

The Standard Bearer

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Subject one to another

Rev. James Slopsema

The manner of training elders

Prof. Barrett Gritters

The intertestamentary period

Mr. Don Doezema

Fundamental Reformed critique of premillennialism (6)

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Perfect moral guidance for youth (2)

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Meditation

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

Subject one to another

Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.

I Peter 5:5b

This meditation deals with the second part of a verse. The first part of the verse is addressed to a specific element in the church: “Ye younger, submit yourselves to the elder.” Although there are differing opinions as to the meaning of these words, they are most likely directed to the younger element of the congregation in their relationship to those who hold the office of elder. The younger with their enthusiasm, inexperience, and new ideas sometimes struggle to submit to those who by reason of their experience and wisdom hold the office of elder in the church. And so, there is the instruction to the younger to submit to the wise rule of the elders.

But now, there is a word addressed to the entire church. “Yea, all of you be subject one to another.”

There is a mutual submission we are to have to one another in the church.

This will be possible only as we are clothed with humility.

And the incentive is very clear: “God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.”

Yea, all of you be subject one to another.

To be subject to someone is to be willing to place yourself under that person. It is to subordinate yourself to another so that you take the role of a servant. It is to serve rather than to be served.

The tendency of our sinful human nature is to subject others to ourselves so that that we have power and control over them and are able to have them do our bidding. We see that in the political arena. Some seek political office to serve their country. But many aspire to public office in order to subject others under them—to have power and control over others. We see the same thing in the business world—men and women climbing the corporate ladder to gain power and control over others.

It exists in the family and in marriage. Many marriage and family problems involve control issues. Who will serve and who will be served? This is found also in the school, where students vie for power and control over the class and even over the teacher. We also see this in the life of the church, where one person or group seeks to subject the entire church to their own will.

Rather than seeking to subject others to us, we must subject ourselves to one another. Consciously and willingly, we are to place ourselves under each other, subordinating ourselves to each other so that we serve one another. Rather than trying to get others to serve us, we must see how we can serve others around us.

The “one another” of this passage is our fellow saints in the church. This includes the Christian family with believing parents and their covenant children. It includes the Christian school where believing parents have their children instructed according to the demands of the covenant. It includes the members of your local church, your denomination and, ultimately, all who belong to the household of faith. We are willing to place ourselves under our fellow members so that we view ourselves as the servants of one another. This is true even of those whom God has clothed with authority in the church, home, or school. Officebearers in the church, husbands in marriage, parents in the home, as well as teachers in the Christian school must use their positions of authority to serve those whom they rule.

The Bible gives us examples of such subjection. Jesus subjected Himself to His disciples by washing their feet at the last Passover (John 13). The apostle Paul subjected himself to those to whom he brought the gospel: “For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more” (I Cor. 9:19). Paul commended Phebe to the church of Rome, “which is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea” (Rom. 16:1).

Interestingly, Jesus cites such subjection to others as the measure of true greatness in the kingdom (Matt. 20:25-28).

And be clothed with humility.

A contrast is made in the passage between humility and pride.

Pride is the vice of having a high and inflated opinion of self. By nature fallen man is lifted up with pride. Ironically, he has lost all his good spiritual gifts and is bound for hell. He can do nothing good or worthwhile in the cause of God. Yet, he imagines himself to be something great, boasting of his accomplishments. This is the sad result of the Fall and the depravity that results. And it is the nature of pride to put others in subjection to oneself. Pride leads to self-seeking and self-promotion. With that spirit, the proud also seek to subject others to themselves so that they are served.

Humility is the virtue of having a modest opinion of self.

There is a natural humility that is rooted in insecurity and low self-esteem, fed often by failures of the past.

The humility that this Word of God speaks of is the gift of grace in Jesus Christ. By grace one sees himself as a mere creature whose station is to be a servant of the Lord. By grace he sees his sins and worthiness to be damned. He is an unprofitable servant. Yet, he has come to know the saving grace of God in Jesus Christ. In Christ he has been freely reconciled to God in the blood of the cross. In Christ he has been transformed into the very image of God and given an important place of service in the kingdom. For this he is eternally grateful. In the process of it all he has been humbled. And his humility leads him to subject himself to others as a servant.

That we may so subject ourselves to one another, we are called to clothe ourselves with humility.

The Bible often calls us to clothe ourselves with some virtue and to discard as filthy rags various vices. The figure expresses the idea of making virtue so prominent in our lives that it is as visible as a fine garment you put on. The word translated here “to clothe” is derived from a word that describes a slave or servant putting on an apron so that he may serve his master. The idea, therefore, is that we are to put on humility, just as a servant puts on his apron, so that you are ready to serve.

And we must repeatedly be called to do this. As God’s children, we have the gift of true humility. But the pride of our sinful nature often asserts itself and is sometimes so prominent that it becomes the spiritual clothing we wear.

And in this pride we seek to subjugate others to ourselves in a spirit of self-seeking. And so we are called to put off these filthy rags of pride and self-promotion to put on a humility that leads us to submit ourselves to others.

We are able to do this only in the power of the Word and prayer.

*For God resisteth the proud,
and giveth grace to the humble.*

God resists the proud. The basic meaning of “resist” is to “arrange in battle.” It suggests that the Lord views the proud as His enemies and battles to destroy them. The proud do not submit themselves to others; but neither do they submit themselves to God. They stand ultimately with the devil to build their own empires, to

establish themselves without God, and ultimately to overthrow the living God. But God resists them. He arranges Himself in battle against them. From a human point of view, it sometimes appears as though the proud self-seekers prosper and will even succeed in their self-promotion. But, ultimately, they will fail and fall into the hands of an angry God.

But God gives grace to the humble. True humility is the fruit of saving grace. And as God has given grace to be humble, He continues to shower His grace on the believer who walks in humility. The humble believer knows close friendship and fellowship with God and the saints. He experiences the joy of giving which is greater than receiving. And God lifts up the humble ultimately to the glory of eternal life, which is a share of Christ’s reward.

This fact is set forth as the reason for us to clothe ourselves with humility.

How we are inclined in pride to subject others to ourselves to serve our selfish ends! It sometimes appears as though this pays handsome rewards. But consider God’s resistance.

Let us rather clothe ourselves with humility and submit ourselves to one another. From an earthly point of view, there are many sacrifices that this requires. But consider God’s grace to the humble, a grace that one day will exalt them with Christ.

In Christ he has been freely reconciled to God in the blood of the cross. In Christ he has been transformed into the very image of God and given an important place of service in the kingdom. For this he is eternally grateful. In the process of it all he has been humbled. And his humility leads him to subject himself to others as a servant.



Editorial

Prof. Barrett Gritters, professor of Practical Theology in the Protestant Reformed Seminary

The manner of training elders

By God's grace, the Protestant Reformed Churches are determined to train our ministers well—our prophets and teachers. With equal determination we must train our elders well, for the watchmen on Zion's walls must have the wherewithal to watch properly, her gatekeepers must be skilled in the use of the gate's keys, and her overseers must have wisdom to make proper judgments about the faith and life of the members and about the instruction from the church's prophet.

I wrote last time that our churches *do* train our elders. It is not the same kind of specialized training that the churches give to her ministers over the course of four rigorous years of seminary instruction. Rather, the fundamental training for elders comes in especially two ways. From a certain point of view, it is no less rigorous or extensive.

First, the Holy Spirit, by the means of grace, prepares a man's *heart*, often from his youth, with the spiritual gifts of wisdom, boldness, humility, patience, godliness, moderation, balance, sobriety, and others. Second, the Holy Spirit prepares, by the same means of grace, a man's *mind*, also often from his youth, to give him the intellectual grasp of biblical truth: knowledge of God, of His will, of His works—the doctrines of God, man, Christ, salvation, the church, and the end times.

Christ's Spirit prepares not only heart, but also mind. For even the knowledge required for an elder is *spiritual* knowledge. It is not the knowledge *about* God, which anyone can acquire by studying, but the true spiritual knowledge which is precious to a man, by which he embraces Christ and all His benefits as his own.

But the Spirit prepares the elder's heart and mind by *means*—the means of grace. We might think that a man's *heart* is trained by the Spirit *without* means, but the man's *mind* by the Spirit *with* means. But both a man's heart and a man's mind are prepared by the means of grace—the Word of God, especially as it is preached and taught in the church, but also as it is given in the home and school by parents and Christian teachers. For this reason, it is very unusual—not impossible, but unusual—that the Spirit prepare a man for the office of elder who has not been under the means of grace

for an extended period of time. Normally men are prepared for this work only after they have been members of the church for many years. “Not a novice.”

So if the church has judged that you have the necessary qualifications for office, perhaps largely by the fact that you have had an upbringing by faithful parents and received solid catechetical instruction by a qualified pastor, you may have good confidence that the Lord has given you a great deal of what is necessary to be an elder whom God will use for good.

True, to the extent that you did not heed the good instruction of your parents or did not listen to and profit from catechism, to that extent you repent in humility and beg of God both to forgive our failures and sanctify you for the office in other ways. And He will, for He who called will qualify for the work. He loves His church. Commit, then, brother elders, to use more fervently the means of grace to prepare yourselves further. God does use weakest means to fulfill His will! For, although God does use weakest means to fulfill His will, we also want to grow.

It really is not different for us teaching elders—ministers of the gospel—who also begin with only the barest qualifications for being useful pastors. But through the course of the minister's ‘term,’ he grows by diligent work, careful study, and earnest prayer...or he languishes in the pulpit. For elders as for ministers, if a man does not work to develop and grow, it is not likely that the Lord will be pleased to use him well.

Growth for elders can come in three main areas: 1) knowledge of Scripture and the creeds; 2) understanding of church government; and 3) ability to counsel the people of God in their troubles.

Scripture and confessions

First, we remind ourselves what is primary. The “Form for Ordination” calls elders to “take heed that purity of doctrine...be maintained in the church of God,” that

is, to “have regard to the doctrine of the minister.” For this, elders must know the truth. So the Form calls you “diligently to search the Word of God,” and “continually [to] be meditating on the mysteries of faith.” Also, the Formula of Subscription you signed has you make weighty promises: 1) you believe all the doctrines taught in the PRCA fully agree with the Word of God; 2) you promise to teach and defend these doctrines faithfully; 3) you do and will reject all errors that militate against these doctrines, in particular those addressed at the Synod of Dordt.

This calling stands at the very heart of the elder’s labors. Because you take this instruction and your public vows seriously, you will be determined to read and study Scripture and the confessions, systematically and regularly. Let every elder be diligent in his private reading of Scripture, perhaps also reading through the confessions as part of his personal devotions. Full and accurate knowledge of the Scripture and the Reformed creeds are as basic to the elder in his work as hammer and saw are to a carpenter.

It is a good practice of some consistories to read articles of the Church Order at each meeting. It might be as important, or more, to read and receive instruction from the creeds. Before each consistory meeting, shall we commit to reading an article of the Belgic Confession and the corresponding explanation of it in Prof. D. Engelsma’s new commentary published by the RFPA? Or the Canons of Dordt and Homer C. Hoeksema’s (older) explanation of it (*Voice of Our Fathers*, both available at rfpa.org)? Not to do so because of busyness may call for a discussion of priorities. Men and brethren, let us never become churches whose elders are not fully conversant in the Word of God and the Reformed creeds. Let our training and preparation start here.

Church Order

Second in our recommendations for preparation is the Church Order. Actually, church government is not a subject distinct from Reformed doctrine but is an *aspect* of it. It is a part of *ecclesiology*, the biblical and confessional doctrine of the church. The Church Order is considered among us as one of our “minor creeds” because it is the Reformed *creed* or *confession* regarding church government. It is designated *minor*, not because it is less important than the other creeds, but because it deals with a smaller slice of biblical truth. Our minor creeds include the Forms for Baptism, Confession of Faith, and the Lord’s Supper; the Form of Confirmation of Marriage; the Forms of Excommunication and Readmittance; and the Forms of Ordination of ministers, elders, deacons, missionaries,

and professors. Each of these Forms is the church’s official teaching about a particular subject in Scripture. Among these minor creeds, the Church Order is actually quite major. Its 86 articles include instruction regarding the *offices* in the church (minister, elder, deacon); regarding the *assemblies* (consistory, classis, synod); regarding *worship* (Baptism, the Lord’s Supper, catechism preaching, singing, weddings, funerals, etc.); and regarding *church discipline* (of the common member and of the officebearer).

This Church Order is the “government and discipline” to which everyone who confesses faith promises to submit. Thus, to rule these members well (I Timothy 5:17), elders will want to know the Church Order inside and out.

Good advice for the elder here, then, is to read the Church Order itself until it becomes like an old friend. Then he can read the good commentary on it by VanDellen and Monsma. All our churches can have a ready supply of this commentary, available from our brother G. VanDerSchaaf (both in new paperback and used hardcover at gvsbooks@gmail.com).

Counseling

Also counseling is your calling as elders, as our minor creeds teach. Article 23 of the Church Order gives this mandate to elders: “comfort, instruct, exhort” the members. The Form for Ordination of Elders calls elders “to be assistant with good counsel and advice (and consolation)” both to the ministers and members of the church. II Timothy 2 says that the elder’s calling is to assist the people of God who have been ensnared in a terrible sin. In meekness, you instruct those who have fallen prey to the devil, or who have been harmed by the evils of others.

Occasionally, I hear the strange notion that it is not the calling of elders to ‘do counseling.’ Some suggest this to be true for ministers also. I cannot think of any advice more bizarre, or hurtful. Unless, of course, by ‘counseling’ is meant telling people what to do who already know what to do but do not want to do it; or sitting down with people as a worldly psychologist sits, trying to psychoanalyze a person’s problems or dig for suppressed memories. But this is not what elders (and pastors) are called to do. They are, though, to counsel—to give “good counsel and advice” to the sheep.

Giving good counsel to God’s people takes wisdom. And since there is no wisdom without knowledge, also here we see the supreme importance of knowing Scripture and the creeds.

A few examples can make that clear. If, for example, an older man has become addicted to strong drink, or a

younger man to pornography, the counsel they need will be given from a firm foundation of Reformed doctrine. The competent elder-counselor understands man's vicious nature and the addictive power of every sin. He will not be naïve as to the hideous strength of sin, nor the subtlety of Satan, nor our innate blindness to our own sin. He will know the free grace of forgiveness for every penitent sinner and the power of the Holy Spirit to sanctify, but also that growth in sanctification is gradual, usually not dramatic, and that the transformation of penitent believers comes mostly by the renewal of their *minds*. Thus, the elder-counselor will always be opening the Scripture and *teaching* the fallen but repentant believer how to *think* biblically. This principle applies to all counseling.

Or if, for example, an elder gives counsel to a depressed Christian who doubts the goodness of God and even wonders whether God loves him, he will have at his disposal all the deep and blessed truths of Scripture and the creeds about God's unconditional love, and sovereign grace, about justification, sanctification, and God's eternal purposes (even in afflictions). Or, when elders are asked to help with marriage problems, they will not start with explaining the biblical truth about finances, sex, personal communication, or the like, but with God's unconditional covenant of love with His people in Jesus Christ as the bedrock truth that must be

known and embraced before any lasting unity and true peace can exist in an earthly marriage.

If you elders are familiar with Scripture and our creeds (in this last example, the minor creed of the Marriage Form), you are well-equipped to help the saints in their needs.

I am thankful that some of elders are receiving training in counseling. Romans 15:14 teaches that the people of God are "able to admonish" or "competent to counsel" one another. To seek training from wise men and women who have experience in this is commendable. But keep in view that Romans 15 also shows that one who truly is competent to counsel is "full of goodness, filled with all *knowledge*" (Rom. 15:14; emphasis added). So it is not an exaggeration to propose that anyone who seeks to be trained as a competent counselor should be required first to pass a rigorous "entrance examination" in the knowledge of the Scripture and the Reformed creeds. I would not trust my friend or family member to anyone who was not.

You elders who have this knowledge, worked by the Spirit in your hearts and minds, through your study of Scripture and daily pleading with God for wisdom, are truly able "to be assistant with good counsel and advice" to the sheep under your care.

We thank God for making you willing to serve us. May He strengthen you for your work among His people.

Letters

A charge unanswered?

After reading Rev. Koole's response to a letter written by Rev. Nathan Langerak, a letter printed after the response instead of before it, I was puzzled and my curiosity aroused.

Was what I read a true response? Was what I read really an answer to a charge?

I found in the response an explanation for the article which Rev. Langerak addressed, an article that appeared earlier in the *Standard Bearer* [Oct. 1, 2018]. I read of some reasons offered for which that article was written, offered by the author. I also read of his wonderment that Rev. Langerak should present the thinking that he did.

Is that all?

A criminal may have his motives for robbing a bank. To be sure, he would lay his hands on money that belongs to the bank, to have it for his own. But he also may crave the reputation of being a successful bank robber. Suppose he is caught robbing the bank, and over

the course of his trial, the motivation is brought out that he craved the reputation of being a successful bank robber. He answers that he is puzzled by such a charge. He answers that he wanted the money badly. Did he really and truly answer the charge? Has he cleared himself of the motive of seeking a reputation?

Similarly, I do not find in Rev. Koole's response any clear answer to Rev. N. Langerak's charge. Does Rev. Koole support the decision of Synod 2017 clearing the aggrieved brother of the charge of antinomianism? Does Rev. Koole agree with the decisions of Synod 2018 that overturned decisions of a church's consistory and Classis East's support of them?

I find no indications of support for Synod's decisions in the response offered in the *Standard Bearer*. That is telling. And it is troubling. Until I can read of such support for Synod's decisions, I cannot come to any conclusion that Rev. N. Langerak's charges have been answered.

Sincerely,
Rev. Martin VanderWal
Wingham PRC, ON

Response:

Ordinarily, the *SB* does not print letters that are responses to previous *SB* letters or to their responses. Of the writing of such letter-exchanges there might be no end.

But in this instance the editors have decided to make an exception. The issue referred to in your letter is an issue stirring up unnecessary debate in our circles, one that needs to be laid to rest. As well, your challenge of my November 15 response to another brother's letter critical of my October 1 editorial (a challenge, by the way, that also indicates a mistaken reading of my October 1 editorial) deserves response for clarification to all and sundry. Evidently, others also want to insist on reading the editorial in the same way—as a roundabout, surreptitious way to disagree publicly with decisions of our recent synods.

So, first, we state once again, the October 1 editorial does not indicate any disagreement with the decisions of our recent synods. That is something that some, you among them evidently, have insisted on reading into the article. There is no reference to disagreement with decisions made by our synods as they touch on doctrinal declarations or exoneration of men's names.

We state once again, the editorial in question dealt with an issue that was before the Synod of *Dordt* (1618-19), namely, a charge the Arminians leveled against the truly Reformed theologians for the Calvinistic doctrines they emphasized—the first being the total depravity of natural man (his complete spiritual disability—denying his having a free will); the second being God's sovereignty in salvation, and in particular, the *irresistible* character of His saving grace—grace invariably overcoming the resisting, obstinate will of sinners where the Holy Spirit so wills, so that those who are to be saved have no more say-so or choice in their second birth (regeneration) than they had in their first. The charge leveled was that such a doctrine of salvation turns men into “stocks and blocks,” mere puppets on strings. Why even bother with the call of the gospel to repent and believe? No man could respond in obedience anyway. And if one did repent and believe, it would be due to God not only working salvation for a man and in him, but God, for all intents and purposes, by Christ's Spirit in us, doing the repenting and believing for us as well. After all, how else could God be said to receive all the praise (according to you Calvinists)?

The charge of antinomianism.

With such the fathers of *Dordt* were charged, and such they refuted in the Canons' Head IV of Doctrine. “We are not of an antinomian persuasion, not of any shade or form. And our emphasis of the apostolic doc-

trine that salvation is all of God's sovereign grace, full, free, and irresistible does not imply that, in response to the gospel call, those who are saved do nothing at all, but are simply dragged into salvation and Christ's kingdom like pieces of dead wood. And only then is grace magnified.”

As if that is true-hearted Calvinism.

That is why Head IV goes to such pains to declare that, where irresistible grace works, the will of a man is set free, enabled to be spiritually active and to respond obediently to spiritual commands and admonitions.

As the Canons, having set forth the wonder of regeneration, put it: “Whereupon the will thus renewed is not only actuated and influenced by God, but in consequence of this influence becomes itself active. Wherefore also, *man is himself rightly said to believe and repent* by virtue of that grace received” (III/IV, Art. 12—emphasis added).

Read Head IV and you will discover this truth (as a response to the Arminians) is set forth again and again.

And this brings us to what is the nub of your concern, namely, that you find no indication in my November 15 response that I agree with decisions of our recent synods—one that cleared an aggrieved brother's name, the other that overturned doctrinal decisions of other of our assemblies.

The reason you found no declaration of my agreement with our synod's recent decisions is quite simple—the editorial in question was not about our synods' decisions. It was about the Synod of *Dordt*'s refutation of the charge that true Calvinism is inherently antinomian in perspective, which refutation is found in Head IV.

There was, therefore, no need publicly to express such agreement.

That said, it is evident from your request to have this letter printed in the *SB* that you desire to use it as a forum to *ask* the denomination, “Does Rev. Koole support the decision of the Synod of 2017...?” And, “Does Rev. Koole agree with the decisions of Synod of 2018...?” And what? If one does not publicly declare “I concur,” his orthodoxy is to be questioned?

Let our readers understand, the *SB* is not required to give you such a forum. It is a question whether your letter should be printed. Strictly speaking, if you as a colleague have evidence that a writer is not abiding by the decisions of our synods, then you should either approach him privately with your concerns or go the proper way of charging him with not abiding by decisions of the broader assemblies, perhaps even being guilty of agitating against them. That is Church Polity 101. Not raising suspicions about another publicly.

But I have decided to answer this publicly and use it

as an occasion for the instruction of our members. And so, Brother Vander Wal, you have been granted your public forum.

Let us be clear here—what I and every other PRC officebearer (and minister in particular) are governed by is the “Formula of Subscription.” There we read,

We declare, moreover, that we not only reject all errors that militate against this doctrine [confessional truths] and particularly those which were condemned by the above mentioned synod [Dordt], but that we are disposed to refute and contradict these, and to exert ourselves in keeping the church free from such errors.

Notice, the reference is to “doctrines” (and by implication, also decisions that pertain to defining those doctrines in times of controversy). The reference is not to *all* decisions, as for instance, those that occur when matters of discipline are adjudicated by our broader assemblies. Against such decisions one may not agitate, but must acquiesce. Meaning what? Not necessarily that one is fully convinced of them, but that one will not militate publicly or agitate privately against said decisions.

So, here follows my response.

First of all, regarding decisions of our broader assemblies that touch upon doctrines: Brother, you may be sure if I have any difficulty with a doctrinal position taken by our broader assemblies (recent ones included) or with decisions that I am convinced impinge on the freedom of biblical preaching, our broader assemblies will hear from me. It would be my sacred duty. This coming synod should indicate how I assess the *doctrinal* judgments of our recent synods.

If nothing is there, you may come to only one conclusion.

As for the other matter your raise, a decision of the 2017 synod exonerating a brother’s name, freedom of conscience is reserved, that is, about whether one is in full agreement with synods’ decisions or is not.

This is how it has always been, and must continue to be.

Those with experience on our broader assemblies should know that.

Examples?

One that comes readily to mind, as stated above, would be approval of increased censure that consistories have brought to the assemblies. I can recall more than one instance in which the delegates disagreed on whether censure should be increased (and even whether the charge should have been made to begin with!). And the assemblies’ final decisions were not unanimous. Now the question: did those who dissented have to indicate

their agreement? Was this required? Should it have been? As for those of whom this was not required, and as of yet have not indicated their agreement, what shall we do with them? Question their standing as officebearers? Since when?

Further, a number of controversial issues dealt with by our broader assemblies over the past few decades could also be presented. One of recent memory is the controversy that arose over the interpretation of Article 21 of the Church Order (having to do with consistories promoting good Christian schools), particularly the implication of the phrase “according to the demands of the covenant.” As you well know, there were two entrenched schools of thought on that issue. Decisions of Classis East were protested and appealed by officebearers. The appeals were not upheld. I was a delegate at both synods. Not all the officebearers present agreed with our synod’s final decisions.

And now the point: those who protested or who as delegates voiced their dissent were not required to declare whether they agreed with the decision. Whether they were (or are to this day) convinced of the judgment of our churches in this matter was left to their individual consciences. Regardless of where they now stand on the matter, they have acquiesced and not agitated. They remain officebearers in good standing to this day.

That must not change. It would violate our Church Order, Article 31. According to our interpretation of Article 31, decisions are settled and binding unless synod changes them. This means that there is allowance for freedom of conscience in non-doctrinal decisions, as long as one acquiesces, and does not agitate against them. In addition, we have never adopted the view that some take—that all decisions taken by the broader assemblies must be taken back to the local councils and all the officebearers go on record as expressing agreement with them. This has never been the Protestant Reformed view or practice.

Are we now to change that stand? If we did, it would appear we have quite a backlog of business to take care of as churches. And any number of our officebearers must be viewed as being under a cloud of suspicion.

I trust this is not where we are heading.

And so it is with the case referred to in your letter, Brother Vander Wal.

How I (and perhaps others) assess the perspective of a brother whom the synod has exonerated must be left to my freedom of conscience. I need not tell you or our churches whether I think the synod’s judgment was correct or not. But *if* I remain unconvinced of synod’s judgment (and note that “if”), I may not agitate so as to cast aspersions on the brother’s cleared name, but must deal

with the brother as a member in good standing - just as some have had to do in other discipline cases that ended in decisions with which they have disagreed.

Notice, I do not say that I disagree with our recent synod's verdict. But even if I did, I would not be required to tell it to the churches.

Let us, therefore, have an end of this business of raising suspicions based on men's silence, and go forward as committed to the same confessional truths.

Yours for the cause of God and truth,
Rev. Kenneth Koole



Search the Scriptures

Mr. Don Doezema, member of Southwest Protestant Reformed Church in Wyoming, Michigan

Upon this rock (38)

The intertestamentary period

Previous article in this series: January 15, 2019, p. 183.

Scripture is silent with respect to the history of the Jewish state between the time of Malachi and the birth of John the Baptist some 400 years later. But we can learn something of that history from other sources. We know, for example, that the Jews were ruled by various world powers that rose and fell during this period. Since 536 B.C., they were under what proved to be a rather mild rule by the Persians. Medo-Persia, you will recall, constituted the breast and arms of silver in Nebuchadnezzar's image dream. In the years around 333 B.C., the Persian Empire collapsed before the advancing armies of Alexander the Great, who established the Empire of Greece—the abdomen and thighs of brass in Nebuchadnezzar's image dream.

At Alexander's death, his empire was divided among his generals, one of whom controlled lands that included Syria, and another, Egypt. Palestine lay between those two hostile powers and was dominated sometimes by the one and sometimes by the other. For the more than 100 years during which they were subject to the Ptolemies of Egypt, the Jews fared quite well. But under the Seleucid kings of Syria, they were made to suffer severely.

Especially was this true under Antiochus Epiphanes, whose wicked reign is compared, in the prophecy of Daniel, to that of the Antichrist (see Dan. 7:25). This king made a determined effort to destroy, once and for all, the worship of Jehovah. In 168 B.C., he sacked Jerusalem, broke down much of the city's wall, plundered the temple of its treasures, and sold a large number of Jews into slavery. He converted the temple into a shrine

of the Greek god Zeus, put an image of Zeus on the altar, and sacrificed a sow there in Zeus's honor. He destroyed every copy of the Scriptures that he could lay his hands on, and let it be known that anyone who was discovered reading the book of the law, or had it in his possession, would be executed. In effect, he outlawed Judaism, and resorted to torture of the Jews in an attempt to force them to renounce their religion.

For the Jews of Palestine, the situation was intolerable. At length an old priest named Mattathias killed a royal agent who was attempting to force the people of a Jewish village to take part in a heathen sacrifice. This touched off a general revolt of Jews against Antiochus Epiphanes. A detachment of Syrians sent against the Jews was decisively routed by the Jews, who, after the death of Mattathias, were led by Judas, one of the sons of the old priest. Antiochus then sent a much larger force, which, though far outnumbering the army of Judas, was also badly defeated. By 165 B.C. Judas had liberated Jerusalem from Syrian domination and had purified and rededicated the temple (giving rise to the Jewish Feast of Dedication). Other amazing victories by Judas (nicknamed Maccabeus, meaning “the Hammer”) brought much of Palestine under his control.

The strife continued under successors of Antiochus and of Judas. Eventually, in 142 B.C., a new king in Syria made peace with Simon, brother of Judas Maccabeus. The revolt of the Maccabees, thus, brought an end to Syrian domination of Palestine. And, for the first time since 605 B.C., when Jerusalem fell to Nebuchadnezzar, Judea was an independent state.

Meanwhile, however, Greece had fallen in 146 B.C. before the advance of the Romans (represented by the legs of iron in Nebuchadnezzar's image dream). The power and influence of Rome was rapidly extending eastward, and the Maccabean rulers soon found their affairs intertwined with those of this rising world power. In 139 B.C. a treaty was signed, according to which Rome recognized the independence of Judea.

In the years that followed, the Maccabees were challenged on a number of occasions by the Syrians. But a more serious threat to peace in Judea was the almost constant internal strife. Quarrels among members of the ruling family led on different occasions to assassination, imprisonment, and civil war. Eventually the political situation became so chaotic that Rome was able to use it as an excuse to step in and settle the dispute. Roman troops under Pompey arrived at Jerusalem in 63 B.C. The defenders of the city surrendered with little resistance. Palestine became a province of Rome. Thus the independence of the Jews ended, not to be recovered till the modern state of Israel was established by the United Nations in 1948, some 2,000 years later.

A member of the Maccabean family was allowed to remain as head of the country, under Rome, but the real power lay in the hands of an Idumean (Edomite) by the name of Antipater. Through much intrigue, his son Herod (who came to be known as "the Great") managed to have himself proclaimed by the Roman Senate to be King of Judea.

As Herod obtained the throne by intrigue, so also he maintained it. The submission of the inhabitants of Jerusalem was gained, it seems, only by a show of force (which included the execution of a majority of the Sanhedrin). And in the course of his long reign, which was characterized by reckless cruelty and bloodshed, his ambition, jealousy, and suspicion led to the further deaths of, among others, his uncle, three of his sons, his mother-in-law, his favorite wife (he had ten in all), and a man he had appointed to be high priest. His slaughter of the infants of Bethlehem was, therefore, entirely in keeping with the character of his reign. He would stop at nothing to retain the throne for himself and for what he intended to be his dynasty.

At the same time, Herod tried to gain popularity among the Jews. He spent enormous sums of money to remodel the temple, which had been erected 500 years earlier by Zerubbabel. By the time he was finished with it, it was virtually a new building. But because he had taken it down and rebuilt it one section at a time, over a number of years, it continued to be considered the second temple. He made use of marble and gold plates to

an extent that the people of Zerubbabel's day could never have afforded. He did, in fact, gain the favor of some in Judea, but he never won the admiration of the Jews generally. For the most part they hated this foreigner and they stood in constant fear of his ruthless wrath.

Such was the history of the Jews during the years between the Testaments. In that history we see the Lord at work. World powers rise and fall at His command, and only in order that they might serve the *church*. For no other reason. Why was there a Rome? Because there had to be a Caesar Augustus, by whose decree "the world should be taxed." There had to be a Pontius Pilate, through whom the world could pass judgment on the Christ of God. There had to be a Roman Empire, at first to facilitate the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ to all nations and later, through persecution, to purify that church. More often than not we, as mere creatures, are unable to *trace* it, but the finger of God most emphatically directs the course of history.

That is unmistakably true with respect to what Paul would later call "the fulness of time" (Gal. 4:4)—that is, the fullness of time on the clock of *God*, who, as Rev. M. Schipper once wrote, "stipulates the exact moment of time that coincides with His plan when His Son must make His appearance in the world of darkness, when the development of history, which is nothing more than the succession of moments that God uses to realize His eternal purposes, is reached." The moment, therefore, that was foreordained. And foretold of old. A prophecy that, more than once, must have seemed impossible of fulfillment. Perhaps never more so than at *this* time in the history of Old Testament Jewry. The Jewish nation?—fast becoming apostate. The very house of God having become a "den of thieves." The royal line?—"the royal family tree of Jesse as to its power, majesty, and glory was cut down, so that all there remained of it was a mere stem or stump" (Rev. G. M. Ophoff).

But is that not the way the Lord often works? When was Isaac born to Abraham? It was when Sarah was "past age" and Abraham "as good as dead" (Heb. 11:11, 12)—in order that it might be clear on the very face of it that salvation is of the *Lord*. So also now, when does "Shiloh come"? When does the "bright and morning star" arise? Why, just before dawn, when the night is at its blackest.

The "scepter shall not depart from Judah," Jacob had prophesied, "till Shiloh come" (Gen. 49:10). But had not the scepter *already* departed from Judah? Has not the promise *already* proved to be untrue? Indeed, Judah's typical throne had fallen for good when Nebuchadnezzar carried the Jews off into captivity in Babylon. And now, though they have been restored to the

promised land, it is the *Romans* that rule, and a descendant of *Esau* sits on the throne that once was *David's*.

What hope can there be for such a people, and at such a time? Only this: “I am the LORD, I change not” (Mal. 3:6). And: “The Sun of righteousness [shall] arise with *healing* in his wings” (Mal. 4:2). The promise of God *will* not, *can* not, fail. Yes, the throne of David had disappeared. But the royal line had not. And the prophecy of Jacob was that it *would* not fail, that it would surely

extend itself till it brought forth the Christ. Did that line *end* in Mary, a virgin? If so, the cause of God in this world would appear to have been forever lost. At just such a time as this, when the promise appeared all but impossible of fulfillment, the Lord would “suddenly come to his temple” (Mal. 3:1). The ruins of the throne of David will be rebuilt, and it will continue firm forever in the person of Jesus Christ.

Next time: Zacharias and Elisabeth



Taking heed to the doctrine

Prof. Ronald Cammenga, professor of Dogmatics and Old Testament in the Protestant Reformed Seminary

Revelation, inspiration, and infallibility (25) “What saith the Scripture”: The Bible’s trustworthiness

Previous article in this series: June 2018, p. 396.

The Bible is trustworthy. It can be relied upon. The inspired psalmist gives expression to the Bible’s trustworthiness when he says “the testimony [Word] of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple” (Ps. 19:7). That God’s Word is “sure” means that it is trustworthy. Trustworthiness is the last of the five perfections that are often ascribed to Holy Scripture.

The Bible is trustworthy and can be relied upon because the Bible is the Word of God—the Word of God in the words of men. Because the Bible is the Word of God, word for word the very Word of God, whoever reads the Bible ought not to doubt anything that is in the Bible. The Bible deserves our confidence because it is God-breathed (II Tim. 3:16) and because “the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost” (II Pet. 1:21).

If the Bible is not the Word of God but the word of man, we could not have this confidence in the Bible. If the Bible is to any degree and in any part the word of man, to that degree and in that part we could not confidently rely upon it. Man’s word is weak, often contradictory, and sometimes even deliberately untruthful. A child denies wrong-doing in order to avoid punishment. A contractor promises a start-time for a job, but knows he will not be able to keep that promise. A politician promises the voters that if he is elected he will cut taxes, but after he is in office forgets his campaign promise

and votes to raise taxes. A lawyer bends and stretches the truth in the interests of gaining an acquittal for his client. But “God is not a man, that he should lie... hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?” (Num. 23:19). God’s Word is sure, absolutely sure! That is the confidence that every child of God has. And that confidence motivates him to turn to the Scriptures in every circumstance of life.

Completely trustworthy in its revelation of God, in its account of history, and in its doctrine

The Bible is *completely* trustworthy. It is reliable in its entirety. That is simply what it means that Scripture is trustworthy. If the Bible is not fully trustworthy, it is not trustworthy at all. If the Bible is partly trustworthy, we could not be sure of what in Scripture is trustworthy and what is not. It is all or nothing. Either the tree is dead or it is alive; it cannot be partly dead. As is so often the case in natural life, so it is in regard to the Bible’s trustworthiness. Even in a court of law, if a witness can be shown to have perjured himself, his whole testimony is thrown out as unreliable. Scripture is trustworthy—completely trustworthy. It is reliable in its entirety.

The Bible is reliable *in its revelation of God*—who God is. He is the only and the true God. He is the triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He is the

Creator God, who by the word of His power called the universe into existence in the beginning. He is the God who alone must be worshiped and praised. He is the sovereign God who has decreed all things: the salvation of His people (predestination) and the course of history (providence). For the elect believer, He is our God and our heavenly Father.

The Bible is reliable *in its history*. The Bible is trustworthy in what it teaches about the beginning of history in the moment of God's creative activity, as recorded in the opening chapters of Genesis. The Bible is reliable in what it teaches about Israel's bondage in Egypt and God's miraculous deliverance out of Egypt, including the ten plagues by which He brought Pharaoh to his knees. The Bible's history is reliable in its account of the parting of the Red Sea, the miraculous provision for Israel in the forty years of wilderness wandering, particularly by His sending of the manna. It is reliable in its account of the crossing of the Jordan River on dry land, the overthrow of the city of Jericho, and the conquest of the land of Canaan. The Bible is reliable in what it records of the history of the kings, both of Judah and of Israel, including their overthrow and respective captivities. The Bible is reliable in its account of the birth, ministry and miracles, suffering, death, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And it is to be trusted in what it prophecies of the history of the end of the world, the coming kingdom of Antichrist, and the second coming of the Lord Jesus.

The Bible is reliable *in its doctrine*. It is reliable in its teaching about God and about man, its teaching concerning the person and the work of the Lord Jesus Christ, in its teaching of salvation by grace alone, through faith alone. It is reliable in its teaching concerning God's covenant of grace established with believers and their children, membership in which covenant is controlled by God's decree of election.

Completely reliable in its teaching concerning Christ, man, and the church

The Bible is reliable *in its teaching concerning Jesus Christ*. It is reliable in its teaching that He is the Son of God, the ever blessed Second Person of the Trinity. It is reliable in its teaching of the incarnation and the virgin birth—God become a man for us men and for our salvation. It is reliable in its teaching concerning the nature, scope, and efficacy of Christ's cross. The cross was real atonement for sin, a real sacrifice to God, a real satisfaction to the justice of God for all for whom He died. The Bible is reliable in its teaching that we are saved through faith in Jesus Christ and not at all on account of our works. The Bible is reliable in its teaching

that there is salvation in Christ alone—He is the only Savior and apart from Him there is no salvation, “for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12).

The Bible is reliable *in its teaching about man*. It is reliable in its teaching about the fall of man into sin, as recorded in Genesis 3, and its teaching about the consequence of man's fall under the judgment of God: total depravity. This is at once the need that man has for salvation and the impossibility of man's working or willing in order to be saved. As a totally depraved, spiritually dead sinner, he cannot work to save himself; indeed, he cannot even desire to be saved. From a spiritual point of view, he is dead. And dead is dead.

The Bible is reliable *in its teaching concerning the church*. It is reliable in its teaching that the church is the body and bride of Christ. It is reliable in its teaching concerning the calling that every child of God has to be a member of the church institute. It is reliable in its teaching concerning the marks of the true church: the pure preaching of the gospel, the proper administration of the sacraments, and the faithful exercise of Christian discipline. It is reliable in its teaching that the public worship of God is to be governed by the revealed will of God—the regulative principle of worship. It is reliable in its teaching of the calling of the church to preach the gospel and to administer the sacraments. It is reliable in the calling that Christ gives to the church in the Great Commission to preach the gospel throughout the world and to every creature, for the gathering of the elect out of the nations (Matt. 28:19, 20; Mark 16:15, 16).

Completely reliable in its ethics and its teaching of the end of all things

The Bible is reliable *in its teaching concerning ethics*. It is reliable in its teaching that the one, great calling that every man has is to know and love God. It is reliable in its teaching that man must obey God out of love and gratitude, which is only possible for those who have been regenerated—given new life—by the Holy Spirit. It is reliable in its teaching concerning sexuality, marriage, and family. It is reliable in its teaching that marriage, as an institution of God, is governed by the will of God. It is reliable in its teaching that marriage is the permanent, life-long relationship between one man and one woman, and not two men or two women, which the Bible condemns as an abomination in the sight of God. The Bible is reliable in its teaching concerning the place of children in marriage, that children are to be viewed as a blessing from God, that they are to be brought up in the fear of God, and that according to His

covenant promise God is pleased to gather His children from among the children of believers.

The Bible is reliable *in its teaching about the end of all things*. It is reliable in its teaching that, as this world has its origin in the will of God, so also according to the will of God the world's end has been determined. The Bible is reliable in its teaching about the world's development in sin until its cup of iniquity is filled and Jesus Christ comes down from heaven in order to judge the living and the dead. It is reliable in its teaching that in the great judgment all will stand "that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (II Cor. 5:10). All will stand before God "and the dead [will be] judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works" (Rev. 20:12). At His second coming, Christ will resurrect the dead (I Cor. 15:52), judge all men (Rev. 12:12), and consign the reprobate wicked to hell and the elect saints to heaven (Rev. 20:13-15; Matt. 25:31-46).

All Scripture is equally reliable

In the church of our day, the trustworthiness of Scripture is under attack. The form of the attack is that according to which Scripture is said to be trustworthy but in a limited sense. One of the most serious attacks in our day is the attack of those who say that Scripture is reliable in its teaching that concerns salvation, but is not necessarily reliable in matters of science, history, society, and so forth. The Bible is reliable in salvific matters, but not in all that it says in other matters. Or, the attack on Scripture's trustworthiness takes the form of those who teach that the Bible may be relied upon to make a positive impact on people, trustworthy for the effect that it achieves, though not objectively reliable in what is actually written in its pages.

Both of these positions are a clear departure from what the church has historically maintained concerning the trustworthiness of the Bible. Both deny that Scripture is objectively reliable and that every word, every verse, every chapter, and every book of the Bible is entirely trustworthy.

John Calvin insisted on the trustworthiness of Scripture in its entirety. In his exposition of II Timothy 3:16 he insisted that the "principle which distinguishes our religion from all others, [is] that we know that God hath spoken to us." He goes on to maintain that the prophets and apostles "did not speak at their own suggestion, but that, being organs of the Holy Spirit, they only uttered what they had been commissioned from heaven to declare." What has been written in Scripture has

been "dictated by the Holy Spirit." Thus, "we owe to Scripture the same reverence which we owe to God; because it has proceeded from him alone, and has nothing belonging to man mixed with it." Because Scripture is the Word of God, Scripture is altogether trustworthy in Calvin's view.¹

One issue that ought to be raised in this connection is the red-letter editions of the Bible. There are a good number of Bible publishers that produce Bibles in which the words of Christ, that is, the words spoken by Christ while He was on this earth, are placed in red. Altogether apart from the issue of what in the gospel accounts are actually words spoken by Christ, the red-letter editions of the Bible bring into question the complete reliability of Scripture. The red-letter Bibles leave the distinct impression that the words of Jesus are the really important words in the Bible. The words of Jesus in some way carry more authority and are to be viewed as having special weight in comparison to the other words that are found in Holy Scripture. The impression is left that Jesus' teaching on marriage in Matthew 19:1-12 is more important than Paul's teaching on marriage in I Corinthians 7. In the case of homosexuality, Jesus did not directly address this issue, but Paul does in Romans 1, I Corinthians 6:9, 10, and I Timothy 1:9, 10. Since these are the words of Paul and not directly the words of Jesus, it is possible that they are time-bound and culturally conditioned, not necessarily inspired and authoritative. They applied in Paul's day, but do not necessarily apply in our day. This sort of distinction between the red-letter words of Jesus and the words of the human writers of Scripture, tends to undermine the truth that the Bible is completely trustworthy. We are not to add to or take away from Scripture, which is the warning of Revelation 22:19. It would seem that placing some of Scripture in red amounts practically both to adding unto and taking away from Scripture, both of which are forbidden.

This does not imply that every helpful aid to reading and studying Scripture ought to be rejected. By no means! As originally given, the Bible was not divided into chapters or verses; neither did it contain any punctuation. These conventions of modern book publishing do not violate the principle of Revelation 22 in any way. And they are very helpful in the reading and study of the Bible. That is not to say that the punctuation and verse and chapter divisions may not be questioned. They may be and in some cases definitely should be. For example,

¹ John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistles of Timothy, Titus, and Philemon*, trans. William Pringle (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1948), 248-9.

should the phrase “in love,” make up the end of Ephesians 1:5, a verse in which the apostle describes God’s purpose in election, “that we should be holy and without blame before him in love”? This is where the King James Version places the phrase. Or, does “in love” go with the beginning of Ephesians 1:5 and provide the explanation for God’s election of us: “In love having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will”? The punctuation is not inspired and there are

good reasons for each position. But this is quite different from the danger of elevating one portion of Scripture above another.

The Bible is the Word of God. It is the Word of God in its entirety. It is the Word of God from Genesis 1:1 through Revelation 22:21. Because it is God’s Word, it is completely trustworthy. Because God who cannot lie (Titus 1:2) has inspired Scripture from beginning to end, the Bible is entirely reliable.



Things which must shortly come to pass

Prof. David Engelsma, professor emeritus of Dogmatics and Old Testament in the Protestant Reformed Seminary

Premillennialism (24) Fundamental Reformed critique of premillennialism (6)

Previous article in this series: January 1, 2019, p. 161.

“But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.”

I Peter 2:9

Introduction

Because dispensational premillennialism refuses to recognize the church as the fulfillment and reality of Old Testament Israel, this premillennialism has concocted its heretical and absurd eschatology, that is, doctrine of the last things.

There must be a future, national conversion of the Jews in order to fulfill Old Testament prophecy concerning the peace, prosperity, and power of Israel. There must be a millennium for the Jewish people in order to fulfill the promises to Israel, in the earthly forms in which Old Testament prophecy typically couched the promises. There must be a rapture of the church out of the world and out of the way in order that the Jews may enjoy their carnal power, peace, and privileges.

At the root of the false and foolish eschatology of premillennialism is the un-Reformed, unchristian, and unbiblical division of Israel from the church.

The Reformed confessions against premillennialism

The Reformed confessions condemn premillennial theology.

There is in all of history, that of the Old Testament and that of the New Testament, as well as in eternity, one people of God—the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church of Jesus Christ—which the Son of God gathers to Himself out of the whole human race “from the beginning to the end of the world” (Heidelberg Catechism, Q&A 54). The organizational form of the church in much of the time of the old covenant was the kingdom, first of Israel, then of Judah. In the time of the new covenant, the institution and citizens of the kingdom of God are the church. Therefore, in the time of the new covenant the keys of the kingdom—the keys *of the kingdom*—are the preaching of the holy gospel and the exercise of Christian discipline *by the church* (Heid. Cat., Q&A 83).

Question 123 of the Heidelberg Catechism identifies the kingdom of God as the church. The content of the petition in the model prayer, “Thy kingdom come,” is: “preserve and increase Thy *church*.”

Article 27 of the Belgic Confession confesses Jesus Christ as “eternal King,” not of the national Israel of racial Jews, but of the “catholic Christian church.”

With regard to the creedal exposure of dispensationalism as false doctrine, there is also the glaring fact that none of the Reformed, or even Christian, creeds confess premillennialism. In view of the huge importance of the theology of dispensational premillennialism, according to its advocates, how strange, how significant, that the Spirit of truth did not lead the Christian church, especially the Protestant church after the Reformation, into any knowledge of premillennialism, much less into a creedal statement of the doctrine.

Dispensational premillennialism is, in fact, the very recent invention of Darby, Scofield, and others even less reputable than they.

Scripture against premillennialism

Holy Scripture exposes dispensational premillennialism as false doctrine. Earlier in this series, I have shown that the passages appealed to by premillennialism as the main sources of their theory—Revelation 20, Daniel 9, and Romans 11—do not, in fact, teach or support that doctrine of the last days.

On the contrary, the Bible condemns premillennialism as false doctrine, particularly with regard to premillennialism's teaching of Israel and the church as two different peoples of God.

God has made elect, believing Gentiles and Israel "one new man." They are "one body" in the one Savior, Jesus the Messiah (Eph. 2:11-23).

Contrary to the basic assumption of dispensational premillennialism, "there is neither Jew nor Greek...for ye are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28). Abraham's seed is not determined by physical descent from the father of believers, thus forever distinguishing a Jewish people of God from the Gentile people of God. But Abraham's seed is Jesus Christ (Gal. 3:16). Belonging to Abraham's seed, therefore, is determined solely by being "Christ's," by a true faith, according to eternal election (Gal. 3:29). It is a spiritual reality, not a physical, racial matter.

That this radical oneness of Jewish and Gentile elect believers holds only for the present dispensation, prior to a rapture of the church and to God's returning to the Jews on behalf of a distinctively Jewish kingdom-people, when Israel and the church will again become two divided peoples of God, is sheer premillennial invention and a bold, wicked denial of the biblical doctrine of the unity of the church of God. "There is neither Jew nor Greek" now, *and forever!* "Ye [are] all one in Christ Jesus" now, *and forever!* "Ye [are] Abraham's seed if ye be Christ's" (not, if ye be physical offspring of Abraham) now, *and forever!*

The oneness of Jewish and Gentile believers, con-

trary to dispensational premillennialism's dividing of them into two distinct and separated peoples, is taught by Scripture in the very passage to which premillennialism appeals on behalf of its schismatic theology, Romans 11. When God saves elect Jews throughout the ages, He does not save them as a separate people. But He incorporates ("grafts") them into one and the same olive tree with Gentile converts. "For if thou [Gentile believer] wert cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and wert grafted contrary to nature into a good olive tree: how much more shall these [Jewish converts to Christ], which be the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree?" (Rom. 11:24) There is, and ever shall be, one olive tree of Jewish and Gentile believers who are one in their union in the one tree.

Perfectly clear, and absolutely decisive, against the dispensational premillennial denial that the New Testament church of largely Gentile elect believers is the fulfillment and reality of Old Testament, largely Jewish Israel is I Peter 2:9, which is quoted at the head of this article. Here, the apostle applies to the New Testament church of elect believers, who are mostly Gentiles, words that were originally spoken of Old Testament Israel, in Exodus 19:5, 6:

If ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine:

And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel.

Thus, the Holy Spirit identifies the New Testament church of mainly Gentile believers and their children as the true, spiritual "Israel of God" (Gal. 6:16).

Specifically, the passage identifies the "holy nation," not as a future, earthly, restored kingdom of Jews, but as the believing, largely Gentile church.

The New Testament church is the "holy nation" and kingdom of God.

The Gentiles, "which in time past were not a people...are now the people of God" (I Pet 2:10).

Not "replacement," but fulfillment

In this connection, I call attention to an important aspect of the controversy between premillennialism and amillennialism that is often overlooked. Premillennialists invariably, and undoubtedly deliberately, misrepresent the amillennial, Reformed doctrine of the relation between Old Testament Israel and the New Testament church. Premillennialists state the Reformed position as holding that the church "replaces," "supplants," "supersedes," or otherwise takes the place of Israel.

Barry E. Horner contends against “supersessionism (or, replacement theology, the view that the church has replaced Israel in God’s plan of redemption).”¹

W. Edward Glenny would have his readers believe that Reformed amillennialism presents “the church as a new Israel replacing ethnic Israel in God’s program.”²

Kenneth L. Barker fights with a straw man when he argues that “the church does not supplant Israel.”³

Emphatically, the Reformed, Christian faith does not now teach, and never has taught, that the church supercedes, replaces, or supplants Israel. If Reformed theologians used such words to describe the relation between Israel and the church, they were careless, and did not express, or represent, by these words the Reformed understanding. The calculated use of such words by the dispensationalists to describe the Reformed confession of the relation between Israel and the church indicates that the dispensationalists are well aware of the importance of this relation in the controversy. To criticize as mildly as possible the evil of the dispensationalists in thus describing the Reformed view of the relation between Israel and the church, it is, at the very least, a poisoning of the wells.

The Reformed theology is not that the church replaces, much less supplants, Israel. Rather, the Reformed doctrine is that the church is the New Testament *reality* of Old Testament Israel. The church is the spiritual *fulfillment* of Old Testament Israel. Thus, the New Testament church *is* God’s Israel today, even as Old Testament Israel, in its elect kernel, *was* the church of the old covenant.

Let every dispensationalist, and every confessing Christian considering dispensationalism, give heed.

The church does not replace Israel!

The church *is* Israel, even as Israel *was* the church!

I Peter 2:9 says so: “Ye are a chosen [elect] generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people,” that is, people of God’s possession. Speaking to the largely Gentile church of the New Testament, the Holy Spirit identifies her as the Israel to whom these words were originally spoken in Exodus 19:5, 6. In past time, the time of the old covenant, we Gentile believers “were not a people, but are now the people of God,”

that is, His Israel (I Pet. 2:10). On this passage—I Peter 2:9, 10—indeed, on this passage by itself alone, dispensational premillennialism breaks its neck.

Contrary to the foolish thinking of many evangelicals, and even Reformed church members, the blessed nation today, “whose God is the LORD, and the people, today, “whom he hath chosen for his own inheritance,” are not the United States and its citizens. (I began conceiving this article on July 5, at the time of the year when Christians lustily sing “God Bless America” as though the United States were the God-blessed nation of the psalms.)

Contrary to the theology of dispensational premillennialism, neither are this nation and people Israel and the Jews. The blessed nation is the New Testament church of Christ, the spiritual kingdom whose king is the risen and exalted Christ Jesus. And the “people whom he hath chosen for his own inheritance” are exactly those whom God “hath chosen,” that is, the elect out of all nations, who show and know their election by a true faith in Jesus Christ.

Likewise, the New Testament church is the reality and fulfillment of the Old Testament temple. Contrary to the foolish premillennial expectation of a rebuilt, material temple of God in Palestine in the future (for which American premillennialists, we hear, are presently taking collections, so that Israel in it may again offer animal sacrifices, to the denying of the one sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross), the New Testament church is “a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ” (I Pet. 2:5).

Premillennialism’s blindness regarding Christ

Ultimately, the reason why dispensational premillennialists cannot see this spiritual fulfillment of Old Testament Israel, of the Old Testament temple, and of the Old Testament sacrifices, indeed refuse to see it, despite the clear witness and powerful testimony of the amillennial Reformed faith, is premillennialism’s blindness with regard to Jesus Christ.

Nothing less!

For the entire, glorious word of God in I Peter 2 concerning the church as the New Testament reality of Old Testament Israel centers on the truth of Jesus Christ. Because He is the “chief corner stone, elect, precious” (I Pet. 2:6), those who believe on Him are the true, real temple of God and the genuine reality of the Old Testament priesthood, offering up “spiritual sacrifices” (I Pet. 2:5). Because Jesus is the chief corner stone, whom God Himself has laid in Sion (I Pet. 2:6), God’s Israel is the people distinguished by believing on this Jesus, not

1 Barry E. Horner, *Future Israel: Why Christian Anti-Judaism Must be Challenged* (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2007), xvi.

2 W. Edward Glenny, “The Israelite Imagery of I Peter 2,” in *Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church*, ed. Craig A. Blaising and Darrell L. Bock (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 186.

3 Kenneth L. Barker, “The Scope and Center of Old and New Testament Theology and Hope,” in *Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church*, 322.

a people distinguished by mere physical descent from Abraham (I Pet. 2:6-8).

The reality of Israel, the temple of God, acceptable sacrifices, and indeed all the truth of salvation—power, peace, and prosperity—are determined by Jesus Christ and by faith in Him.

For the Protestant, Reformed faith to compromise with the dispensational premillennial heresy would be abandonment of Reformed covenant theology, denial of the unity of the church, and disparagement, if not denial, of Jesus Christ.

Against premillennialism, therefore, as against post-millennialism, the Reformed faith rejects the notion of a future millennium prior to the end of all things at the second coming of Jesus Christ. The Reformed faith abjures the popular prophecy of a future establishment of a carnal kingdom of Christ on earth, whether this imag-

inary kingdom is erected by Christ Himself (premillennialism) or by His aggressively this-worldly disciples (postmillennialism).

The expectation of such a worldly kingdom of Christ before the end is delusion—a false hope.

The one hope of the church is the second coming of Jesus Christ.

Then, and only then, the now militant church/kingdom of Jesus Christ, the members and citizens of which are elect believers and their children, will become the church/kingdom triumphant.

“Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly,” is the urgent petition of the Reformed church and of every Reformed believer.

To which comes back the reply, “Behold, I come quickly.”



When thou sittest in thine house

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

Perfect moral guidance for youth (2)

Previous article in this series: December 15, 2018, p. 137.

In the last article we considered the above-mentioned subject from the viewpoint of a question proposed by the inspired psalmist in Psalm 119: “How shall a young man cleanse his way?” This question was answered without hesitation: “By taking heed thereto according to thy word” (Ps. 119: 9).

The question implies that the young man (and by implication the young woman) mentioned knew the awful reality of his own sinful nature. He also knew that he could not deliver himself from the power of the sins of immorality. He needed guidance from someone else whom he could follow and depend on. Only God can give the absolute answer to the question, and He does so in the word that comes from His own mouth and that is now recorded infallibly in the Holy Scriptures to be the guide of His redeemed people.

Ideally, covenant young people are taught from early childhood about the power and destructiveness of sin by their godly parents. They learn of this through the faithful preaching of the gospel in church and in the catechism room from good pastors entrusted to watch for their souls.

Young men and women do not yet have a lot of life experience in this ungodly world. They are not yet as deeply aware as they should be of sin’s power and destructiveness. This is the nature of youth. They easily boast of their own power to stand against sin and temptation. Their sinful nature rages with sinful passions, yet they often imagine that this is not the case. But this is their foolishness in the days of youth. They do not yet know how desperate their need is for God’s guidance in their daily lives in this evil world in which we live. They are vulnerable to the attacks of the devil who goes to and fro in the world seeking whom he may devour. While the devil may be unsuccessful in bringing some to ruin by other means, he is often successful in spoiling the beauty and glory of youth through the powerful temptations of immorality. Even strong men, according to Proverbs, are brought down to hell by the sins of immorality.

Our way necessarily leads us through an increasingly corrupt and desperately evil world as the last days are upon us. Our way includes the whole of our life, both our outward deeds and words as well as the thoughts,

desires, and purposes of our hearts. As we live in the last days, the corruption of this world grows worse and worse and the instruments it has to tempt covenant youth increase and are more powerful. The outstanding example of this today is the power and accessibility of the Internet, with the graphically portrayed evil it sets before the eyes of those who enter its many dark and forbidden sites.

False teachers, even sometimes right in the church at large, are deceiving our young people by teaching them that the world is getting better and better, and that warnings about it are no longer necessary. They say that the sins of immorality are quite harmless. They say the ways of immorality offer great excitement, entertainment, and fellowship with the world.

It is urgent, then, that the young man and woman know how to cleanse his/her way. Cleansing means washing our way, making it pure and holy in the sight of the holy God. God's purpose for His people is to make them holy even as He Himself is holy. This is a glorious, wonderful, and blessed work of God through the Spirit of Christ Jesus in our hearts. By accomplishing this work in us, God demonstrates His great love to us by delivering us from the power and destruction of sin. This is God's final, glorious purpose for our everlasting salvation and glory. God has and does cleanse us through the exceedingly precious blood of His Son Jesus Christ shed on Calvary's cross. According to Ephesians 5, Jesus gave Himself for His beloved church to wash and cleanse her from the corruption and defilement of sin. His final purpose is to present us spotless and holy in His own holy and glorious presence. Young people, as well as we adults, must know Christ Jesus and His saving power, and the urgency of His abiding in us and we in Him.

We need cleansing from the very beginning of our lives because we are conceived and born in sin. We need cleansing because we often are tempted by the world and often fall again into sin, sometimes even grievous sin. We need cleansing because we need to preserve our lives holy from day to day as we face the great perils of this evil world.

The purpose of the Word of God is to lead us to Christ. The Word of God nowhere teaches the false imagination that we can save ourselves through our own power and inherent wisdom. This is forever impossible. As Jesus says in John 15, "without me ye can do nothing." Every word of Psalm 119 has as its purpose to lead us to Christ and cause us to rely completely

on Him alone. To do this we must know Him and His perfect righteousness, as well as the manner of His saving work in us through His Word and Spirit operating in our hearts continually.

The young man needs to guard his way through the guidance of the Word of God. Following the instruction of the Word of God will leave the young man and young woman without doubt and confusion concerning true morality for every part of his/her life. Following the Word of God, the young man and woman will never fall. They will have the victory over sin, the devil, and the temptations of the world.

Psalm 119, as we said above, uses twenty-two synonyms for the law and Word of God. These synonyms are not to be viewed merely as repetitions or a matter of poetic style on the part of the writer. Each of the words used has its own nuance of meaning. When we study the Word of God, we must study each word carefully, and so by the Spirit of Christ we understand the depths of meaning and power of the Word of God to save us.

All of these terms have their beginning with God. The word in verse 9 emphasizes that God's Word is the very utterance of His own mouth. Another word reminds us that the word of God is what God has decreed and established for all time. Yet another speaks of the fact that God's Word is something established and fixed by God, and therefore will never change over time and in different cultures. Another word used in Psalm 119 speaks of God's Word as being the absolute truth over against all the lies of worldly men and of the devil. Another one of the words tells us that the Word of God is the revelation of His own righteousness. God who is the Holy One is the God of our salvation. And He is the beginning and end of all these words used in Psalm 119. This is the amazing reason why God's Word is the absolutely perfect guide for all of our life in the world.

Every believer must have regular times of earnest, prayerful study and meditation on the Word of God every day.

We ought to take heed to this Word of God. This means that we must study it carefully, meditate on it every day, and deeply consider its meaning. It means that we must carefully think through the practical application and wisdom of the Word of God for our lives. Taking heed to the Word of God includes listening very carefully to this Word in the preaching of the gospel and in the catechism class. It means that we are interested in studying the Word of God with our fellow saints in the church of which we are part.

In order to take heed to the Word of God, every young man and every young woman should so discipline his and her personal life that they make room for regular,

personal devotion times. Every believer must have regular times of earnest, prayerful study and meditation on the Word of God every day. Soon young people will be out of the home and have the responsibility of living on their own. Tragically, few among covenant young people, (as well as adults) follow such necessary discipline. In order to attain an advanced degree in science, math, or some other discipline to prepare for one's life occupation, we need much disciplined study and tireless pursuit using our every God-given power of intellect and energy. The same kind of diligent and constant effort is required for morality and godliness.

Covenant young people must make God's Word their own. They cannot just believe what their parents have taught them. They must make God's Word their own belief, relying on its absolute truth. The study of the Word of God must be the never-ending, earnest, and prayerful pursuit of the Christian's life.

Another excellent way to take heed to the Word of God is by reading solid Christian books, including doctrinal books. These, when rightly applied, will help to build a strong foundation for life. There are many worthless books churning from the presses of the world, books full of error and worldly philosophy that deceive young people. But there are also many excellent books. Look for these, and exercise the powers of your God-given intelligence to understand God's truth. How

much better this activity is than watching the immoral movies of the world and spending hours on the Internet through your mobile devices. What are you watching on these that so excites you?

Those who are weak in the knowledge of the Word of God will be easily led astray, tossed to and fro with every 'new' philosophy and behavior promoted by the world.

Hear the Word of the Lord:

Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich glory in his riches: but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord which exerciseth loving kindness, judgment and righteousness in the earth: for in these things I delight (Jer. 9: 23, 24).

Psalter #428 has an outstanding commentary on the verse from Psalm 119 we have been considering. It is in the form of an earnest prayer:

O Lord, how shall a youth preserve his way,
At every turn by vanity surrounded?
In truth, if he Thy statutes will obey,
If on Thy Word his attitudes are founded.
Thou whom I've sought, O let me never stray
From Thy commandments, lest I be confounded.



Bring the books...

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



In the Year of Our Lord: Reflections on Twenty Centuries of Church History, by Sinclair B. Ferguson. Sanford, FL: Reformation Trust Publishing, 2018. Hardcover \$18.00; digital \$9.00. 229 pages. [Reviewed by Prof. Douglas Kuiper.]

This book “is not a history of the church” (4), but a “panorama” (7) of her history. Taking the church's history one century at a time

(twenty centuries, twenty chapters), Ferguson relates the two or three most significant church-historical events or persons in that century. For instance, the second century was characterized by persecution from without and false teaching from within. The sack of Rome, the Pelagian controversy, and the spread of the gospel to Ireland by St. Patrick marked the fifth century. The fourteenth century was marked by the life and work of John Wycliffe and Jan Hus.

The significant persons or events of each century comprise the middle, and largest, section of the chapters. Ferguson begins each chapter with a lengthy quote

(up to two pages) from a writing of a church father of that century, and concludes each chapter with a hymn written in that century.

For several reasons I recommend the book to all who enjoy reading church history. First, this book is an easy read: averaging ten pages in length, each chapter can be read in a short time, and a young teenager could understand most of it. Second, this book *teaches*. It teaches that history is under the direction of Christ, seated at God's right hand (see the title). It teaches that God is sovereign in defending and preserving His church. It introduces the reader, briefly and simply, to the theological issues regarding sovereign grace. Sovereign grace, and the tendency to deny it, is *the* issue that the church faced throughout her history. It was the issue in the Pelagian controversy (53), and at the time of Gottschalk (102); it was the issue that Anselm clarified (121-123), and the issue at the time of the Reformation (168-69). The book also teaches that the church must remember her past history so as to learn from it (108-9, and other places).

In most instances I appreciated that Ferguson included the persons/events that he did, to the exclusion of others. Not that the "others" were unworthy of mention; but one must be selective. Only in the last four

chapters, in the years 1600-1999, did the panoramic view of church history become very narrow, for Ferguson focused heavily on the Puritans and Scottish Presbyterians. In Ferguson's defense, he warned the reader of this ahead of time (7), and explained that this reflects his own background.

Fact is, every survey of church history, regardless of how detailed it is, covers the same material when treating the first sixteen centuries. The church's history during these centuries is what it is: the church developed and declined until God brought about the great Reformation. Since then, her history has been very diverse. Historically, Protestant Christianity has divided into four main streams: Baptist, Lutheran, Presbyterian, and Reformed. Each stream has its branches and subdivisions. And, Christianity is now global, on every continent and in most nations. No one survey of church history can do justice to the last four hundred years in which our Lord has gathered, defended, and preserved His church. From that viewpoint, Ferguson's book should not be faulted.

Even these last four chapters were educational. Their omission of what is of greater interest to me (Dutch Reformed church history) stimulates me to find yet another book to fill that gap.



News from our churches

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

Trivia question

The new PRC denominational directory, under "sister churches," unintentionally gives an old address for Rev. M. McGeown, missionary pastor in Limerick, Ireland. His current address is 38 Abbey Vale, Corbally, Limerick, Ireland, V94 K7ER, as correctly listed in the *SB* and the *Acts of Synod*. In which year did he move into his current home? Answer later in this column.

Mission activities

On December 16 at 2:00 P.M. a presentation was given at the church building of the Berean PRC of the Philippines. This was conducted by the delegates of the

Covenant Evangelical Reformed Church of Singapore along with officebearers of the Protestant Reformed Churches in the Philippines. The discussion centered on a sister-church relationship between the two. Church members were invited to attend as observers with a potluck supper to be provided.

Rev. Vernon Ibe and one of the officebearers of the Berean PRC were scheduled to visit the saints in Gabaldon on December 30 to lead them in worship. This usually happens one Sunday a month. Gabaldon has been a focus of work by our missionaries in the past, and is located approximately four hours northeast of metro Manila.

Young people's activities

Sunday evening, February 10, Cornerstone PRC is hosting a presentation by Prof. R. Cammenga and Rev. C. Griess on their trip to Mexico. This is hosted by Cornerstone's Evangelism Committee and the Young People's Society. The young people will serve a lunch before the presentation. The young people will also present two special numbers. A collection will be taken to help defray upcoming Convention expenses.

Seminary activities

Work began in December on the seminary addition project that will house the new PRC archives and two offices during the professor transition period in the next few years. For more updates, look on the PRCA website under "current" and "news."

Congregational activities

All at Loveland, CO PRC are invited to their annual church camp-out held at Carter Lake South Shore Campground. The dates for the 2019 campout are June 24-June 29 and reservations can already be made.

From the bulletin of Heritage PRC in Sioux Falls, SD:

The 3rd Annual Pinewood Derby Event is scheduled to be held at Heritage PRC on February 23, 2019. \$15 entry fee includes a kit and lunch. Feel free to come to watch, have lunch, and fellowship as well. A free will donation will be taken to help offset the costs for lunch and support the School Association. All proceeds will go to the Association for Protestant Reformed Education in Sioux Falls. Save the date and RSVP your entries!

Zion PRC (Jenison, MI) recently voted to approve the purchase of the building and parsonage of 12th Ave CRC (near corner of 12th Ave. and Baldwin St. in Jenison) after that congregation voted to disband and sell her property. Zion worshiped in her new place for the first time on Old Year's night, December 31. We rejoice with them in God's good providence and gracious provision.

Sister-church activities

All in Covenant PRC of Ballymena, Northern Ireland were invited to the manse on New Year's Eve for games and fellowship. And their congregational dinner was set for January 11 at Ross Park Hotel.

The CPRC is also planning a *mini-conference* on

Saturday, 13 April, 2019, on the theme "The Original Five Points of Calvinism: The 400th Anniversary of the Canons of Dordt" with Prof. D. Engelsma as the speaker. Prof. Engelsma will also give two other lectures relating to the Synod of Dordt in the weeks following the conference.

The delegation of the CERC of Singapore met with Committee 2 (Contact Committee) of the Protestant Reformed Churches in the Philippines on December 17, 2018, discussing pertinent matters that are essential in establishing a sister-church relationship. Both parties were convinced that there is a "complete organic union" in all points of doctrine and all other practices, and thus CERC and PRCP are ready to make a necessary report and recommendation(s) to PRCP Classis (Feb. 25, 2019) and to the Session of the CERC for approval, D.V. Our churches are encouraged to pray that God may bless this ongoing work for His glory and for our union in Christ as members of His body! Soli Deo Gloria!

Minister activities

Rev. S. Key, pastor at Loveland, CO PRC announced his decline of the call to be minister-on-loan to the CERC in Singapore. The calling church, Grandville, MI PRC, formed the trio of Revs. J. Engelsma, G. Eriks, and E. Guichelaar. On December 30, Rev. Guichelaar received this call.

Rev. G. Eriks received the call from Trinity PRC of Hudsonville, MI on December 2; on January 6 he declined it.

Rev. W. Langerak was led to decline the call from Immanuel PRC of Lacombe, AB. From her new trio of Revs. R. Barnhill, B. Huizinga, and J. Laning, they called Rev. Huizinga on January 6.

Prof. R. Cammenga and his wife left December 19 for four weeks of service in the CERC on behalf of the Contact Committee.

Trivia Answer

Rev. M. McGeown has lived in three places since he moved to Limerick. He has resided in his present home since 2014. Now you know! Please make his address correction where necessary. More trivia next time. And feel free to send trivia about your congregation our way!

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

Announcements

Teacher needed

The **Edmonton Protestant Reformed Christian School** is in need of a full-time teacher for the 2019–2020 school year. The school will be starting with grades 1–4, and the board is willing to work with the teacher on a curriculum suited to their preference. Please contact Gord Tolsma at gr.tolsma@gmail.com / 780-777-5780 or Scott Ferguson at s_r_ferguson@hotmail.com.

Seminary

All students enrolled in the Protestant Reformed Theological Seminary who will be in need of financial assistance for the coming school year are asked to contact the Student Aid Committee secretary, Mr. Steve Bylsma (Phone: 616-828-3699). This contact should be made before the next scheduled meeting, February 27, 2019, at 4 P.M. in the seminary, D.V.

Student Aid Committee
Steve Bylsma, Secretary

Call to aspirants to the ministry

All young men desiring to begin studies in the Protestant Reformed Theological Seminary in the 2019 - 2020 academic year should make application at the March 21, 2019 meeting of the Theological School Committee.

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

All applicants must appear before the Theological School Committee for interview before admission is granted. In the event that a student cannot appear at the March 21 meeting, notification of this fact, along with a suggested interview date, must be given to the secretary of the Theological School Committee before this meeting.

All correspondence should be directed to the Theological School Committee,

4949 Ivanrest Avenue SW
Wyoming, MI 49418

Bob Drnek, Secretary

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

Classis West

Classis West of the Protestant Reformed Churches will meet in Heritage PRC on Wednesday, March 6, 2019, at 8:30 A.M. the Lord willing. All material for the Agenda is to be in the hands of the Stated Clerk by February 4 (30 days before classis convenes). All delegates in need of lodging or transportation from the airport should notify the clerk of Heritage's consistory.

Rev. J. Engelsma, Stated Clerk

Reformed Witness Hour

Rev. Rodney Kleyn

- Feb. 3 "The Priority of Love"
I Corinthians 13:1-3
- Feb. 10 "Love Is Patient"
I Corinthians 13:4
- Feb. 17 "Love Is Kind"
I Corinthians 13:4
- Feb. 24 "Love Does Not Envy"
I Corinthians 13:4

Announcements continued



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Walking in the Way of Love (volume 2)

A Practical Commentary on 1 Corinthians for the Believer

This volume treats the apostle's explanation of the main theme of the epistle in his glorious paean to love in 1 Corinthians 13. Also included in this commentary is treatment of the doctrinal heart of the epistle—the apostle's instruction regarding the resurrection. The apostle grounds all of his instruction about the way of love in the gospel of the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Failure to walk in the way of love as revealed by the Holy Spirit in 1 Corinthians is an abject failure of faith in the resurrection of Jesus Christ and in one's own resurrection. Walking in the way of love is the great evidence of faith in the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ.



mail@rfpa.org



616-457-5970

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