3) the calling of a steward is to serve the interests of his master, not himself. The Bible repeatedly reminds us that our relationship to God is that of stewards (Luke 12:42-44; 1 Pet. 4:10). All that we have ultimately belongs to Him, and our calling is to manage these possessions in His service.

The principle of stewardship should inform our perspective of AI in two primary ways.[5] First, we must remember that because the primary purpose of AI is to increase human efficiency, there is a very real danger of offloading our responsibilities to a software program at the expense of cultivating our own abilities. Jesus' parable in Matthew 25 reminds us that our refusal to cultivate and invest what God has given to us will ultimately be taken away (Matt. 25:29).

Secondly, we must consciously exercise our stewardship of AI by using it in a God-honoring way. The calling to exercise dominion, which was given to Adam and his posterity by God (Gen. 1:28), is a call to serve His interests and not our own. We are not the ultimate rulers of creation, Christ is. Our use of AI must therefore be conducted in submission to His will and consistent with other virtues of the Christian faith to which we are called in Scripture. When we misuse AI, we dishonor our Lord.

Conscientious Abstinence

The final biblical concept we need to consider is *conscientious abstinence*. Conscientious abstinence is the intentional choice to abstain from using something for the spiritual good of oneself or others. While this term does not come directly from Scripture, it is a concept derived from biblical principles found in both the Old and New Testaments.

A prominent Old Testament example of conscientious abstinence can be found in the book of Jeremiah. There God pointed to the Rechabites as examples of faithfulness for their refusal to drink alcohol in obedience to the command of their father Jonadab (Jer. 35). Jonadab was a faithful follower of Jehovah during the days of Ahab, who was directly involved in cleansing the nation of Israel from Baal worship (2 Kings 10:15-28). Whether due to its association with idol worship or for some other reason, he commanded his family to abstain from alcohol. While not a broad

3 Paul Quiram, "AI: Automated Idolatry," *Westminster Theological Seminary*, June 6, 2025, https://wm.wts.edu/read/ai-automated-idolatry.

4 Stephen Driscoll, *Made In Our Image—God, Artificial Intelligence and You* (Sydney: Matthia Media, 2024), 100.

5 Micah Gaudet and Jason Ogden, "Thinking Biblically About Artificial Intelligence," *By Faith*, December 9, 2024, https://byfaithonline.com/thinking-biblically-about-artificial-intelligence.

scriptural prohibition of alcohol use, it is an example of conscientious abstinence by a man of God.

While we may be free to use the good gifts of creation given to us by God, there are times abstaining is best. When there is a legitimate risk of becoming addicted to and misusing a good gift like alcohol, for instance, it is better to abstain. Similarly, artificial intelligence may be everywhere and seem unavoidable, but that does not imply we must use it in every possible instance.

Using the knowledge and understanding we receive from biblical principles, we must decide how to use AI wisely. Some of us may decide to act counterculturally and restrict or exclude the use of AI from our lives. Others may decide to use it for work purposes out of necessity but avoid personal use. Whatever the practical application, our calling is to use the gifts given to us in ways that edify ourselves, our families, and our church communities. For some, conscientious abstinence may be the best answer.

WISDOM: CAUTIOUS USE OF AI IN THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

For this final section we will consider common uses of artificial intelligence in three specific spheres of life: education, the workplace, and personal guidance and connection. While far from an exhaustive list, these are areas of common AI use where *wisdom* is required.

AI in Education

A recent article in *World* magazine spotlights the impact that AI is having on education.[6] Among other topics, the author discussed several ways that students are using AI as part of the learning process. These can be summarized in three distinct categories.

The first category is *information extraction*, that is, doing research. When you put a question into the latest version of Google, its AI agent (Gemini) provides a distilled answer summarizing its findings. Just a couple of years ago such a search would have required reading several webpages, and before that it may have required a trip to the library to look up key resources. Nowadays, the amount of time that is required to do research is infinitesimal compared to what it used to be. This is largely due to AI.

The next category is *process simplification*. This use of AI is aimed at making the learning process easier but is also more ethically problematic. Not only can chatbots provide the right answer when prompted, but they can also give the entire workflow to arrive at the answer in any discipline from STEM to the humanities. This reality makes it increasingly difficult for teachers to decipher whether a student truly understands the material or is cheating with AI. Although in-class testing can help distinguish in some instances, the temptation many students face to outsource the learning process to AI cannot be entirely prevented.

The last category, *creative expression*, presents the most concerning uses of AI for education. Because of their foundation on LLMs, AI agents are exceptionally good at crafting aesthetically pleasing responses to any sort of prompt you give them. Whether this is a written response like an essay or an image-based artistic depiction, AI agents can produce outputs that appear to be both original and beautiful. The reality is that all AI-generated outputs are a distillation of previously generated material gleaned from training data. So when a student uses AI to generate "creative" material, the product is neither his nor entirely unique.

Several significant issues arise from the use of AI in education. Among the most significant of these is the fact that efficiencies gained from AI can significantly undermine the learning process. Professor Brad East, who was quoted in the previously cited *World* magazine article, observes that "ChatGPT cannot give you [critical thinking skills] any more than a robot that picks you up and runs a mile can develop your mile-running muscles for you. You have to do the running." Time and effort are necessary components of the learning process—removing them often means actual learning simply is not happening.

This observation ought to serve as a major caution for AI use in education. The moral issue of poor stewardship is one concern, but another is the fact that skills never developed in childhood are exceptionally difficult to learn as an adult. Neuroscience research has clearly demonstrated that when students do not do the work associated with learning, their ability to do it in the future never develops. If you do not read books, for instance, your brain will not develop the neural circuitry required to sustain the effort of absorbing

6 Grace Snell, "ChatGPA: AI is forcing teachers and students to redefine education," *World*, August 2025, 66-73.

written information. Cutting short the process of education stunts a child's capacity to be educated.

AI in the Workplace

If there is a context where efficiency is a dominating principle, it is the workplace. It is unsurprising then that AI is already transforming the future of work. In the world of work, efficient use of AI tools may give an individual or company a competitive advantage in what they can offer. As the former CEO of IBM stated: "AI may or may not be coming for your job, but someone who uses AI to a greater degree of effectiveness certainly is."

We should expect that AI will continue to quickly grow in use in the workplace. A study by global consulting firm Cognizant and Oxford Economics looked at the transformative potential of AI at work.[7] Their data projects that 90% of jobs could have some form of disruption from AI by 2032. Similar to the expectation of proficiency in tools like Word or Excel for job seekers, AI proficiency will become an expected skill for employees over time, especially in certain industries such as computer science or technology as examples.

How is AI being used at work? Because AI tools are language-based, they are impacting white-collar professions most heavily. Common examples include generating content for *ideation*, perhaps for marketing campaigns, company LinkedIn posts or strategy ideas. We also see AI used for *summarization*, such as comparing contracts for differences or recapping key points in a meeting transcript, and for *task automation*, where AI routes information and manages handoffs in a business workflow. Broadly, we should expect the advent of AI will lead companies to change or eliminate jobs as they pursue efficiency and a competitive edge.

Another growing trend is the inclusion of AI features into a company's products. The software company called Grammarly, for instance, makes proofreading and editing tools for writers. They are now turning into an AI company, not by making entirely different products, but by applying AI technology to supercharge their ability to help writers. This is common use case of a product being enhanced or "powered by" AI.

AI usage in the workplace has resulted in growing concerns, though less on the moral aspects of use and more on the commercial aspects, especially regarding *intellectual property*. Think about a company that is innovating in its ability to build or design products. This company needs to ensure that its proprietary designs are not leaked into AI datasets where others can use them. Loss of this valuable information disrupts a company's competitive advantage, which is why AI platform developers are being increasingly asked to add security safeguards for their customers.

In summary, AI adoption in the workplace is growing significantly. We should expect that our current generations and those following will encounter AI at work.

Companion AI: Guidance and Connection

No longer is AI just for simple questions that Google could have answered quickly; it also tiptoes into the thornier types of use cases where individuals are seeking advice, counsel, and situational guidance.

Consider the example of AI being used by someone looking for advice. A person might turn to AI with a simple situation, seeking a general advice: "Is my car's transmission worth repairing?" or "What savings strategies should I consider for retirement?" But seeking advice can also get deeper and become deeply personal: "I keep fighting with my significant other—what do I do?" Finally, at times a user may not even be asking AI a question or requesting anything; they are just looking for a listening ear.

Clearly, many types of uses may fall under the broad umbrella of guidance and connection. Some uses may be on the harmless end of the spectrum, while others may lead to concerning places. Especially parents ought to consider whether to supervise or discourage their children from these uses entirely. Consider the impact in a few decades if AI becomes a primary emotional support system for our society.

The related concept of *companion AI* merits special mention and caution. This refers to a type of conversational AI chatbots that aimed to act as someone's friend. An example of such a platform is called Replika, which markets itself as "the AI companion that cares." Consider how that might resonate with a vulnerable teenager, or someone with friendship challenges. Significant caution is warranted for this kind of AI use for several reasons.

7 "New work, new world," *Cognizant Research*, January 2024, https://www.cognizant.com/us/en/aem-i/generative-ai-economic-model-oxford-economics.

First, a digital "friend" creates highly unrealistic expectations around what to expect in friendship. It is constantly and immediately available. It will never tell you that you are wrong, even if that is what you need to hear. It will affirm you, welcome you, and celebrate your every thought. This is by design, to keep you engaged. Additionally, pursuing conversations with AI for friendship is *counter* to God's design for relationships, which come in the various circles of our life—family, church, school, and more. We must be deeply cautious of tools that supplant community and relationships.

Finally, Christians need to remember that the advice and guidance a companion AI bot provides will reflect the average cross-section of our society, not what a faithful Reformed Christian friend would say. To quote Derek Schurrman again, "An AI chatbot or robot should never substitute for human wisdom, care, or companionship."[8] It is imperative that we teach and model relationships that follow God's design, not the perspective of the world around us.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

From these articles, our hope has been to provide a perspective that is not alarmist, but one balanced and informed by rational, biblical caution and wisdom. We should think about AI like any other tool. When a builder selects a tool like a saw, they consider the power and value of the tool, but also the danger and damage that could result if used improperly. Further, they would not bring this kind of a tool to the kitchen table and set it up next to their children—it belongs in the workshop. Similarly, tools like AI must be viewed for both their power *and* risks and be accordingly positioned.

As Reformed Christians, our use of AI must honor *knowledge*, with an *understanding* of how these tools work, and must be guided by biblical *wisdom*. Read, do research, talk to others, and pray. These are thorny, important issues that affect all of us. Be encouraged to go and consider these matters further to form up *your* Christian perspective on AI in the service of our King!

8 Derek Schuurman, "ChatGPT and the Rise of AI."

Recommended Reading List

- Derek C. Schuurman, "ChatGPT and the Rise of AI," *Christian Scholar's Review,* January 20, 2023, https://christianscholars.com/chatgpt-and-the-rise-of-ai/
- Micah Gaudet and Jason Ogden, "Thinking Biblically About Artificial Intelligence," *ByFaith,* December 9, 2024, https://byfaithonline.com/thinking-biblically-about-artificial-intelligence/
- Paul Quiram, "AI: Automated Idolatry," Westminster Theological Seminary, June 6, 2025, https://wm.wts.edu/read/ai-automated-idolatry
- Grace Snell "ChatGPA: AI is forcing teachers and students to redefine education," *World,* August 2025, pp. 66-73.
- "Artificial intelligence and adolescent well-being: An APA health advisory," *American Psychological Association,* June 2025, https://www.apa.org/topics/artificial-intelligence-machine-learning/healthadvisory-ai-adolescent-well-being
- MIT Project Iceberg—Measuring impact of AI on workforce: https://iceberg.mit.edu/index.html
- *AI Christian Benchmark*—Mike Graham, "Evaluating 7 Top LLMs for Theological Reliability," The Gospel Coalition, September 2025, https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/ai-christian-benchmark/

Books

- Neil Postman, *Technopoly: The Surrender of Culture to Technology* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993)
- Nicholas Carr, *The Shallows: What the Internet Is Doing to Our Brains* (New York: W. W. Norton &Company, 2020)
- Stephen Driscoll, *Made In Our Image—God, Artificial Intelligence and You* (Sydney: Matthia Media, 2024)

Topical Blog Posts

- Nate B. Jones, "The Parent's Technical Guide to AI Literacy: What You Need to Know to Teach Your Kids," Nates Newsletter blog, Substack, August 28, 2025, https://natesnewsletter.substack.com/p/raising-humans-in-the-age-of-ai-a
- "AI Companions Are Powerful. Here's Your Complete Guide," *Protect Young Eyes,* August 13, 2025, https://www.protectyoungeyes.com/blog-articles/complete-guide-to-ai-companion

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Council and congregation of Doon PRC express our Christian sympathies to Mr. and Mrs. Cody Altena and family in the death of Cody's grandmother, **Mrs. Chalice Altena.** "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit" (1 Peter 3:18).

Rev. Daniel Kleyn, President

Perry Van Egdom, Clerk

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

CALL TO ASPIRANTS TO THE MINISTRY

All young men desiring to begin studies in the Protestant Reformed Theological Seminary in the 2026-2027 academic year should make application at least two weeks prior to the **March 19, 2026** meeting of the Theological School Committee (TSC). Older men from the PRC who wish to apply under the new Special Seminary Entrance Program (SSEP) should approach the secretary of the TSC or the registrar (C. Terpstra) to review status and pre-seminary requirements (cf. PRC *Acts of Synod 2023,* pp. 348ff.).

Accompanying the application must be a testimonial from the prospective student's Consistory that he is a member in full communion, sound in faith, and upright in walk, and exhibits the qualities and personality necessary for a gospel minister; a certificate of health from a reputable physician; and a college transcript.

Before entering the seminary, all students must have earned a bachelor's degree and met all of the course requirements for entrance to the seminary. Those older men who apply under the new SSEP may be exempt from some of these requirements, which will be determined on a case-by-case basis. The requirements for the regular course of entering seminary and for the SSEP are listed in the seminary catalog available from the school or on the seminary's website (prcts.org/admissions).

All applicants must appear before the TSC for interview before admission is granted. In the event that a student cannot appear at the **March 19** meeting, notification of this fact, along with a suggested interview date, must be given to the secretary of the TSC before this meeting.

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

Joel Minderhoud, Secretary

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

PRC SYNOD 2026

All standing and special committees of the synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches, as well as individuals who wish to address Synod 2026, are hereby notified that all material for this year's synod should be in the hands of the stated clerk no later than April 15. Please send material to:

Doug Mingerink Sr., (dougi@mingerink.com),
or mail to the same at:
4949 Ivanrest Ave., SW
Wyoming, MI 49418

CLASSIS EAST

Classis East of the Protestant Reformed Churches will meet in Byron Center PRC, in Byron Center, MI, on Wednesday, May 4, 2026, at 8:30 A.M. the Lord willing. All material for the agenda is to be in the hands of the stated clerk by April 30, 2026 (30 days before classis convenes).

Rev. C. Spronk, Stated Clerk

REFORMED WITNESSHOUR
FOR BY GRACE ARE YE SAVED

REV. CARL HAAK

3/1	When I Heard, I Wept and Prayed, Nehemiah 1
3/8	So I Prayed and Said, Nehemiah 2
3/15	Come, Let Us Build, Nehemiah 2:11-20
3/22	The People Had a Mind to Work, Nehemiah 4
3/29	Building With Sword and Trowel, Nehemiah 4

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