

The Standard Bearer

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Careful for nothing

Rev. James Slopsema

A voice from the past and our criminal justice system

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Radioactive dating and uniformitarianism

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News from the seminary

Prof. Barrett Gritters



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Editorial office

Prof. Russell Dykstra
4949 Ivanrest Ave SW
Wyoming, MI 49418
dykstra@prca.org

Business office

Mr. Alex Kalsbeek
1894 Georgetown Center Dr
Jenison, MI 49428-7137
616-457-5970
alexkalsbeek@rfpa.org

Church news editor

Mr. Perry Van Egdom
2324 Fir Ave
Doon, IA 51235
vanegdoms@gmail.com

United Kingdom office

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

Rep. of Ireland office

c/o Rev. Martyn McGeown
38 Abbeyvale
Corbally
Co Limerick, Ireland

Contents

- Meditation**
- 27 Careful for nothing
Rev. James Slopsema
- Editorial**
- 29 A voice from the past and our criminal justice system
Rev. Kenneth Koole
- All around us**
- 32 Significant decisions from the
Presbyterian Church in Ireland
Rev. Martyn McGeown
- Search the Scriptures**
- 36 Upon this rock (34)
The land left desolate
Mr. Don Doezema
- All Thy works shall praise Thee**
- 38 Radioactive dating and uniformitarianism
Mr. Joel Minderhoud
- Go ye into all the world**
- 41 Seeking the kingdom, witnessing, and roosters
Rev. Daniel Holstege
- Pertaining to our churches—seminary**
- 43 News from the seminary
Prof. Barrett Gritters
- Guest article**
- 44 British Reformed Fellowship conference report
God's providence is beautiful!
Lidi Cecilio
- Activities**
- 46 News from our churches
Mr. Perry Van Egdom



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Meditation

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

Careful for nothing

Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.

And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Philippians 4:6-7

Worry!

Anxiety!

Paralyzing fear!

Sleepless nights!

How often is not this the dreadful experience of God's people?

The Word of God addresses this.

“Be careful for nothing.” The meaning is, do not worry about anything. Easier said than done, as we know.

But here is the prescription for worry. “In everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.”

To this is attached a wonderful promise: “And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”

“Be careful for nothing!”

God in His providence often places us in adverse situations. In its explanation of providence, the Heidelberg Catechism speaks of drought, barren years, sickness and poverty, all of which come not by chance but by God's fatherly hand (Lord's Day 10). Having lost all his riches, his ten children, and then his health, Job responded to his grieving wife, “What? Shall we receive good from the hand of God and shall we not receive evil?” (Job 2:10).

When God sends evil into our lives, we are prone to worry. A number of questions push themselves to the foreground of our soul. How long will this last? How adversely will this affect me? How can I possibly deal with it? Very quickly we see catastrophe looming in the

future. And so we become consumed with worry. Fear takes hold of us. Our souls become disquieted.

Be careful for nothing!

It is important to distinguish between worry and the proper care we are to have in the affairs of life. To be careful for nothing does not mean to be careless.

There are many ‘cares’ (responsibilities/concerns) that we are to shoulder in life and that can even be burdensome. Although we are to take no thought (not to worry about) what we shall eat or drink or wear (Matt 6:31), we are to take great care to provide these earthly needs for our family. We certainly must have concern about our marriages and families that are under attack in these evil days. We must have the same concern about the welfare of our churches and Christian schools. Paul informed the Corinthian church that daily he carried the care of all the churches (II Cor. 11:28).

The point of the passage is that we are not to allow these necessary ‘cares’ to bring us to a state of worry. When the responsibilities of this life overwhelm us so that we are anxious, alarmed, and fearful, we have fallen into the grip of worry. When our sleep is disturbed and our appetite is affected, when we become irritable because our minds are preoccupied with the troubles of life, we have fallen victim to worry. This is exactly what the devil wants. Worry is just one of many ways in which the powers of darkness would destroy our faith and lead us away from our blessed Savior.

Be careful for nothing!

“But in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.”

Prayer, supplication, thanksgiving, and requests are all closely related.

Prayer is the general term under which the other three are subsumed.

Supplication is prayer for God's gracious benefits and blessings. These supplications take the form of requests.

A request is a specific petition for particular blessings. These two terms point to one aspect of prayer. In prayer God gives His people the privilege in Jesus Christ to bring their needs to Him and seek His help. How important this is! God will give His grace and Holy Spirit to those only who with sincere desires continually ask them of Him, and are thankful for them (Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 116).

Then there is thanksgiving. This is a grateful acknowledgment in prayer of God's goodness to us. How wonderfully the Lord has blessed us in His grace and mercy! He has sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to offer the perfect sacrifice for all our sins. In Jesus Christ He provides full and free salvation according to which He forgives all our sins and enters into a blessed life of friendship and fellowship with us. In Christ He also protects us, provides for all our needs, and promises all good things. Prayer is also the opportunity God has given us to thank Him for blessings and promises given. In fact, expressing our thanks to God in prayer is the chief part of thankfulness that God requires of us (Heidelberg Catechism, Q&A 116).

"In everything" we are to pray. In other words, we are to respond with prayer in every situation of life.

When we prosper under the hand of God, then we must pray. In prayer we must thank God for His abounding blessing. But we must also request that He continue His blessings to us in Jesus Christ.

And we are to pray when God's hand brings evil upon us.

In prayer we are to make our requests known to God in earnest supplication. Let us be careful what we request. Our request must not be driven by selfish desires and self-promotion. All that we ask of God must be designed for His glory. Jesus taught that with the first petition of His model prayer, "Hallowed be Thy name." Doing that, we will find ourselves in time of distress more often asking for God's grace to humble ourselves under His hand in contentment rather than for Him to change the circumstances of our lives. And, still more, we must ask for the gift of the Holy Spirit to trust Him in our adversity. How often does not our worry stem from a lack of trust in God?

In that connection, do not forget to thank God for His great blessings. When God sends pain and suffering, we tend to dwell on all the bad things of a situation, focusing on all the catastrophes that may possibly come. If only we will remember the blessings of God to us, His faithfulness and His promises, many of our worries will be allayed. And so, take the time to thank God for His great blessings.

If only we would pray as we ought!

Are you consumed with worry? Reflect on your prayer life.

Are you too consumed with worry even to pray? Seek the help of your fellow saints to assist you in prayer.

"And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

The peace of God is the inner peace of heart and mind that God graciously provides for His people in Jesus Christ. It is the opposite of worry and anxiety. It is an inner peace that arises out of the assurance that one is right with God, that the God who controls all things loves him and cares for him, and that God will avert all evil or turn it to his profit. It is an inner peace that makes for contentment, joy, and good hope in the worst of situations.

God promises this peace to those who in the struggles of life let their requests be made known unto God by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving.

This is a peace that passes all understanding. It is a peace that cannot be fully comprehended or rationally explained. It often defies human understanding. In the midst of tragedy the people of God find peace through prayer, and the world looks on in amazement. Often the saints themselves are mystified by the peace they come to experience as they pass through life's fiery trials.

That peace shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. It is with a born-again heart and a renewed mind that we through Jesus Christ serve the God of our salvation. With heart and mind we take up the good work that God has for us in His church and kingdom. How one's ability to do that is hampered and compromised when the heart and mind are overwhelmed with worry! The peace of God that comes through prayer keeps or guards our hearts and minds, so that we are able to serve God faithfully and to do the good work He sets before us, even in the worst of trials.

Is your lot one of suffering and adversity?

Be careful for nothing.

In everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.

And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.



Editorial

Rev. Kenneth Koole, minister emeritus in the Protestant Reformed Churches

A voice from the past and our criminal justice system

When cleaning out a study towards the end of one's active ministry, one comes across things of interest, items laid aside long ago for future reference. One such item was a religious periodical, *Christianity Today*, dated August 16, 1993. Evidently laid aside for future reference due to some article that had caught my attention.

But which and why?

Opening the magazine, I realized what had caught my attention: an article by Charles Colson that was the substance of an address he gave to the National Press Club back in March of 1993. The address was entitled "Crime, Morality, and the Media Elites."

The title itself was enough to catch my interest. That it was an address given by Chuck Colson added to its interest.

If you are old enough to be familiar with the name Charles (Chuck) Colson, you will know just how unlikely it was that Colson would be invited by the National Press Club to address them on any issue at all. The two were long-time opponents, once despising each other for political reasons, for one. Chuck Colson, who early in his political career was known as [President] "Nixon's Hatchet Man," digging up dirt on all of Nixon's enemies (who were myriad in number); and the other representing the news media, liberal by reflex and actively involved in bringing down the Nixon administration with all its "dirty tricks," leading to Nixon's resignation from office in the 1970s, as well as to prison terms for Colson and other of his cronies.

Now, two decades later, Colson was invited to address the representatives of the news media on an issue that concerned them all, the burgeoning prison population and the obvious inability of our nation and its judicial system to stem the tide.

Colson was converted to Christianity while in prison and made it his life's work from that point on to confront prison inmates with what he labeled "the Good News of Christ Jesus"—Christ Jesus as the one way to renewal of life (true freedom even while imprisoned), and as giving hope for a purpose in life not only for

those to be released, but for those serving life-sentences as well.

Some may question Colson's conversion and the reality of his faith. Many in the liberal media did (just another who has conveniently "found Jesus" in prison in hopes of leniency by a judge to release one early). We leave it to the judgment of God. I am well aware of Colson's promoting of "Evangelicals and Catholics Together" and its wrong-headedness. But then, this was essentially what Abraham Kuyper was guilty of in his political career as well, developing the theory of common grace to justify Reformed and Catholics working together to lift financial burdens from those sending their children elsewhere than the state-run schools. Shall we challenge Kuyper's Christianity?

For such a man as Colson I make the judgment of charity per the Canons of Dordt (cf. III/IV.14).

My interest in the article by Colson is not so much his solution for the corruption of our criminal system, certainly not in its entirety, but his statement of the problem, the undeniable reality of the growing evil in our society 25 years ago, one that is still with us today, and especially of his analysis of how the attempts to remedy this growing evil have been a miserable failure.

Which in turn raises the question, is there remedy for our society? And if so, what?

What Colson has to say about our criminal system and its failures is as relevant today as it was 25 years ago.

Colson begins his address by laying out statistical facts that simply underscore in an alarming way the growth of lawlessness in our society back in the late-twentieth century and its inability to deal with it.

Colson's thesis is simple. As he states at the outset of his address,

Over the past 17 years, I have been in well over 600 prisons in nearly 30 counties. What I have experienced can be summed up tersely, the American criminal justice system is terminally ill...

The statistics tell the story. In 1973 there were 210,000 people in U.S. prisons; the incarceration rate was 98 per 100,000 U. S. citizens, well behind the notoriously high rates of the Soviet Union and South Africa. Last year [1992] the total number of people imprisoned in America was 856,000, plus 425,000 in jails. Our rate of incarceration was 512 per 100,000 (including jails). We are now *leading* the world by a wide margin.

In spite of the huge number of criminals being incarcerated, our crime rate has continued to rise. In 20 years, violent crime has climbed over 75 percent. And each year the people who commit these bloody crimes are younger. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control estimates that 20 percent of high-school students carry weapons to class.

Lawlessness lies just below the surface in our everyday life....¹

To be sure, these are statistics that are some 25 years old. But the reality is that the alarming growth in crime and imprisonment continues unabated to this present day. The U.S. continues to lead the world in people imprisoned. What Colson set before the Press Club in 1993 is still relevant today.

The latest statistics place our prison and jail population at over 2.3 million, about twice the number there was 25 years ago.

Reporting on his own experience in prison, Colson remarks,

I have never been in a place so filled with anger, bitterness, despair, dejection.

It is no wonder to me that, after being released, between 66 and 74 percent commit new crimes within four years; the wonder is that 25 percent do not. The prison experience is brutal, dehumanizing, counterproductive.

Of course, prisons do serve one very important function. They separate dangerous offenders from the rest of society.²

What is of interest is Colson's sharp criticism of our society's solutions for the growing evil that is bedeviling and threatening it. And not just the liberal Democrats' solution, but that of the Republican conservatives as well.

A plague on both the Houses!

Colson's critique of the remedies proposed by both is insightful.

Beginning with the liberals, Colson states:

Let's consider first the liberal approach. The prevailing sociological view earlier in this century was that crime is caused by environmental factors—poverty, racism, oppression, lack of opportunity. Once this idea took root, it was hard to shake. In the 1960s, Attorney General Ramsey Clark said flat out, "Poverty is the cause of crime...."

If the cause of crime is the external environment, then crime could be cured by changing the environment. Thus we came to believe that prisons are capable of rehabilitating criminals. But rehabilitation proved to be a costly myth. I don't know any one in corrections today who honestly believes that prisons have a redemptive purpose. Nevertheless, the myth lives on, and so does the notion that individuals are not responsible for their behavior.³

Colson then turns to the conservative perspective.

The assumptions on the conservative side have been equally flawed. They believe the solution to crime is to lock criminals up and throw away the key.... I [as a White House adviser] helped shape the law-and-order mentality popular today....

This is called the deterrent theory: Lock them up and we'll scare people out of crime. But it doesn't work either. The problem is that fear does little to change behavior. If it did, no one would smoke.

If prisons did rehabilitate or if the threat of prison did deter crime, surely we would be living in utopian peace. But the stark fact is this: though we've thrown more people in prison than at any other time in human history, few sensible people would be willing to take a walk in the city's combat zone after dark.... Crime and the fear of crime disrupt our lives and haunt our nights.

Why have these approaches failed?⁴

And that is the great question, isn't it. Why have the proposed remedies failed so miserably? Is it that there is no remedy? Society better plan on throwing more and more into prisons, with no end in sight?

We bring this all up not because we suppose we can solve the growing crime rate of our society, but simply to reflect on the reality that we live in increasingly evil days, and what is happening in our society points us to the end, indicating just how close to the return of our Lord we are.

No, we are not making predictions—the end has to be within the next half century or less. Such would be foolishness. But what does become plain is how *ripe* (rotten)

1 *Christianity Today* (August 16, 1993), 29.

2 *CT*, 29-30.

3 *CT*, 30.

4 *CT*, 30.

the times are for the Antichrist to appear, when God's clock strikes the eleventh hour, the last hour before the Lord returns. Everything is dropping into place, so that when the Lord decides it is time, all that is needed is one great crisis accomplished by His providence, and society will welcome the Man of sin to save it from itself.

What Colson's address makes crystal clear is how deeply rooted wickedness and violence is in our post-Christian society. Lawlessness is on the increase with no letup in sight, so much so that even the most ungodly, the liberals, are troubled and wonder where it will all end. When they start looking to Chuck Colson, that one-time despised 'Nixon hatchet-man,' for possible insights, you know they are desperate for answers.

Colson's criticism of the liberals and their analysis of crime, its causes and resolutions, cannot be gainsaid. Wickedness displayed in violence is not simply due to poverty and the environment. There are countless countries more impoverished than the USA with far less crime and violence. And the much-touted rehabilitation measures have had little positive affect.

The reason?

Evil and violence are not due to the environment, but are of the heart with its envy, self-love, and greed. And a cleaned-up environment does not improve the heart with its lusts and resentments.

Without acknowledging personal accountability ("I am to blame, not everyone else"), there is no enduring change of character.

Interestingly, Colson dismisses the common conservative perspective as well, namely, the best deterrent to crime is strict punishment—hand-out harsh sentences and "scare people out of crime." Colson did not see this as the remedy either.

Ultimately, of course, Colson was right. Simple fear of punishment is not ultimately the deterrent to crime, as if such can change a man's heart and outlook on life and towards others.

This is not to say that punishment and the threat of punishment strictly enforced and rigorously applied does not deter crime and stifle violence. We do, after all believe in the restraint of sin. No, not of the heart, but of behavior when the magistrates exercise the sword or rod of discipline on the evildoers as required by God's laws.

Singapore is a case in point. The crime rate in that fair city is astonishingly low, at least by our standards. Children can ride the public transportation safely at night unattended.

The reason? Punishment against criminal behavior is rigorously, some would say, severely, and speedily meted out.

And the latter must not, according to Scripture, be ignored.

As Ecclesiastes declares, "Because the sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil" (Eccl. 8:11).

If there is one thing egregiously lacking in the States' criminal court system, it is execution of sentences with dispatch. Violent criminals are given years of appeals before any punishment is handed out, by which time the citizenry has long forgotten the criminal, the crime, or its penalty. The deterrent of publicly applied punishment is lost.

And when charges against those guilty of crimes are dismissed left and right due to this legality and that, the proposed punishment is merely hypothetical. Who need fear it!

That said, the manner in which our foolish society is committed to doling out 'criminal justice' is doomed to failure. It is obvious that Colson's address has had little affect on changing our criminal justice system. Slick defense lawyers still control the application of our penal laws. And neither the Democrats nor the Republicans really want to change their long-standing approaches. It is their recognized political platforms.

What Colson pleaded for was that the news media would recognize that, since crime is basically a *moral* issue, they give sympathetic publicity to religious organizations occupying a large place in the prison system. Time has shown that the thoroughly secular, anti-religious news media has little sympathy for such a notion. The vast majority want nothing to do with religion in any shape or form—no recognition of a Supreme Being as ultimate Judge at all—let alone with Christianity and its truth.

Grievous to say, what is coming to light of late in the scandalous behavior of Rome's priests world-wide, massive pedophile abuses to which Rome's leaders have been complicit, has given the anti-Christian news media ample reason to scoff at 'religion being the remedy of evil and abuses,' especially the Christian religion. They feel justified in maintaining their 'environmental' approach to criminal justice. Apostate Christianity has ruined Christianity's name.

Is there no remedy then to the running evil of our failed criminal system?

Oh, there is a remedy! It has to do with Christ, of course, and the gospel, and true-hearted conversions acknowledging personal responsibility, and seeking grace. But of such our increasingly ungodly society wants no part.

The simple reality is that any real, wide-spread rem-

edy must begin not in the criminal system itself, but in society at large. Lawlessness does not start in the criminal system, it starts in homes, in families, in society as it makes a mockery of marriage in every shape and form. And if these are not ‘remedied,’ criminal systems are powerless to affect change. The gospel brought to criminals may and will transform some souls. But the system’s corruptions will remain.

So, where does that put us?

Praying and waiting for Christ’s return when all evil

shall at last be addressed and redressed. But not despairing and not powerless when it comes to the corruptions of our prison system. Christ can still be brought to men and women in prison. And Christ still has power in the midst of such corruption and despair to set His people free.

Maybe it is time that we as Reformed Christians become more actively involved in prison ministries than we to this point have been.

Think about it.



All around us

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

Significant decisions from the Presbyterian Church in Ireland

Presbyterian Church in Ireland breaks ties with the Church of Scotland

The Presbyterian Church in Ireland (PCI), the church of my youth, made two headline-grabbing decisions this summer, which have caused a headache for those who care about the denomination’s public image. The first decision concerns the PCI’s relationship to two other denominations, the Church of Scotland and the United Reformed Church (of England and Wales, no relation to the URC in the USA), both of which in recent years have compromised on the biblical teaching concerning sexuality, especially the Bible’s teaching on homosexuality and related issues. The General Assembly, which met in June, voted 255-171 on the following motion:

That the Presbyterian Church in Ireland should no longer accept invitations to the Moderator of the General Assembly, or any other formal delegation, to attend the General Assemblies of the Church of Scotland and the United Reformed Church and no longer issue invitations to those two denominations to attend the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland.¹

¹ “The Church of Scotland News” website features a glum-looking Moderator of the Church of Scotland, Susan Brown—a female Moderator—lamenting that the PCI have taken such a step. “Susan Brown said agreeing on everything was not what was required of us as Christians: ‘Jesus called his followers to follow. He didn’t call us to agree on absolutely everything, but to be his

Cue a diplomatic crisis! But why did the PCI take this (long-overdue) step? The Doctrine Committee explains in its “Response to [the] Church of Scotland Theological Forum Report 2017” and, in doing so, highlights the fundamental difference in biblical interpretation between the liberal Church of Scotland and the PCI’s Doctrine Committee:

[The Church of Scotland’s report] rests on a distinction between the written text of Scripture and the living Word of God, the latter being associated with Jesus Christ who speaks to us in our hearts and consciences. According to this argument, we owe our allegiance to Jesus Christ the Word made flesh rather than adherence to the literal words of Scripture...conservative readers [tend] to focus on the words of Scripture and more inclusive readers [tend] sometimes to *look through* rather than *at* the words of the text.²

In response, the Doctrine Committee makes some

sisters and brothers on the journey of faith, loving one another and letting that love be the outward sign of our belonging to him.” Notice Brown’s undefined, vague “love,” a love that is devoid of truth, whereas I Corinthians 13:6 says, “charity rejoiceth not in iniquity [homosexuality is iniquity] but rejoiceth in the truth.” See “Regret over Presbyterian Church of Ireland’s Decision to Break Ties with the Church of Scotland” (June 6, 2018), http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/news_and_events.

² “Doctrine Committee Report” in the *Annual Reports of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland* (Belfast: 2018), 81-83.

profound observations: first, the liberal view of Scripture suggests a contradiction between what the Lord revealed to “the Spirit-anointed apostles” and His “present word to his church.” In reality, Christ’s word to His church is always the same—it is what is written in Holy Scripture! Any attempt to subvert the Word of God by an appeal to subjectivity is simply unbelief. Second, the liberal view of Scripture attacks its clarity: “Reformed churches still hold to the perspicuity of Scripture.” Third, the Doctrine Committee exposes the Church of Scotland’s hypocrisy, for the same denomination adopted a report on poverty, basing its findings on “the apparently plain and straightforward meaning of texts without the need for an anguished ‘looking through’ rather than a ‘looking at’ the words.” In other words, the Church of Scotland appeals to the text of Scripture when it suits her liberal agenda; otherwise, the text is discarded in favor of subjective opinions. Finally, the Doctrine Committee appeals to the Church of Scotland to “return to the clear teaching of the Holy Scriptures,” an appeal that has so far fallen on deaf ears.

The Presbyterian Church in Ireland adopts the doctrine committee’s report on same-sex couples and the sacraments

A diplomatic spat between two or three denominations probably would not have attracted the attention of the secular media, but the PCI’s second decision certainly did. For some reason that I have not yet discovered, the Doctrine Committee was asked to explain “what constitutes a credible profession of faith” in the specific instance where a *same-sex couple* might seek communicant membership or request baptism for a child. Why this would even be a question in a Presbyterian church is a mystery, but the Doctrine Committee dutifully took up the question. The Committee concluded:

In light of our understanding of Scripture and the Church’s understanding of a credible profession of faith it is clear that same sex couples are *not* eligible for communicant membership nor are they qualified to receive baptism for their children. We believe that their outward conduct and lifestyle is at variance with a life of obedience to Christ.³

A motion was made to shelve the report at the General Assembly, which motion was defeated, whereupon after much debate the report was received.⁴

³ Doctrine Committee Report, 84-89.

⁴ Rev. Cheryl A. Meban (another female minister) moved “that Section 3 of the Report of the General Council be received, *with*

Media reaction to the PCI’s decision was swift. The *Irish Independent* warned, “Church says same-sex couples can no longer be ‘full members,’ nor baptise their children.”⁵ The *Belfast Telegraph* reported, “Presbyterian Church in Ireland votes to deny gay people full membership of the church.”⁶ Both newspapers, either out of ignorance or malice, make this seem like a new policy, but the Presbyterian Church had not heretofore permitted same-sex couples to partake of (that is, profane) the holy sacraments, at least not officially. This was not a new policy but the clarification of an *existing* policy and practice.⁷

Northern Irish politicians, some of whom are members of the PCI, were asked to comment. Alliance Party leader Naomi Long expressed her heartache over the decision: “I can only imagine the hurt this has caused to those from the LGBT community. It does not reflect the views of so many of us who love, respect and value you as family, friends and members of our community,”⁸ she declared on social media. Mike Nesbitt, leader of the Ulster Unionist Party, said, “I feel that the church has become a much colder house for me,” adding, “my attendance at church over recent months has not been anything to be proud of, so I am not sure that they would even miss me [if I left], but I am very uncomfortable with supporting those decisions.”⁹ The

the exception of Appendix 2 of the Doctrine Committee Report, pages 84-89. Appendix 2 constitutes the “Same Sex Couples and the Sacraments” section of the report. (See <http://www.presbyterianireland.org/GA-Minutes-2018-Sessions-1,-2,-3.pdf>).

⁵ “Church Says Same-Sex Couples Can No Longer Be Full Members Nor Baptise Their Children,” *Irish Independent*, June 9, 2018, <https://www.independent.ie/irish-news>.

⁶ “Presbyterian Church in Ireland Votes to Deny Gay People Full Membership of the Church,” *Belfast Telegraph*, June 8, 2018, <https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland>.

⁷ The *Belfast Telegraph* article begins, “The Presbyterian Church in Ireland has voted in favour of a *new policy* which means anyone in a same-sex relationship cannot be a full member of the church and their children cannot be baptised.” The *Irish Independent* article quotes from a church statement: “it was outlined that ‘members were not discussing whether to prevent anyone from attending worship, coming into church, receiving communion, or having access to pastoral care, as our Church is open to all.’” Notice that since the PCI practices open communion, its policy of barring certain sinners—such as impenitent homosexuals—from the Lord’s table is almost impossible to implement. Close communion, as outlined in Heidelberg Catechism, LD 30, Q&A 81-82, is necessary lest “the covenant of God [be] profaned and His wrath kindled against the whole congregation.”

⁸ *Belfast Telegraph*, “Presbyterian Church in Ireland Votes,” June 8, 2018.

⁹ “MLAs Feel Uncomfortable Giving Support to Presbyterian Church,” *Belfast Newsletter*, June 15, 2018, <https://www.newsletter.co.uk/news>.

aforementioned Naomi Long opined, “It has made my church membership increasingly uncomfortable and has affected my attendance at worship because I come away angry and frustrated.”¹⁰ David Ford, former Alliance Leader and PCI elder, complained of a “mood of growing homophobia” and “a trend which is moving the church increasingly to the right.”¹¹ Lord Alderdice of the British House of Lords resigned his membership of the PCI and wrote, “The Presbyterian Church in Ireland is no longer the spiritual heir of the Protestant martyrs of the sixteenth century, and is instead becoming more like a present-day representation of those who lit the fires that burnt them.”¹² Because the PCI excludes impenitent homosexuals from church membership, they are like the Roman Catholics who burned Christians at the stake?! The PCI response to Alderdice was to characterise his comments as “ungracious, unbecoming and deeply regrettable.”¹³

The *Belfast Telegraph* also featured the case of the Macaulay family of Portstewart Presbyterian Church. According to the article, the Macaulay’s daughter has been with her fiancée—another woman—for three years. When news broke of the PCI’s decision, the Macaulays resigned from the PCI: Mrs. Macaulay complained: “As a result of the vote last week [my daughter] has been excommunicated from her Church because of her God-given sexual orientation.... I am deeply hurt my daughter has been targeted in this way. I could not remain a member of a Church where I could no longer share communion with my daughter.”¹⁴ One is tempted to ask: did the elders *know* about the lesbian relationship, and if they knew, why was she not placed under discipline *before* the GA’s 2018 decision? The Macaulays claim to have found a new, welcoming church, The Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church in Belfast, which is a Unitarian, non-creedal, LGBT+ affirming denomination. When family is more important than devotion

to Jesus Christ, Christian discipleship becomes impossible (Luke 14:26) and further compromise is inevitable. Indeed, doctrines such as the deity of Christ, the blood atonement, and original sin, which the Non-Subscribing Presbyterians deny, are less important than their daughter’s comfort in the pew! In fact, since Portstewart and Belfast are about one hour and twenty-five minutes apart, the Macaulays appear quite devoted to error, since they are prepared, it seems, to make such a journey to attend worship in a false church. Would that professing Reformed Christians had a similar zeal for the truth in traveling to a true church! Mrs. Macaulay also urged fellow Presbyterians to reconsider their support for “an institution that’s making these sorts of decisions and causing this hurt and pain.” “It’s certainly like a group of fundamentalists,” she added.¹⁵ Notice the emphasis—not on her daughter’s sinful activity, but on the “hurt and pain” caused by the preaching of the demand of Christ for holiness!

Disgruntled former members are one thing, but there are also rumblings of discontent among the current membership and clergy of the PCI. Where does an aggrieved member go: does he lodge an appeal/protest in an ecclesiastical manner? That would be the Reformed and Presbyterian way. Instead, some have run to the press and even to the authorities. Arthur Acheson, clerk of May Street Presbyterian Church in Belfast, reported his own denomination to the Charity Commission to see if the PCI is breaching equality legislation by restricting membership: “This decision excludes people from being voting members of congregations, presbyteries and the General Assembly,” he complained. “It places an unreasonable restriction on the membership of the congregation.”¹⁶ Lawrence Kirkpatrick, professor of church history at Union Theological College, the PCI’s seminary, was asked: “What would happen if you had a gay student in a class where they’re looking at the theology or the ethics of homosexuality or trans issues and the like, and they are offered only one view theologically on that, and that view is that to be in a same sex sexually active relationship is sinful?” Prof. Kirkpatrick’s answer: “I would be horrified if they were getting that in our col-

10 *Belfast Newsletter*, “MLAs Feel Uncomfortable,” June 15, 2018.

11 *Belfast Newsletter*; June 15, 2018. David Ford was removed from the eldership in his local congregation because certain members were upset about his public support for same-sex marriage. He retains the office of elder, but because the other elders refuse to work with him he does not exercise the office. When Presbyterian and Reformed church polity is discarded, such bizarre compromises are the result.

12 “Presbyterian Church Now Like Those Who Burnt the Martyrs: Lord Alderdice,” *Belfast Newsletter*, June 12, 2018, <https://www.newsletter.co.uk/news>.

13 *Belfast Newsletter*, “Burnt the Martyrs,” June 12, 2018.

14 “Northern Ireland Couple Resign from Presbyterian Church As Same Sex Ruling Row Escalates,” *Belfast Telegraph*, June 11, 2018, <https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland>.

15 “Woman Who Quit Presbyterian Church Over Same-Sex Ruling Urges Others to Examine Their Support for Institution,” *Belfast Telegraph*, June 12, 2018, <https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland>.

16 “Watchdog is Called in to Investigate Whether Same-Sex Ruling Breaches Charity Regulations,” *Belfast Telegraph*, June 14, 2018, <https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland>.

lege.”¹⁷ Ironically, Stafford Carson, convener of the Doctrine Committee, is the Principal of Union College. Following the interview, Kirkpatrick was suspended. There were also calls for Queen’s University to sever its links with the PCI’s Union College, which not only trains the PCI’s ministerial students, but also provides theological degrees for non-Presbyterian students of Queen’s University.¹⁸

But perhaps the most shameful response to the controversy was an open letter to the media titled “A Cry from the Heart” written and signed by just over 230 teaching and ruling elders. The letter expressed “the profound sense of hurt, dismay and anger currently expressed” at the PCI’s decision taken at the 2018 GA. “We hold,” the officebearers declared, “that any unnecessary narrowing of the range of acceptable theological perspectives within the PCI will damage our credibility and limit our future.”¹⁹ In other words, these ministers and elders want a range of theological positions on homosexuality to be accepted in the church, until, of course, they gain the ascendancy: then they will expel the conservative, biblical view, which is always the tactic of liberals. They even claim that their stand is “a necessary consequence of [their] ordination vows, which [they] take with the utmost seriousness.” I must have missed the part in the ordination vows where, contrary to the Word of God and the confessions, signatories promise to promote the reception of homosexuals in the church! The PCI did not respond by suspending the officebearers who signed the letter, or by calling for their deposition, which would be the biblical and Reformed approach, but by issuing a statement:

In a Church with over 6,400 ministers and elders, we recognise that many will hold different views and some will choose to express them publicly in this and other ways.... People are free to debate in public, but it is the nature of the discourse that is important. Therefore it

...if the largest Protestant denomination in Northern Ireland is so divided over the subject of homosexuality, what will the remnant still faithful to Christ in that denomination do?

is worth positively noting that the 200-plus ministers and elders who were signatories, state that they were making their statement ‘as a prayerful expression of appropriate loyalty to the Presbyterian Church in Ireland.’ Discussions will also, no doubt, take place within the structures of the church, in presbyteries and kirk sessions.²⁰

This controversy reveals a number of uncomfortable truths about the PCI.

First, although officially the denomination made the *right decision* in severing links with the apostate Church of Scotland and barring practising homosexuals from the sacraments, there is little unity in the PCI on the subject. A significant section of the PCI membership, including a large number of officebearers, is unfaithful to Christ’s Word on this matter, which is not surprising to me. The PCI ordained women in the 1970s; the PCI maintains ecumenical ties with the Roman Catholic Church (the current Moderator accepted an invitation to attend a reception for Pope Francis in Dublin); the PCI is plagued with Arminianism and liberal views of Scripture; and within the denomination the so-called conservatives and liberals have lived in an uneasy relationship for years.

Second, if the largest Protestant denomination in Northern Ireland is so divided over the subject of homosexuality, what will the remnant still faithful to Christ in that denomination do? Will they remain there with their children, or will God give them grace to worship elsewhere?

Third, how long will it be before Northern Ireland, following its neighbors in the south (Republic of Ireland) and the east (Great Britain) legalize same-sex marriage? Since the churches in Northern Ireland find it increasingly difficult to fight for the truth of marriage, the only barrier to same-sex marriage in Northern Ireland is the (as-yet-suspended) legislative assembly. “Put not your trust in princes [or politicians], nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help” (Ps. 146:3).

17 BBC Radio Ulster “Talkback,” June 13, 2018, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes>.

18 “Should Queen’s University Break Its Link With the Presbyterian Union Theological College,” Slugger O’Toole, June 12, 2018, <https://sluggerotoole.com/2018/06/12> and “Queen’s University of Belfast Reviewing Links to Presbyterian College as Professor Suspended,” *Belfast Telegraph*, June 27, 2018, <https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland>.

19 “Top Presbyterian Members Sign Letter Criticising Same-Sex Ruling,” *Belfast Telegraph*, July 6, 2018, <https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland>.

20 “Statement in Relation to an Open Letter in Today’s Media,” Presbyterian Church in Ireland Press Office, July 6, 2018, <http://www.presbyterianireland.org/News/2018-News-Archive/July-2018>.



Search the Scriptures

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

Upon this rock (34) The land left desolate

Previous article in this series: September 15, 2018, p. 490.

Nebuchadnezzar left Jerusalem in smoldering ruins. Thousands of Jews were either killed or carried off to Babylon. But, since the poorest of the people yet remained in the land, the history of what had once been the nation of Judah is not yet finished.

Over the Jews who remained, Nebuchadnezzar placed Gedaliah as governor. Mizpah, a city about ten miles north of the ruins of Jerusalem, was chosen as the capital.

After the departure of the Chaldean army and the establishment of Gedaliah, remnants of the scattered army of Zedekiah began to gather in Mizpah (Jer. 40:7, 8). Likewise also the Jews who had fled into neighboring Moab, Edom, and Ammon in order to escape the sword of Nebuchadnezzar now returned, cautiously, to their homeland (vv. 11, 12). There they were assured by Gedaliah that they needed not to fear further punishment from the Babylonian army. Gedaliah was convinced, on the basis of the word of the Chaldean king and probably also that of Jeremiah, that with submission and faithful payment of annual tribute all would indeed be well with them (vv. 9, 10).

It seemed for a time as if both peace and a measure of prosperity would be the lot of those who remained in the land. They “gathered wine and summer fruits very much” (v. 12). But all would not be well. All *could* not be well. For, in spite of all that befell Judah on account of her unfaithfulness to God and her rebellion against His Word, the remnant who were left in the land did not return to the Lord. So rebellious were they, as would soon become apparent, that they were prepared to quit the land, in open defiance of the prophet of God whose every word had been proven, by events, to be true.

Long before, it had been revealed to the prophet that he must expect this. “Therefore thou shalt speak all these words unto them,” the Lord had said to Jeremiah, “but they will not hearken to thee: thou shalt also call unto them; but they will not answer thee. But thou shalt say unto them, This is a nation that obeyeth not the

voice of the LORD their God, nor receiveth correction: truth is perished, and is cut off from their mouth.... Therefore, behold, the days come saith the LORD, that ...the land shall be desolate” (Jer. 7:27-34).

Centuries earlier, God’s servant Moses had warned the people of Israel of the inevitable consequences of apostasy. “And if ye will not for all this hearken unto me, but walk contrary unto me; then I will walk contrary unto you also in my fury.... And I will scatter you among the heathen, and will draw out a sword after you: and your land shall be desolate [i.e., without inhabitant—cf. Jer. 9:11], and your cities waste” (Lev. 26:27-33).

God will, therefore, in keeping with repeated, solemn warnings by His servants the prophets, empty the land of all its inhabitants. But not apart from their continued rebellion. The word of God to the remnant that yet inhabited the land is “If ye will still abide in this land, then I will build you, and not pull you down, and I will plant you, and not pluck you up...” (Jer. 42:10). Their final expulsion will come about in the way of their rebellion to the bitter end.

It began with the assassination of Gedaliah. Along with Gedaliah, some Chaldeans who had formed part of the governor’s court were slain also. The eleven assassins fled into the land of Ammon, but their deed struck fear into the hearts of the Jews who were left in the land. What, they wondered, will Nebuchadnezzar now do to avenge this treachery and insurrection?

A sensible solution to their apparent predicament would have been simply to report to Nebuchadnezzar what had been done, and inform him that the culprit had subsequently been driven from the country. Even to the nervous Jews it should have appeared unlikely that, if they remained submissive, Nebuchadnezzar would hold them responsible for the deed of eleven scoundrels. But the Jews had had enough, they thought, of Babylon. They were ready to quit the country. In Egypt, they thought, they could find the peace and tranquility that

had for so long eluded them in Judah. So it was that Johanan and the remnant of the people determined “to enter into Egypt” (Jer. 41:17).

Before they made the move, however, they would consult Jeremiah to learn the will of God. To the prophet, who was already suspicious of their mood, they profess a willingness to accept and act in accordance with the divine will as revealed to Jeremiah, whether it seemed to them to be right or wrong (Jer. 42:4-6).

Concerning their desire to go to Egypt, Jeremiah would surely have been able to advise them without further revelation from God. The word of God through Moses, who had commanded concerning Egypt that Israel must “henceforth return no more that way” (Deut. 17:16), certainly still held true. But Jeremiah nevertheless promised to bring their request before God, and to relate to them only that, and all that, which the Lord would reveal to him.

For ten days Jeremiah waited for that revelation. The people, then, had plenty of time to consider how they would respond to the message; and they also had all the more evidence that Jeremiah was not coming to them with his own thoughts on the matter, but that he waited for and brought to them what was the will of *God*.

And during those ten days the people were further hardened in their determination, no matter what the old prophet might say, to go to Egypt. That their minds were made up from the start is plain from the assertion of Jeremiah that “ye dissembled in your hearts, when ye sent me unto the LORD your God” (42:20). It is evident, further, from their immediate rejection of Jeremiah’s word. They do not, of course, admit to a rejection of *God’s* word. They rather accuse Jeremiah of lying. “The LORD hath not sent thee,” they say, “to say, Go not into Egypt to sojourn there” (43:2).

What was the word that they rejected? God told them first what they *should* do, namely, remain in the land and prosper (42:10). The message was really the same as it had always been through Jeremiah—“Serve the king of Babylon and live” (27:17). God assured them, further, that they need not fear the wrath of Nebuchadnezzar, “for *I* am with you to save you, and to deliver you from his hand” (42:11). No matter, in other words, what Nebuchadnezzar’s natural inclination may be, his heart is in God’s hand. It was in this sense, after all, that Nebuchadnezzar could be described as God’s *servant*. Apart, now, from any *intent* on Nebuchadnezzar’s part, the fact is that the king of Babylon could only execute what *God* had decreed.

Then God told them what they should *not* do, namely, go into Egypt. Their admitted reason for considering flight to Egypt was their fear of the sword of Nebuchad-

nezzar. The word of the *Lord* was that “the sword, which ye feared, shall overtake you there in the land of Egypt” (Jer. 42:16). And indeed it did. Historical records show that there was a successful invasion of Egypt by Nebuchadnezzar about five years after this prophecy by Jeremiah.

To the admonitions of Jeremiah the people paid no heed. They set out shortly thereafter for Egypt, probably compelling the few reluctant ones to accompany them. Jeremiah was also in their company. In Egypt, the prophet continued to admonish them, for there they soon adopted the idolatrous practices of their hosts. In open defiance of God and of His prophet, they simply declared, “We will not hearken unto thee” (Jer. 44:16). They continued to “burn incense unto the queen of heaven,” claiming to have fared better when they worshiped her (vv. 17, 18). Thus, they hastened toward the destruction predicted by Jeremiah.

And thus was Israel plucked up by the roots from her promised inheritance. Some were carried away captive to Babylon, but many had been scattered among the nations. The cause of God and of His people would seem to have perished forever.

But not so. Jeremiah knew it. After having himself pronounced the just judgment of God upon Judah and Jerusalem for all their sins, Jeremiah had *bought a field* in Anathoth (Jer. 32:9). Yes, there was hope. Though the land would soon indeed be desolate, yet, the prophet declared, “houses and fields and vineyards shall be possessed again in this land” (v. 15). To the ears even of the faithful remnant, who were carried off into captivity right along with apostate Judah, that promise must have seemed a thing incredible. How, they must have wondered, could such a thing ever happen? Jeremiah had the answer: “Ah Lord GOD! behold, thou hast made the heaven and the earth by thy great power and stretched out arm, and there is nothing too hard for thee” (v. 17). “Behold, I will gather them out of all countries, whither I have driven them in mine anger, and in my fury, and in great wrath; and I will bring them again unto this place, and I will cause them to dwell safely” (v. 37).

But, we might ask, did that ever in fact *happen*? True enough, after a seventy-year captivity in Babylon a remnant did indeed return. But, “*dwell safely*”? Subsequent events would seem to prove otherwise. The returned exiles found themselves harassed by their neighbors. Over the years they would be subjected to the rule of one world power after another. And in the end Jerusalem would be leveled again, this time by the Romans. Though the prophet was not given to anticipate this eventuality, he must have been keenly aware that the ‘end’ of this promise, as of all other promises, was

spiritual. It would find its ultimate fulfillment in the kingdom of *Christ*. Liberation from exile was, therefore, but the bare beginning of what would be the real redemption of Israel. Physical restoration to the land of Canaan there must be, for out of Bethlehem Ephratah “shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel” (Micah 5:2). Then would be revealed the great wonder of all wonders. Not, first of all, possession of an earthly Canaan, but “they shall be my people”—they who have forfeited, a thousand times over, every right to My favor will be My people—“and I will be their God. And I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear me forever, for the good of them, and of their children after them” (Jer. 32:38, 39). No question, therefore, about the permanency of this covenant and of this planting in the land...for it will be accomplished by Christ. The Jews may again be expelled from the land of Canaan. No matter. For those who are in Christ are citizens of a kingdom that is heavenly and they are heirs of eternal life.

Therein lies, too, the “point” of the history of Old Testament Israel. Who of them were unfaithful? Some of them? Most of them? Listen: “...because of all the evil of the children of Israel and of the children of Judah, which they have done to provoke me to anger, they, their kings, their princes, their priests, and their prophets, and the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. And they have turned unto me the back, and not the face: though I taught them, rising up early and teaching them, yet they have not hearkened to receive instruction” (vv. 32, 33). All of them.

And they are we. For Israel of the old dispensation is a type of the church of the new. Thus is man. Sinners all—deserving not only deportation from the earthly Canaan but to be cast into everlasting punishment. But...“Ah Lord GOD...there is nothing too hard for thee: Thou showest lovingkindness unto thousands...” (vv. 17, 18). How? Not by winking at their sin. But by giving His Son a ransom for many. It is only in Him that “they shall be my people and I will be their God.” Wretched sinners they are, but “I will give them one heart and one way”—or, in the language of the apostle Paul: “For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure” (Phil. 2:13). All is of God.

That is what we learn from the history of Israel. They, we, are unfaithful, but the Lord says, “I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me. Yea, I will rejoice over them to do them good, and I will plant them in this land assuredly with my whole heart and with my whole soul. For thus saith the LORD; Like as I have brought all this great evil upon this people, so will I bring upon them all the good that I have promised them” (Jer. 32:40-42).

“The brilliancy of God’s love,” writes G. Vos, “needs a dark background.” There is a song that only the redeemed can sing....

Next time: A remnant returns.



All Thy works shall praise Thee

Mr. Joel Minderhoud, science teacher in Covenant Christian High School and a member of Hope Protestant Reformed Church in Walker, Michigan

Radioactive dating and uniformitarianism

Previous article in this series: October 1, 2018, p. 16.

In our previous article we learned that ^{14}C atoms transform into more stable atoms (^{14}N) by giving off a form of radiation called beta radiation. And since the rate of transformation (rate of decay) is a known value, scientists use the amount of ^{14}C still remaining in a substance to determine its age. This method is one of many types of radioactive-dating techniques.

Using radioactive-decay techniques, unbelieving scientists draw conclusions about the age of the earth that contradict the teachings of Scripture on this matter. The unbelieving world often seeks to attack the teaching of Scripture with an appeal to the flawed conclusions of science in order to deny the God revealed in the Scriptures. Their use of radioactive dating is

no exception. Therefore, a biblical answer to such an attack is not only warranted but necessary. To a biblical view of origins and a biblical evaluation of ¹⁴C dating we now turn our attention.

Definition of uniformitarianism

Secular scientists base their work on the assumption that the natural processes they observe are self-governing processes that have always worked the same way, without interruption or disruption, since the origin of the world. This assumption is called “Uniformitarianism.” In II Peter 3:3-4, the Holy Spirit clearly refers to this: “Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? *For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.*” We ought to consider this passage in evaluating secular scientists’ ‘proof’ for the age of this earth. What we see today is not the world as it has always been, but a world affected by the Flood (as well as the Fall, although we focus on the Flood for the purpose of this article). The truth of the Flood renders invalid secular scientists’ conclusions that are based on the assumption of Uniformitarianism.

A secular archeologist, for example, uses the principle of Uniformitarianism to predict the age of the earth. Scientists have observed for many years how wind and rain run-off erode soil and rocks. Based on the rate of erosion that is *currently observed*, the scientists back-calculate to determine how long it must have taken to erode a canyon deep into the earth’s crust. It is on the basis of such calculations that the scientists estimate the age of the earth.

Similarly, in order to predict the age of an artifact, scientists assume that the rates of deposition of ¹⁴C have remained constant and unaffected over the entire history of our world. Apart from this assumption, it would be impossible to use the ¹⁴C dating method to determine with accuracy the age of an artifact made out of biological materials.

Effect of the flood

The teaching of Uniformitarianism—the assumption that all natural processes have existed in the same way and form as they always have without interruption—is an erroneous assumption. Such an assumption does not acknowledge a sovereign God who rules by His Word in all creation (including words of judgment on the wicked world and words of miraculous deliverance for His people throughout history), and therefore, denies the biblical teaching of the Flood and its catastrophic

effects on the world. After describing the fundamental principle of Uniformitarianism in II Peter 3, the Holy Spirit identifies what *underlies* the thinking of those who hold to it:

For this they [the scoffers of v. 3 who teach Uniformitarianism, v. 4], willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water perished: the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men” (II Pet. 3:5-7).

The Holy Spirit teaches here that it is the judgment and rule of the sovereign God of creation that ungodly scoffers willingly deny. They do not want to hear the inspired words of the apostle that as the pre-Flood world was destroyed in the judgment of God by water, so the current world will be destroyed in the judgment of God by fire. They suppress the truth of God’s judgment, in part by denying that the *picture* of it ever happened. As there was no Flood, so also will there be no final judgment.

But the Holy Spirit teaches more in this passage than that there will be a judgment of God. The Scriptures teach that the Flood was a *catastrophic* judgment. The pre-Flood world “perished.” So catastrophic was the Flood that the Scriptures describe the pre-Flood world as “the world that *then was*,” that is, the world that no longer “*is*”—a world that has been destroyed. Furthermore, to emphasize that the post-Flood world is distinct from the pre-Flood world, the Scriptures refer to the current world as the heavens and earth “which *are now*.”

II Peter 3:5-7 is clear: the pre-Flood world and the post-Flood world are different worlds. To assume that everything we observe *now* has existed in the same way and form since time began, without interruption or disruption, is an *error*. The *truth* is that the natural processes and structures that we observe today have been affected by the Flood. Therefore, we must be very careful not to view the pre-Flood world through post-Flood ‘glasses’—making assumptions about what the creation *was* like based only on what we observe in the creation *today*.

Biblical evaluation of radiometric dating

Knowing that the pre-Flood world was different from the post-Flood world is important in evaluating radiometric dating. The biblical record of the Flood describes a catastrophic interruption of the natural processes of the

world that then was. Changes to the earth caused by the Flood could very well have impacted the deposition of ^{14}C . How much and to what extent the pre-Flood world was a different world we do not know. But it was a world distinct from today's world. This testimony of the Holy Spirit alone gives us pause when we consider the conclusions based on ^{14}C radiometric dating. On the basis of II Peter 3, we can only conclude that a determination of the age of archeological artifacts that precede the Flood is beyond the reach of scientific measurement.

Due to the relatively short decay rate of ^{14}C , scientists generally use it to determine the age of artifacts but use the radioactive decay of other elements to date the earth. While it is not the purpose of this article to enter into a description of all these other methods, the assumptions of Uniformitarianism that apply to ^{14}C dating also apply to these other methods. The conclusions drawn from the use of other radiometric-dating techniques that the earth is 4.5 billion years old are likewise invalid, because such conclusions do not consider the clear testimony of God's Word about the Flood. Besides, the teaching of Scripture, which we by the grace of God believe by faith alone, is that the earth is only a few thousand years old.

Hardly, however, is it true that, on the basis of II Peter 3, we reject *all* use of ^{14}C as a tool for dating artifacts. There is *order* in creation. Since God is a God of order and is an unchanging God, He illustrates that truth to us by providentially maintaining this creation in an orderly and unchanging way. Day by day, for example, the sun completes its circuit in a precisely repeatable fashion. Year by year, the seasons change in a regular manner. Meteorological conditions can be measured, and, with remarkable accuracy, weather forecasters can predict the next week of weather for a particular area. These predictions can be made because the natural processes, mechanisms, and structures of creation are governed by the immanent God every moment of the day in an orderly way.

Therefore, it is a proper assumption that ^{14}C deposition occurs in a very similar way today as it always has *since* the Flood. Thus, it can be helpful in determining the age of an artifact, within the past 4,000 years or so (that is, post-Flood). Any conclusion made using radioactive-dating techniques that predicts an artifact to be *beyond* the date of the Flood is invalid, because it is based on the faulty assumption that the radioactive-decay process has always existed without interruption or disruption. Simply stated, such conclusions are invalid because they, in essence, deny the Flood and its effects on the creation.

The blessed gift of faith

Uniformitarianism, which denies the Flood and its effects, is a serious denial of our sovereign God. Many, even in the church world today, have succumbed to this lie. In an attempt to harmonize biblical truth with secular science, many compromise the truth. The danger is real. Pray for grace that we might recognize our own sinful natures and inclinations, realizing that we ourselves are not immune to the lies of the devil. "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" (I Cor. 10:12).

The words of the Holy Spirit, through the apostle Peter, testify clearly of the Flood and of a world that "*then was*" and a world that "*now is.*" In light of God's faithful, inerrant Word we must carefully evaluate all conclusions of secular science. As children of God who have faith, we do not fear scientific investigations or the tools of science, but continue to search out and marvel at God's work in the creation. And as we investigate God's creation, we arrive at significantly different conclusions than secular science because we have the Spirit of Christ in us and our study of creation is enlightened by the Word of God. May God continue to give us the grace to believe the testimony of His Word regarding the origin of all things and the truth of the Flood. Apart from the precious gift of faith, we all would believe the error that *all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation*. Thanks be to God that He has graciously given us trust in His Word!

Finally, by faith we are comforted knowing there is a sovereign God, who speaks an *effectual* word. Whether it be the world that *then was* or *now is*, all are kept (reserved) by that same word—the Word of God. He speaks, and all things are created. He speaks, and all things continue to exist. And, as the God "who hast according to [His] severe judgment punished the unbelieving and unrepentant world with the flood, and hast according to [His] great mercy saved and protected believing Noah and his family" (prayer in our Baptism Form), so He speaks today, preserving us unto the great day of deliverance and executing His sovereign will and good pleasure for the glory of His precious name and the salvation of His beloved church. Praise Him for His sovereign and effective word! And praise Him for the blessed gift of faith!



Go ye into all the world

Rev. Daniel Holstege, missionary of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America, stationed in Manila, Philippines

Seeking the kingdom, witnessing, and roosters

As far as I knew, the only connection we had to the young man we were about to visit was that he had done some work on our church building just down the road in Provident Village. Yet for my evangelistically zealous Filipino brethren that was enough reason to visit and bring the gospel to him. I was delighted to do so. When a man does work on your church building, behold, an opportunity to witness!

Hence, I found myself walking under the moonlit sky above Metro Manila through a front yard with probably a dozen roosters. The cocks were tied by their feet to crates and posts, if my memory serves me. Cock-fighting is one of the most popular pastimes here, especially among young men. Every Sunday we drive past a crowded cockpit on our way to church. No doubt, one reason for its popularity is that it involves gambling. The roosters we saw that night were waiting for their opportunity to fight in the arena. We weaved our way through the noisy birds into the humble abode of the young man, who was the caretaker, not the owner, of the property. It was a small, dimly lit back room with a bunk bed where he lived with his wife and young child.

We took a seat and began our visit. I did not know how well they understood English, so I felt that I should try to use more Tagalog, the local language. By that time, we had already made several family visits, so I was able to recite our theme text and explain it a little in Tagalog. The text is well known to you: “Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.”

As in so many of our other family visits last winter, I drew attention to the idea of seeking. Seeking is looking for something you desire but cannot see. Jesus once spoke of a merchant seeking goodly pearls, who, when he found a pearl of great price, sold all that he had and bought it. Seeking the kingdom of God is looking for something spiritual and, therefore, is an activity of faith. The kingdom of God is not of this world and cannot be found on a map with the eyes of flesh, but must be sought by faith. But, because of the prevalence of

Arminian thinking, I had to emphasize that this seeking *first* of the kingdom does not mean we must first seek God by our free will in order to find the kingdom and be saved. For that is impossible. There is none that understands, there is none that seeks after God (Rom. 3:11). No, God must first seek us. And God has first sought us through His Son. For His Son came to seek and to save the lost. Now, in the Sermon on the Mount He exhorts us, the lost whom He has already found, to seek *first* the kingdom of God and His righteousness. That is, we are to search by faith, day by day, for the kingdom of God as our highest priority. We are to make it our highest priority to join the church, the manifestation of that kingdom on earth, where we may hear of the righteousness of God. We are to set our hope, above all, on the final perfection of that kingdom in the new heaven and earth when Christ returns. We are to delight, more than anything, in the kingdom of God.

So I asked that young man and his wife, in their native tongue, “Ano pong hinahanap natin sa buhay?” I may ask you, beloved reader, the same question: “What are we looking for in life?” Our life is soon cut off and we fly away (Ps. 90:10). Our life is a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away (James 4:14). Compared to the endless ages of eternity, our life is just a twinkling of an eye. What are you seeking in your brief moment on earth? What do you want and what do you seek that gets you out of bed each morning?

There is always a little voice, Jesus knows, that tempts us to seek more of the treasures and pleasures of this world (Matt. 6:19-24). Probably we are not tempted to go to a cockfight and put bets on a rooster, though that is a strong temptation for many Filipinos. But perhaps we are tempted to work more and more hours, to seek a higher and higher wage, to build bigger and better barns, and to eat, drink, and be merry. Every day we work hard. Then we see the fruit of our labors. Then we receive those good gifts of God with thanksgiving. But whether we receive much or little, become rich or poor, have meat on our table every night or only on rare

occasion, the temptation to lay up treasures on earth is powerful. Those who seek them do not seek first the kingdom.

Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth!

But there is another little voice, also very dangerous, which Jesus also knows (Matt. 6:25-32). It is the nagging little voice of worry. Probably most of us do not worry about typhoons as many do in this part of the world. But perhaps we worry about our earthly needs, paying our bills, maintaining our health. Perhaps we worry about our children getting sick, hurt, bullied, abused, or lost. And a host of other things. Lack of trust in our heavenly Father also distracts us from seeking first the kingdom in our lives.

Take no thought for the morrow!

What are you looking for in your life?

The best witnessing flows out of the heart of one who seeks first the kingdom of God in his life. He is ready to give an answer regarding the hope that is in him. One who loves money cannot very well bear witness to the astounding riches that we have in Christ, riches which we can never lose, because he is caught in a snare, fallen into many foolish and hurtful lusts, drowning in perdition (I Tim. 6:9-10). Or one who, in his constant worry, does not trust his heavenly Father day by day, cannot very well talk about the hope that is in him. But one who seeks the Lord as his highest good, who has tasted and seen that God is good, to whom the lovingkindness of God is better than life, is ready to talk to his neighbor about the gospel, for it is the food and drink of his soul.

This is essential for witnessing, for talking to others about the gospel. We talk about the things that are important to us, you see, the things that we love. One who knows about God, whose mind is packed with the information of the Bible, for he had catechism, went to a Christian school, and goes to church but in whose thoughts God is not found, who does not treasure the Lord as his inheritance, as the fullness of his cup of bliss, and who is not deeply affected by the forgiving grace of God toward him in Christ, will not joyfully and readily bear witness to his neighbor about the hope that is in him. On occasion, he might mention what he believes on a given topic. Yet, peradventure, some would dare to engage in apologetics to defend the truth against those who assault it. But a man or woman will not joyfully speak to the neighbor of the wonder of grace in Christ unless that person appreciates that wonder, understands the value of the pearl Jesus has given him through His death and resurrection, and having drunk from the fountain of living waters, has tasted that the mercy of God is infinitely more wonderful than any pleasure in this world.

Child of God, look back at your life. Do you see the sins of youth that you have asked God to remember not? Do you see the sins of the flesh that have ensnared you and wrought havoc in your relationships? Do you see the selfishness, pride, and anger? The gossip, murmuring, and bitterness? But now, look back further to the life of Christ. Do you also understand that He loved you and gave Himself for you? Do you comprehend what manner of love the Father hath bestowed on you, that you should be called a child of God? Do you grasp the blissful thought that you were unconditionally chosen in Christ and precious to God before the world began? Do you marvel that God, who spared not His own Son but gave Him up for us all, is on your side and nothing can be against you?

Then, like Peter and John in the glow of the outpoured Spirit of Pentecost, you cannot but speak the things which you have seen and heard.

Then you will recognize the precious gifts you have been given, if you grew up in a solid Reformed church such as a Protestant Reformed church: your catechesis in Bible history and Reformed doctrine, the innumerable expositions of the Word of God you hear on Sundays, your Christian education, your Christian friends, and many other opportunities for growth in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ (II Pet. 3:18).

Recognize, you are indeed ready to give an answer, to hold forth the word of life, shining as a light in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation (Phil. 2:15, 16). Even if it means you are commanded not to speak in the name of Jesus, as Peter and John were.

Those who know about Jesus but do not appreciate Him as their Lord and Savior are in danger of falling into the sin of Peter, to whom the Lord said, "Before the rooster crows, thou shalt deny me thrice." Remember the bitter tears of Peter. That night, visiting that Filipino young man and his wife and child, we walked through a multitude of crowing roosters. I suppose they were exhorting us to remember Peter. "Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 10:32-33).

"What I tell you in darkness, that speak ye in light: and what ye hear in the ear, that preach ye upon the housetops" (Matt. 10:27).



Pertaining to our churches—seminary

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

News from the seminary

The seminary salutes all our readers of the *Standard Bearer*! Your regular prayers sustain us. We hear of them. Your financial support—through weekly offerings—makes it possible for us to do our work without thinking about daily bread. Thank you. Your *extraordinary* gifts make possible the growth of the library, attendance at conferences otherwise not feasible, and building additions and improvements not imagined a generation ago. We are humbled by this generosity in the name of Christ.

Most importantly, some of your sons are here to study. Currently, there are four men studying *pre-seminary* Greek. Soon, God willing, these men will apply for admission to the seminary proper. As you know, two of our students are on their six-month internship: Mr. Matthew Kortus at Trinity PRC (having accepted a new call, Rev. N. Decker will continue to supervise the



Left to right: Marcus Wee, Jacob Maatman, Matthew Kortus, Josiah Tan

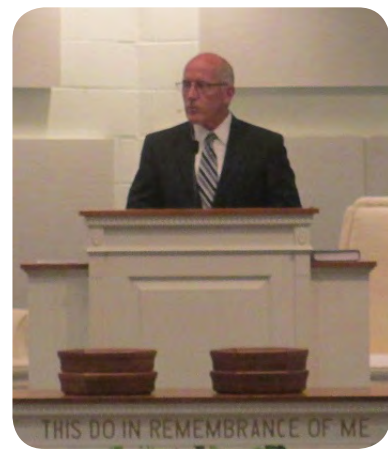
internship from nearby Grandville PRC) and Mr. Jacob Maatman at Hudsonville PRC. In January they will return for one more semester before taking their final examinations publicly at synod in June. And two men are here from our sister church in Singapore: Mr. Josiah Tan in his third year, and Mr. Marcus Wee in his first. For them, the USA is a very foreign land. But they and their families bear this trial with grace for the sake of the Lord who is dear to them.

We also hear reports that others are seriously considering the call to the ministry. The Lord answers prayers.

Dear young brothers, if the Lord lays on your heart this burden to study for the ministry, be assured that we are willing to talk to you about it, privately. Please call or email any of us professors. And be assured that, if God does call you, and you are not able to resist His will, you will not regret it. It will be a happy reality when the Lord works in you a 'willingness in the day of his power' (see Psalm 110).

We hope that elders, parents, and teachers continue to hold before young men the need for ministers in the churches. Be realistic with them about the work, but do not forget to tell them also of the joys of the ministry.

Our semester began a day late this Fall because of the special meeting of synod, but it began well. As usual, we held a convocation service in Providence PRC to open the year in God's house, among God's people, with a speech or sermon to motivate us to labor before the Lord. Taking turn by rotation, Prof. Gritters had the privilege this year to give the speech. He expounded and applied Acts 20:24 with the topic, "None of these things move me...." These words were the apostle's moving testimony in response to the prospect of some pretty significant suffering as a missionary-pastor. Suffering and prison awaited him in Jerusalem and beyond, but he said that this did not disturb him. The prospect of trouble did not deter him from embarking on the next ship. Knowledge of the greatest troubles did not destabilize him at all. His explanation? *He did not count his life dear*



2018 convocation speaker:
Prof. Barrett Gritters

unto himself. Of course, his life was important; but it was not important *for himself.* For him, life was always *for God and God's Son,* never *for himself.* Then, and only then, could he conduct his ministry with joy. The entire speech can be found online at prca.org/resources/publishing/lectures.

Our classes begin early (6:50 A.M.) for the pre-seminary Greek students, so that they can be off to other college work or, as in the case for some, an occupation. Regular classes begin at 7:50 each day, and usually are finished by noon. The afternoons have the students hunkered down in their study carrels in the library (sometimes after an invigorating game or two of ping-pong downstairs).

It may be interesting for readers to know a bit *more* about seminary life, so I take a moment to give a little insight into what *else* goes on. The main part of our work, of course, is the instruction given in the classes and the students' preparation for these classes—languages and Exegesis, Church History and Dogmatics, Catechetics and Church Polity, and so forth—on Tuesdays through Fridays. Mondays are reserved for Practice Preaching. Visitors attend some classes, taking advantage of the invitation to sit in and learn. Each day mid-morning we have student-led devotions in the assembly room, when students take turns leading in singing, reading Scripture, and prayer. Then we have coffee together for a few minutes and get to the third and fourth hour classes. At noon we all eat lunch together, and on occasion have discussions on theology or some practical matter in church life. The upcoming proposal on the Michigan ballot to legalize marijuana made for an intriguing discussion about the implications of this for elders and their work. Every Friday our custom is to

grill up brats for the group. Sometimes we have visitors. From time to time a student or professor will contribute a 'cultural enrichment' item—from the trivial to the serious. Recently, we had a display of old coins, some dating back to the biblical era. Another time a student played classical music that explained some of the Psalter melodies.

More formal are our regular Student Club meetings. The students propose a topic for discussion. In the evening, students and professors assemble at one of the professor's houses and discuss, debate, deliberate on a topic—ranging from deep theology to practical and pastoral questions. The wives of the students get together regularly as well to 'talk shop.' In these evening meetings the professors' wives lead discussion and give instruction about the life of the wife in the parsonage. "Even so must their wives be...faithful in all things." We trust this helps them to be faithful helpers to their minister-husbands.

By the time you get this issue of the *Standard Bearer*, the professors will be ready to travel cross-country to give Reformation Day lectures. We plan the seminary 'reading-recess' at the end of October so that the professors can lecture away from home without missing (too many?) classes here. We hope to see many of you, soon.

Please continue to pray for our work. And talk to your sons about the call to the ministry.

"The blessing of the Lord be upon you."

From your seminary,
Prof. Gritters, Rector

Guest article



British Reformed Fellowship conference report

God's providence is beautiful!

I will praise thee, O LORD, with my whole heart; I will shew forth all thy marvellous works.

I will be glad and rejoice in thee: I will sing praise to thy name, O thou most High.

Psalm 9:1-2

This is simply a humble attempt of showing my gratitude to God for the amazing time I had at the British Reformed Fellowship (BRF) Conference this year. The conference took place in Hebron Hall, Vale of Glamorgan, Wales, on the super-hot days of July 21 to 28, 2018.

Upon knowing that I would be given the opportunity of going, my heart was filled with joy and expectation, both for the excellent preaching that I would hear and for all the godly friends, old and new, whom I knew I would meet. Despite loving the Reformed faith for about ten years now, it was my first BRF Conference, so naturally there was some anxiety involved. At no point, however, was I let down. Everything was incredibly above my expectations. God is always good and He has been gracious towards me, from beginning to end.

In every lecture and personal exchange, I was being constantly reminded of God's sovereignty and of His calling for us to be holy in each and every situation. The glory of the gospel was shining through.

Even though I enjoyed all the speeches, my favorite ones were "The God-Fearing Man and His Virtuous Wife" by Rev. A. Lanning, an excellent preacher I did not know beforehand, and "The Reformed Family: Parents and Children" by Prof. David Engelsma, whose books have proved to be immensely fruitful and have left a long-lasting mark on me. Meeting him in person was a great honor. My soul was once again blessed by the wonderful truth that we belong to God and His covenant, and that it is indeed a very precious thing to obey Him in our roles as women and men according to the Holy Scriptures. I was also encouraged to keep praying for a godly husband, while living for God's glory and content being single, as we are taught by the apostle Paul in his letters.

Not only did the speeches prove to be spiritually uplifting, but so also was meeting saints from several countries: America, Northern Ireland, England, Singapore, Wales, Italy, Canada, Germany, the Republic of Ireland, Hungary, and Australia. The apostle John reminds us that with His blood Christ purchased persons from every tribe, language, people, and nation. It is always great to witness God's gathering of people from every corner of the world—as He promised! All these believers, despite coming from completely different backgrounds and cultures, were unanimously drawn to this one thing—our precious Savior Jesus Christ. I was also strengthened to hear from some young people like me, having the same fears and struggles I have, all the while talking about the enormous comfort we have in our Almighty God. We can trust Him with everything we are because He holds us firmly, and we can live our whole lives—including our singleness—for His glory.

The morning and evening devotionals were wonderfully rewarding! What a precious time we had to listen to the Word of God, and then sing and pray together!

It was beautiful to see all those people from different places, young and old, singing the Psalms in one voice in God's presence.

I appreciated the presentation on Christian education by Mr. Pete Adams. It is such an important topic in the days we live in, especially for someone like me, who lives in a country that has a heavy socialist influence with a Marxist educational system and virtually no schools that are in accordance with the Reformed confessions. I was encouraged to keep helping families in my church and country to seek and fight to give their children a Reformed education that glorifies the Lord, as did those who came before us.

Since I love history and by implication museums, the trips to Raglan Castle, the city of Gloucester and St. Fagan's National Museum of History were really special. The castle was fabulous, with a very interesting history and an amazing view! At the museum we learned a lot about the history of the Welsh people. Beyond that, we had the opportunity to spend some extra time with the saints.

The Hebron Hall Conference Centre was a lovely place and I really enjoyed the view. I was pleased with the godly girls that were in my room. They were great companions and we had a very good time. They were very kind and friendly. I soon felt as though I had known them all my life!

Something that really stood out to me was the hospitality and kindness of my brothers and sisters in the faith. There was this strong sense of belonging all to Christ, even though most of us came from very different backgrounds. I was overwhelmed by the care and sympathy people showed to each other every single day.

Summing up my experience, I have been extremely blessed! God's providence is indeed beautiful. He takes care of His people. He gathers them in order to bless them and glorify His name. It is such a joy to be among His people, to be able to express together our



gratitude to Him, who has preserved us in these dark days when the biblical view on the family is attacked. His Word is truly precious and we must hold on to it. We must keep our minds filled with Scripture so that we can answer the outrageous questions of this wicked generation.

The godly people I met will, God willing, be good

friends from now on, and I do hope to see them again in two years' time. I will hold these memories dear to my heart and pray that God's truths will be written on my heart so that He may be glorified.

— Lidi Cecilio from Brazil



News from our churches

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

Trivia Question

Which six ministers in the PRCA have a last name that begins with the letter L? Answer later in this column.

Reformed Free Publishing Association

The RFPA annual meeting was held Thursday, September 27 at 7:30 p.m. with Rev. Angus Stewart speaking on “The RFPA, the CPRC, and the Spread of the Truth” at Grace PR Church in Grand Rapids, MI. This speech addressed the role of RFPA literature from the perspective of a PR sister church running a bookstore and doing missionary work in another country, showing how these Reformed materials edify the CPRC's members and assist in reaching its contacts. Men, women, and young people were all cordially invited to attend the meeting and were informed and inspired!

Minister activities

Rev. Rodney Kleyn was led by God to decline the call issued to him by Grandville PRC to serve as minister-on-loan to the Covenant ERC of Singapore. The Council of Grandville PRC has since announced another trio: Revs. G. Eriks, S. Key, and W. Langerak.

After considering the call to Grandville PRC, Rev. Nathan Decker (Trinity PRC) accepted it on September 23.

On October 26 and 27 Prof. D. Engelsma will be one of the featured speakers at a conference in Ashland, TN (a suburb of Nashville). The conference is hosted by a group called Reforming America Ministries (RAM).

RAM hosts a Reformation Preaching Conference every year at the end of October. This year their theme is “The Doctrine of Justification Defined and Defended against the Heresies Taught by John Piper, Federal Vision and the New Perspective on Paul.” Prof. Engelsma's speech(es) are titled “Justification by Faith: Denigrates Federal Vision Heresy.” His speech is scheduled to be broken into two parts, the first will be delivered on Friday, October 26 from 7:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. (EDT) and the second part on Saturday, October 27 at 4:30 p.m. (EDT). The event will be live-streamed on Reforming America Ministries Facebook page.

Young People's activities

Grace PRC Young People held a Labor Day breakfast. Hudsonville PRC Young People sponsored their third annual Whiffle Ball Tournament and Zion PRC held their mum sale. All these recent activities served as fundraisers for the young people.

Evangelism activities

From our Hope congregation in Redlands:

On October 26th at 7 p.m. (PST) Professor Gritters will be speaking on “Evangelicals and Catholics Together? Reconciling the Unreconcilable.” Please invite friends, family, and acquaintances for an online, live viewing on our website hopeprc.org. Even better if you can attend in person!

From the Randolph, WI PRC bulletin:

The Evangelism Committee is planning a Reformation

Day Lecture, to be held Friday, November 2, at 7:30 P.M. Because this Autumn marks the 400th anniversary of the start of the Synod of Dordt, Rev. E. Guichelaar will be giving the lecture on the Canons of Dordt. Reserve the date, and stay tuned for more information.

On October 5 Rev. Angus Stewart, pastor at Covenant PRC of Northern Ireland, presented a speech about Martin Luther and his wife Katie at the Pittsburgh PRC.

The Synod of Dordt held its first meeting on November 13, 1618. Crete, IL PRC invites you to commemorate the 400th anniversary of this great event in church history by attending a special lecture given by Professor D. Kuiper on Wednesday, October 31, 2018. The speech will be live-streamed at prccrete.org.

School activities

School fundraisers that were scheduled to be completed by now include the Adams Annual Auction, Covenant CHS Foundation Golf Outing and Fall Festival, Heritage Christian Fall Family Supper, Trinity Christian High Labor Day Breakfast. Also, the Faith Christian School Ladies' Circle in Randolph, WI planned a Jog-a-Thon in late September.

Sister-Church activities

During the time Rev. Daniel Kleyn supplied the pulpit of the CERC in Singapore in September he also had

opportunity to give a presentation there on the work of our missionaries in the Philippines. Rev. Audred Spriensma followed Rev. Kleyn in the pulpit supply rotation in Singapore for three Sundays.

Congregational activities

From Georgetown PRC: Girls Conference 2018: "Shine as Lights in the World" / Nov. 10, 2018 / Grades 9-Post High/College: Join us for great speeches, music, games, food, and fun. Follow us on Facebook and Instagram. Register now at: <https://shineaslights2018.eventbrite.com>. Save the date!

The girls' group at Providence RPC sold delicious caramel apples for their fundraiser this Fall.

Grandville PRC held a church bowling outing at Hudsonville Lanes on October 5.

Trinity PRC held a progressive dinner on October 12.

Trivia answer

The six ministers in the PRCA whose last names begin with the letter "L" are: Revs. Jonathan Langerak, Nathan Langerak, William Langerak, James Laning, Andrew Lanning, and Dennis Lee. More trivia next time.

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

MICAH: Proclaiming the Incomparable God

by Martyn McGeown

Christians want to know Christ from the Old Testament, from Micah, and the other minor prophets. And yet for many of us the minor prophets are like a sealed book. The inspired writing of the minor prophets are addressed to the people of God and addressed to us also in the New Testament church. As inspired scripture they indeed speak of Christ: Micah does so extensively, and not only in the obvious reference to Bethlehem in chapter 5:2.

The prophet Micah proclaims the incomparable God of judgment and mercy. This God is our God, the God of all who believe in Jesus Christ. And this prophecy has vital lessons to teach us today.

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**This book will be sent automatically to our book club members.*



Announcements

Wedding anniversary

With joy and thanksgiving, we celebrate the 40th wedding anniversary of our parents, **Joe and Marcia VanBaren** in October 2018. We are thankful for the health and strength that our heavenly Father has blessed them with, and pray that He may continue to bless them with many more years together. We give thanks for their dedication to the Reformed faith and godly Christ-centered education. "The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage" (Psalm 16:6).

Kyle and Marisa VanBaren

Colin, Brenna, Macie, Gracia, Kenzie, Wyatt

Ross and Jill VanBaren

Joseph, Eli, Blake, Brielle, Abe, Beau

Mike and Corrie VanderVeen

Zach, Emily, Alyssa, Leah, Eric

Caleb and Jenn VanBaren

Joelle, Isaac, Amos, Addie

Anneke VanBaren

Tunis and Kayla VanBaren

Levi

Randolph, Wisconsin

Wedding anniversary

With thankfulness to God, the Lord willing, our parents and grandparents, **David and Bonnie Moelker** will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary on November 8, 2018. We have seen by their love for God, for each other, and for us, the love of Christ for His church. May God continue to be merciful to them and use them in our lives for His glory. "It is of the LORD's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness" (Lamentations 3:22, 23).

Kristina Moelker

Dan and Kolleen Barnhill

Keven Moelker

Taylor, Alexandra (in glory),

Jayson and Kari Alsum

Grace, Elsie

Jacob, Reece, Brianna

Clint and Katie Karsemeyer

Walker, Michigan

Dylan, Skyler

Teacher needed

The Edmonton PR 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.

Southwest Protestant Reformed Church Presents

Rev. Andy Lanning

The Reformation's Defense of Scripture's Authority

Oct 26, 2018
7:30PM at
Southwest PRC
4875 Ivanrest Ave
Wyoming, MI 49418

On January 1, 1519, Ulrich Zwingli did something unheard of. He ascended the pulpit, read the Bible, and explained its meaning. In a day when no one heard the Bible read, much less heard the Bible explained, this was a radical act. A young man who heard Zwingli preach the Bible would later recall, "I felt as if someone had pulled me up into the air by the hair of my head," so profound was the effect of the Word of God upon his conscience. Preaching the Bible was part of the Reformers' conviction that Scripture is the sole rule of faith and life.

sola scriptura

Visit: southwestprc.org/2018Lecture for information and to live stream