# Beacon Lights

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# Reformed Advice to Rome

Recently I was skimming through the local newspaper's religion section in a desultory fashion (it's not overloaded with articles of interest to a Reformed person) when one article caught my attention. It was titled, "Why the next pope should come from the Global South." Thinking that it was likely written by a Roman Catholic, I read farther, only to discover that it was authored by a Rev. Wesley Granberg-Michaelson, former general secretary of the Reformed Church in America (RCA). The general secretary oversees the general operations of the church, and is therefore a person of influence and authority, a representative of the church. Now my interest was really piqued: Why was the recent leader of a large Reformed denomination giving advice to Rome, and what does he have to say?

The occasion for the secretary's commentary is obviously the election of a new pope to replace the one who just resigned (by the time this article appears in Beacon Lights this will already have happened). His premise is that the Roman Catholic Church should not elect as pope a cardinal from Europe or North America, as has been its practice since 741 AD. His reason is the demographic shift in the global population of Christians, of which about half are Roman Catholics, away from Europe and North America to Africa, Asia, South America, and Latin America, and he gives statistics to back up his thesis. His conclusion is that the new pope should reflect this change.

Granberg-Michaelson's advice is gratuitous and presumptuous. Did Rome ask him who he thinks

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should be the next pope? What makes him think that Rome will take his unsolicited advice? Who does he think he is? I am reminded of the reply of Christ when someone asked him to speak to his brother about dividing an inheritance: "Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you?" (Luke 12:14). Perhaps the secretary is ignorant of these words. But one thing is sure: Rome does not need his advice and will not take it. Instead, it will engage in internal politics and a power struggle, as it has done for centuries.

But this is not the worst of the matter. It is more than statistics and politics, according to Granberg-Michaelson. He goes on to say, "Selecting a non-European would be a prophetic spiritual gift to the whole Christian community and beyond. Normal church 'politics' wouldn't produce such a result. It would take a work of the Holy Spirit." A spiritual gift? Of what? Certainly not the spiritual gift of which Paul speaks in Romans 1:11. Whatever it is, I don't want it. A gift to the whole Christian community? Not the one to which I belong. He asks: "Should we assume that no one among the 40 cardinals in that conclave from Latin America, Africa and Asia has those qualities and could be called by God? And couldn't such spiritual affirmative action be inspired by the Holy Spirit?" A cardinal called by God to be the next pope? You have got to be kidding! A work of the Holy Spirit? In the sense that he means it the Holy Spirit has not worked in the Romish church for about twenty centuries. He has certainly worked in the Roman Catholic Church—as he always does in all the wicked (see Rom. 2:15)—to convict of sin. But an inspiration of the Spirit? There is definitely a spirit at work in the Romish church, but it is the spirit of Satan, not the spirit of Christ. Affirmative action inspired and worked by the Spirit? The Holy Spirit indeed works affirmative action, but not the kind the secretary means. The affirmative action of the Spirit is the work of regeneration and sanctification, the application of all the benefits of Christ to the believer.

In addition, Granberg-Michaelson says, "I'm a Protestant, so my observations are those of an outsider, as a sincere ecumenical friend." He may be an outsider, but based on his comments, he is not very far outside. Sincere he may be, but sincerely wrong. And a friend of Rome? He has this exactly backwards. He ought to be a bitter enemy.

How is such writing to be explained? It is admittedly difficult, especially if we remember that Granberg-Michaelson is a leader in the Reformed Church of America. Notice that I did not say, "A Reformed leader." Such a leader would stand in the tradition of the Reformation. With the Reformed fathers he would then reject the Roman church and all its corruptions from top to bottom and from front to back. Instead, he espouses a viewpoint that is 180 degrees opposite that of the Reformation. He wants to make friends with Rome. No, Reformed he is not.

Rightly it has been said that those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it. In this instance the past includes the Council of Trent, an aspect of Rome's counter-Reformation following the Protestant Reformation. In the decrees of this council the false teachings of Rome were reaffirmed, enhanced, and strengthened in opposition to the true Reformation. To this day those decrees stand unchanged. Rome has never compromised or retracted even one of them. This is the church with which we should be ecumenical friends? This is the church of spiritual affirmative action inspired by the Holy Spirit?

Add to this the history of Rome's savage persecution of the true church of Christ in the world. Throughout its history, and especially following the Reformation, the church sought out, tortured, and killed by the thousands anyone who was perceived as deviating even slightly from Rome's authority. Has Granberg-Michaelson ever heard of something called the Inquisition? To this day the Roman church has never apologized for this terrible chapter in its history. The corruption continues today in the scandal of the molestation of children by its priests. Apparently the secretary cannot remember the past, for he is repeating it. For that he must be condemned.

Granberg-Michaelson, as a leader in a (supposedly) Reformed church should be aware that our Reformed fathers repeatedly referred to the various popes as "antichrist." By this they meant that the popes themselves were antichristian in their teachings and actions, and were therefore manifestations of the ultimate man of sin at the end of time, and were those who were bringing about and working toward that final antichrist. They were correct. Nothing has changed. Whether or not the Roman Catholic Church takes Granberg-Michaelson's advice is immaterial. There will be a new pope. But all the Roman church is doing is trading one antichrist for another.

How is such an incredibly erroneous viewpoint to be explained? The answer, at least in part, is to be found in the history of the RCA. When the Dutch

immigrated to North America and formed the RCA, they were confronted with the question of their relation to the people in the new land. What sort of relationship to the world ought they to have? As is always true, they had two choices: that of accommodation and amalgamation, or that of antithesis. These choices were all-encompassing. They concerned what language they should use—Dutch or English? Should they by using Dutch maintain their identity as Reformed, or should they adopt the language of the new country? The question of lodge and secret society membership arose. The issue of their own Christian schools versus the state's public schools came up. And their relation to the culture in general needed to be decided. While not every issue concerned right and wrong, many did. And consistently the members of the RCA chose accommodation over antithesis. The result is the present state of affairs. The truth of the antithesis has worked out in the history of the RCA, so that today it is only a nominally Reformed denomination. How has the gold become dim!

Young people, there are lessons here for you.

Learn your church history, because it matters. Do not forget your church history, because it matters. Remember, those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it. If this happens, then your Reformed heritage is doomed.

Learn the doctrine (teaching) of the antithesis, as well as its practical application to life. It matters. Never compromise. Remember that the Roman Catholic Church cannot be called the church unless that term is preceded by the adjective "false." Do not believe anyone who wants to teach you accommodation, negotiation, and concession. Do not attempt to find a middle ground with the false church through a false ecumenism. Stand sharply and distinctively for the truth of Scripture, and follow the guidance of the Spirit in the history of the church. Do not let history condemn you because you do not know it or cannot remember it.

Remember: If you try to bargain with the devil, you will lose.

## Ask Schuyler

As Reformed young people we are faced with a myriad of temptations to turn from our faith. This holds true especially when we graduate from our Christian schools and begin working full time or attending college. We are then exposed to a wide array of beliefs and ideas that differ from our own, but more importantly, we gain a better grasp of the world's mantra, "Eat, drink, and be merry." This ideology is very enticing to sinners such as we. Unfortunately, some within our circles slowly begin to embrace this lifestyle. In so doing, they spend more and more time with those of the world and less and less time with fellow believers. Church attendance is neglected and before long, it appears that our friends have "gone off the deep end." Any attempts to point out the folly in their lifestyle results only in their drawing farther away. How are we, as Reformed young people, to approach those who knowingly live in sin and neglect the chief means of grace in the preaching? Do we bring the word with us every time, even though it drives them further away? Or is it sufficient that they "know where we stand" regarding their lifestyle and we should attempt to maintain a relationship with them? Any insight would be appreciated.

The reader asks what we must do when we see a fellow young person walking in the ways of sin. This is a situation in which much wisdom, patience and courage are required. First, we must understand that there are different kinds of sins in the church. All sins are damnable; all sins are displeasing to God; but not all sins should be dealt with in the same way. The Bible gives us guidelines on how to deal with different kinds of sins. Wisdom is necessary in the application of such principles. Proverbs 17:9 says, "He that covereth a transgression seeketh love; but he that repeateth a matter separateth very friends." Certain transgressions, therefore, ought to be covered for the sake of love and friendship. Sins must not become the subject of gossip! A person must not be so prickly that he demands an apology for every minor insult. Hypersensitivity would make covenant life in the church impossible. Galatians

6:1–2 describes another situation: "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ." Here, the calling is not to cover the transgression, but to restore the stumbling brother. Satan has laid a trap for the brother and in his folly (perhaps because he neglected to watch and pray) he has been "overtaken." Love demands that we do not ignore the sin. We certainly do not join the brother in sin. We do not stand afar off, wagging our finger like a Pharisee, and condemn the brother (Luke 18:11). We approach him with compassion, considering our own weakness, and we "restore" him. To restore has the idea of the gentleness required in the setting of a broken bone. Carefully, tenderly, with great compassion and love, we tend to our fallen brother. We do not rejoice in his stumbling, tell all our friends about it, invite them to see our fallen brother, and trumpet his folly over Facebook! Meekness, however never means weakness or the indulgence of sin.

One further caution: we must be sure before we proceed that the person is actually committing sin. It is possible to accuse someone wrongly of sin. Certain activities, while distasteful to you, might not necessarily be sin. Sin is an activity in violation of God's commandments, not your commandments. The subject of Christian liberty must not be overlooked, but neither may we use liberty "as an occasion to the flesh" (Gal. 5:13).

The situation described by the reader, however, is much more serious. This is not a minor transgression that we can afford to overlook for the sake of love. This is not a foolish fall into sin that can be remedied through restoration in meekness. This is a pattern of willful disobedience against God, a pattern that must be broken. To walk or live in sin means that sin, not righteousness, has become a way of life. This walking in sin manifests itself in a pattern of worldliness, a love for the pleasures of this world. The Bible tells us that we must live in the world and that we may even enjoy lawfully the things of this world, but we must not love the world itself. Most serious, and an indicator of a serious underlying spiritual problem, there is a neglect of the means of grace and a failure to live in the community of the church. There may even be a growing dissatisfaction with the worship, preaching, and way of life of the true church. In those situations, you can be sure, the false churches are more than willing to cater to the lusts of the flesh and to offer an easier road to heaven. Perhaps your friend has already heard their siren song: "Come to us! Our worship is livelier! Our fellowship is better! We are more loving!" Of course, they omit to tell you that their doctrine is false, their sacraments are corrupted, and their discipline is neglected!

Sometimes young people faced with such rebellious friends despair of what they can do to slow down or stop the downward spiral. But this we must say: ignoring the sin is not an option for a friend who loves. "Open rebuke is better than secret love" (Prov. 27:5). "He that rebuketh a man, afterwards shall find more favor than he that flattereth with his tongue" (Prov. 28:23). Love "rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth" (1 Cor. 13:6). Love demands that the young person whose friend is guilty of walking in sin does not ignore the friend's lifestyle. This is where we need wisdom, patience and courage. Wisdom! We do not approach our friend suddenly without thinking and without much prayer, blundering upon him without any tact or common sense. Patience! We do not expect immediate results, as if one verse of Scripture will immediately break the stubborn heart of our wayward friend. If a person is deeply entrenched in sin, many careful, patient, persistent, loving admonitions are required. Courage! This too will be necessary because our natural reaction is to fear our friend's response: "Who do you think you are?" "You're no better than me!" "Mind your own business!" Ultimately, we feel we might lose our friend, and the whole situation is too risky. Don't rock the boat! Just pretend nothing has happened! These are the temptations we face.

The questioner asks, "Do we bring the word with us every time?" Absolutely! You must! What else would you bring? Do we not, as Reformed young people, believe that the word of God has power? Is it not the power of God unto salvation (Rom. 1:16)? Is it not sharper than any two-edged sword (Heb. 4:12)? The devil would have us bring a butter knife because he fears the sword of the Spirit. Bring the word, and be comforted in this: a child of God will always (even if it takes more time than we hope or expect) respond to the word of God. Christ's sheep hear his voice and they follow him, even if for a time they wander astray to their own hurt.

Matthew 18 lists the steps we must take. First, we admonish the brother privately (v. 15). With this first step, we must come meekly. "Brother, I noticed that

you did […]. Don't you realize that this is sin? I love you and I am concerned for you. Let us talk about it. Let us see what God says about this behavior." Don't come in with all guns blazing. We are engaging in spiritual surgery, using the word as a spiritual scalpel, not as a sledgehammer to break the brother's skull. We must not think that one admonition is enough to warrant the second step. "I told him once. Now I can wash my hands of the whole situation. He knows where I stand." The Bible does not say how many times you must come to your brother. However, if it becomes clear that he is hardening himself in his evil way, step two will become necessary. Bring witnesses. Admonish him again in the presence of the witnesses (v. 16). At no point in the process may you gossip about the sin to others.

If your friend persists, the elders of the church must be called. Are you reluctant to do this? Does this seem too extreme? The Lord has given the elders to the church for this purpose, "to watch for your souls" (Heb. 13:17). And if the brother has been missing church for some time, the elders will have (should have) noticed. Do not be afraid of the elders. It is not their will to tyrannize or excommunicate your friend. That is never the will of godly elders. Church discipline is the Lord's way to restore erring members of his church. We must not be afraid to use it, and we must believe that God is able to save through it. Perhaps a visit from the elders is the shock your friend needs to bring him to his spiritual senses. The Lord has other instruments. As our loving Father he chastises and is never at a loss what to do.

Remember, too, young people, that you are all under the authority of the elders. There are two kinds of young people in the church, specifically in the Protestant Reformed Churches and in her sister churches. First, there are baptized members. These are "by God, through baptism, admonished of and obliged unto new obedience…that [they] forsake the world, crucify [their] old nature, and walk in a new and holy life." About these we pray that they might "live in all righteousness under our only Teacher, King and High Priest, Jesus Christ, and manfully fight against and overcome sin, the devil and his whole dominion" (Confession and Church Order, 258, 260). Second, there are confessing members. These, in addition to what they are obliged to through baptism, have made public vows before God and his church: "Have you resolved…to lead a new, godly life?" (Ibid, 266). Therefore, young people, you have grounds for coming to your erring friends, meekly, with the word of God, and with the spirit of prayer. You must tell your friends that they are sinning against their baptism, and, if they are confessing members (which makes matters much worse), you must tell them that they are breaking the vows they made at confession of faith.

It is easy to lose courage and to compromise, turn a blind eye, and pretend that sin does not affect fellowship. This is what the world says: "If you love your friend, be tolerant, don't judge, don't make a fuss!" But Christ would have you take the way of Matthew 18. Do not be afraid to use it, and may the Lord bless it to the salvation of his precious covenant youth!

Schuyler

Where We Stand — Prof. David J. Engelsma

# Christianizing the World? (2)

In my previous article in this magazine, I described the project of Christianizing the world—a project in which many Reformed people are engaged.

It is, however, not only Reformed people who have taken on this project. Many prominent evangelicals in the United States have also signed on.

But Protestant Reformed young people are confronted with the call to participate, and with the accusation of "world-flight," if they decline the call, usually at Christian Reformed colleges.

What should the response to this call and accusation be on the part of Protestant Reformed young

people—and also on the part of all young people who are and are determined to be truly Reformed?

They must refuse the call. They must repudiate the accusation that by refusing to Christianize the world they make themselves guilty of world-flight.

The entire project of attempting to Christianize the world is unbiblical, unreformed, illegitimate, and doomed to failure. It is the flight of the fancy of Abraham Kuyper, Herman Bavinck, and all its contemporary advocates.

Christianizing the world is not a calling from God. Nowhere in Scripture, whether explicitly or by good and necessary consequence, does God call his church or the members of the church to influence the world outwardly, after a Christian fashion.

The Christian's calling regarding the world is to be *in* it, physically, but not *of* it, spiritually and ethically (John 17:14–16). By joining with the world of ungodly, unbelieving men and women, in Christianizing the world, the Christian puts himself in the position of being *of* the world. He is now one with the world in a great, spiritual project: nothing less than Christianizing the world. He opens himself up to the world's thinking. He is party to the world's way of doing things. In this cooperation, he finds himself fellowshipping with ungodly men and women as together they supposedly build a form of the kingdom of God.

## Demonizing of the World

Scripture clearly reveals that God's plan for the world is not that it becomes Christianized, but that it becomes increasingly demonized, that is, ungodly and antichristian (Matt. 24). Shortly before the end, in the very days in which we are living, in the very days in which foolish Reformed theologians and college professors are clamoring for the Christianizing of the world, all the nations of the world become the kingdom of the beast, Antichrist (Rev. 13; Rev. 17).

Inwardly, in their unregenerated hearts, the vast majority of the human race are anti-God, anti-Christ, anti-church, and anti-holiness. Their hatred of God develops to the extreme. In accordance with their wicked hearts, they frame their outward, societal life, their culture. The idea that men and women with unregenerated, depraved hearts can have some delight even in an outward veneer of Christianity and will work in cooperation with Christians to erect a kingdom influenced by Christ is nonsense on the face of it. Out of the heart are the issues of life. Unholy hearts hate Christianity, root and branch. Hearts that hate God build kingdoms of hatred for God.

Every semblance of Christianity in national and international life is effaced in these last days. Every aspect of the culture of the modern heathen expresses their hatred of God and of his holiness. Their politics exalts Man and governs on behalf of Man liberated from God and now sovereign. The laws of the courts and congresses deliberately trample God's laws underfoot. So developed is the anti-Christianity of the nations in the last days that the laws of God that are held in contempt are not only his laws in Scripture, but also his laws in nature. The demonized State legislates sodomite and lesbian "marriages" (Rom. 1:24–28).

Their educational system despises God's great work of creation, ascribing the origin of all things to blind chance operating through evolution. Thus, Man is deified as the goal of all things, rather than the God of creation and providence.

Their entertainment glories in the shame of sin, movies, television, videos, and the internet: sexual promiscuity and perversity; gratuitous violence; sensual music; material wealth and physical pleasures as the end of human life. Man's own lusts are the standard of the right and the good, rather than the will of God as taught by Jesus Christ.

## Hardening of the World

And all of this development of sin in the world takes place under the wrathful judgment of God on the world, which "when they knew God…glorified him not as God, neither were thankful." God gives them up to uncleanness; God gives them up unto vile affections; God gives them over to a reprobate mind (Rom. 1:21–32). Whereas the dream of Christianizing the world proposes the world's good development by a common grace of God, the Bible teaches that the world develops as the kingdom of Satan under the judgment of God.

The advocates of Christianizing the world knowingly work at a project that conflicts with God's plan for the world. God does not intend the Christianizing of the world. Their project, therefore, is foolish. But matters are worse. The advocates of Christianizing the world pit themselves against God. In his awful but just judgment, God is at work hardening the world in its willful ungodliness, so that the world develops in sin, filling the cup of its iniquity. The cultural Calvinists oppose this work of God, attempting to Christianize the world. Their project is resistance to God.

As is evident to all in AD 2013, the project of

Abraham Kuyper in the Netherlands and of the Christian Reformed Church in North America over the past one hundred years to Christianize first their nations and then the world has been a colossal failure.

But the project of Christianizing the world has not been without its effect: Both Kuyper's Reformed Churches in the Netherlands and the Christian Reformed Church have become thoroughly worldly. The vain enterprise of cooperating with the world of the ungodly, purportedly by a common grace of God, in order to Christianize the world does not, in fact, make the world Christian. But it does make the church and its schools worldly. The churches of Kuyper have become part of a false church—a church that has ministers who preach, "No God!" (see Psalm 14:1). As for the Christian Reformed Church, it is open to the wicked world and tolerant of the world's most grievous attacks on God's glorious works and holiness: evolution and the denial of the inspiration of Scripture, particularly with regard to Genesis 1–11; a universal love of God, implying universal salvation; feminism; sexual promiscuity, particularly in the sanction of divorce and remarriage; promotion in at least one of its colleges of the sexual perversity of sodomy and lesbianism; approval of the very worldly behavior of dancing—the foreplay to fornication.

The true church and the Christian, including the Protestant Reformed young person, must view the world as their enemy, especially in these last days. From it, they must separate spiritually, so that they hate it and refuse to make common cause with it.

It is the sin of the proponents of the Christianizing of the world that they promote the friendship and cooperation of God's people with the world of the ungodly, the world that has Satan as its god (2 Cor. 4:4). Working closely with the world of ungodly men and women, in a work that is in reality, as Abraham Kuyper himself acknowledged, the building of the kingdom of Antichrist, Reformed young men and young women are swallowed up by the world and destroyed. They adopt the world's thinking—about good laws, about origins, about legitimate entertainment, about the goal of earthly life. They forsake the church, if the church is at all Reformed. They come to regard the church as too narrow, too old-fashioned, even bigoted. They marry unbelievers. They are seduced by and lost to the world's culture, the world's way of life.

This is happening to the young people of the Reformed churches that send their youth into the world in the great, glamorous project of Christianizing the world.

And their ministers and college professors are to blame—and will answer for their souls.

## Uncommon Wrath

Fatal to the notion and project of Christianizing the world is the truth that the world of the ungodly is not the object of the grace of God. Nor does the world of ungodly men and women enjoy a grace of God that is a power improving and directing their lives. The theory of common grace, which is fundamental to the project of Christianizing the world, is false doctrine. Grace is divine favor towards someone—a favorable attitude. God does not have an attitude of favor towards unbelievers and idolaters, who are outside of Jesus Christ. On the contrary, God "hates all workers of iniquity" (Psalm 5:5).

God does not drive the culture of the ungodly by some non-saving grace. Rather, "the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness" (Rom. 1:18). In this uncommon wrath, so far from influencing them to create an outwardly Christian civilization, a form of the kingdom of God, God gives them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient (Rom. 1:28), thus manifesting their kingdom more fully and clearly as the kingdom of the devil.

Judgment is impending over the world!

And all those who are one with the world in implementing, exercising, and developing the world's ungodliness will perish eternally in the divine judgment when it falls. All those who have been busy building "Babylon the great" must perish in its fall, and fall it will (Rev. 18:2).

## "Come Out of Her"

The call of God with regard to the great kingdom of the world now abuilding is not, "Christianize it! Christianize it!" but, "Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues" (Rev. 18:4).

The call of God to Protestant Reformed young people is the opposite of the siren-song, "Christianize the world." The call of God is, "Separate from the world! Do not defile yourself with the world's filth and rebellion against God! Hate the world! Oppose the world! Willingly endure the world's hatred of you, as representatives of the holy God in the midst of

the unholy world!"

That you might hear this (saving) call, our spiritual and ecclesiastical fathers and mothers took the stand against common grace that resulted in their expulsion from the Christian Reformed Church in 1924.

But does this not amount to the error of world-flight—the unreformed view and practice of the Christian life of the Anabaptists?

Not at all!

The charge is groundless, if not malicious.

And this will be the content of the next article in this series.

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Where We Stand — Kyle Tanis

# Homosexuality: The Need for Intolerance

Are you prepared to stand by the clear teachings of Scripture when pressured to accept homosexuality? Even from those who profess to be Christians? In a world that is continually pushing acceptance of immoral lifestyles, Reformed young people must be ready to take a stand for the truth and humbly bear the label of "intolerant."

As a student at Grand Valley State University, the need for a strong defense against homosexuality has been made very clear to me. GVSU takes great pride in its Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender (LGBT) Resource Center, which is devoted to making homosexuals feel a sense of unity and inclusion on campus. Homosexuals feel persecuted because they often receive harsh opposition when they "come out of the closet." The LGBT club commonly places signs along the sidewalks at GVSU that attempt to arouse sympathy for homosexuals by listing rates of depression and suicide among homosexual students. These signs list the effects of this so-called persecution, but who is responsible for it?

Rev. Doug VanDoren, a local pastor for the United Church of Christ whose congregation includes many homosexuals, addressed this question in a recent LGBT-sponsored speech at GVSU. Though many religions are opposed to homosexuality, VanDoren claimed that the blame for their persecution rests on Christianity because it has singled out homosexuals more than any other religion. When Christians are confronted by homosexuals looking for tolerance, he said, they often respond with "I can't accept you because I am a Christian." Because Christians as a whole are more outspoken against homosexuality than other religions and make up a large portion of the West Michigan population, hearing this response makes local homosexuals feel that everyone is against them. VanDoren urged Christians to respond with, "I can't accept your lifestyle because it goes against what I believe." He encouraged this response because in this way the individual takes personal responsibility for his stance and also leaves the matter open to discussion rather than simply "hiding behind" the masses of Christianity.

Granted, VanDoren's alternative sounds appealing in that it encourages taking personal responsibility for our beliefs, but our response should not end there. When we are approached by a homosexual, we should not merely state what *we* believe, but bring to them the clear teaching of Scripture. We must let them know that their sin is wretched, but that there is grace sufficient to deliver them. We must come with the gospel of Jesus Christ!

The need to bring them the gospel may seem obvious, but we must be conscious of the fact that the false church also comes to homosexuals in the name of the gospel. They come with a perverse gospel that proclaims "God is love," but completely ignores the equally important truth that "God is just" (Zeph. 3:5)

In his justice, God *must* punish sin. The "God is love" gospel denies this truth by saying that God blindly loves all people, regardless of their lifestyle. When presented with the gospel of the false church and the true gospel of Jesus Christ, the homosexual will find it much more appealing to follow the "Christian" who allows them to wallow in their sin.

Though the false church may not openly say God does not hate sin, they simply undermine his justice by saying that homosexuality is not sinful. When I asked VanDoren how he explained the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, he claimed that God destroyed them on the basis of their *inhospitality* to the angels, not their homosexuality. This is clearly not the case! God told Abraham that he was going to destroy these cities because of the cry of their great sin that had risen *before* the angels even arrived in the city (Gen. 18:16ff). The very purpose of the angels' visit was to rescue Lot from the coming destruction (Gen. 19:15). Further, Jude explicitly states that "giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh" was the reason for the destruction of these two cities (Jude 1:7).

In response to this verse, VanDoren first claimed that looking to the original Greek text would show that this was not the meaning of the verse at all. Perhaps knowing that this was a false claim, he continued by saying Jude was simply an extreme writer at an extreme point in the history of the church, and therefore his words should not be taken too seriously. In VanDoren's response, we see a characteristic that frequently accompanies false doctrine: the denial of the infallibility of Scripture.

Not only did he discredit the epistle of Jude, but he also openly stated that the Old Testament can be ignored because it is no longer relevant to the church. God's law against homosexuality, he claimed, was simply a part of the "holiness code" that was meant to set the nation of Israel apart from the surrounding cults. Laws forbidding homosexuality, therefore, can be thrown out along with other Old Testament laws such as abstaining from pork. While it is true that these laws served to separate the children of Israel from the heathen world, this was not *why* God condemned homosexuality.

Homosexuality is condemned in the seventh commandment, which forbids all sexual uncleanness (see Lord's Day 41). The Ten Commandments were given by God not only to set God's people apart from the world, but because he is holy and requires holiness of his people as well. In Leviticus 18 God describes many implications of the seventh commandment, knowing that the Israelites were like children and would try to find loopholes in the law if he did not list examples in great detail. In Leviticus 18:22 God condemns homosexuality directly by saying "Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it is abomination." The word *abomination* carries with it the idea of an intense loathing. This is how God sees homosexuality, and this is how we must see it as well.

When others hear that this is our stance on homosexuality, we must be prepared to be labeled as "intolerant." VanDoren is a prime example of the growing movement within the realm of Christianity to break away from the "out-dated" and "closed-minded" views on homosexuality and to work towards inclusion of unrepentant sinners. I have also seen in the workplace that even those people of the world who are not directly connected to homosexuality in any way will still defend it against Christian intolerance. These people know they have sin in their own lives, and that Scripture commands that they repent of their sins as well. They stand in defense of homosexuality because they do not want anyone to tell them they have to give up their own sins either.

In light of all this, it is important for believers to be prepared for the situations where a firm stance against homosexuality is necessary. We must approach the homosexual with humility, as sinners saved by grace, knowing that we all have a sinful nature and the only thing keeping us from vile sins like homosexuality is the grace of God. We must show them from Scripture that their sin is an abomination before God, but that there is freedom in the cross of Christ. In order for our witness to be effective, they must see in our lives the joy that can be found only in a sinner saved by grace. The false church and the unbelieving world are united against us, so be prepared for ridicule. Pray for boldness and the grace to be a witness to the beauty of the life of a redeemed sinner.

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# Watching Daily At My Gates

**April 10** ***Read Psalm 93***

Jehovah, the word used in this psalm to name God, is a king. He is the king who rules over all. Like other kings, his kingship is sovereign. However, unlike other kings, God is sovereign over all men and all parts of nature. All nature joins in giving to him the honor due his name. God has a law by which he rules. That law must be kept by his subjects. We do this not just out of honor, but we do this as a way to express our gratitude for all that he has done for us. Finally, his kingdom is holy in nature. Do we work at being holy even as he is holy? Sing Psalter 252.

**April 11** ***Read Psalm 94***

This psalm starts out imprecatory in nature but then turns to being a source of great comfort to the child of God. In the early part of the psalm, some national calamity is described. After addressing Israel's attackers, the psalmist points out that this calamity was for the good chastening of God's people. Reread verse 12 if you do not think that this is true. Then read verse 17. The word "unless" should fill us with great comfort. If God is not our help, on what can we place our trust? Sing Psalter 253.

**April 12** ***Read Psalm 95***

We now come to a section filled with psalms of praise. Many of these psalms we know from memorizing parts of many of these psalms, if not the whole psalm. From the very old to the young, these psalms show to us how we must praise our great God. In this psalm the first part gives to us four reasons to praise our God. We find these in verses 3–7. Then there is a solemn warning of what may happen if we do not praise God as we should. Israel had to learn this solemn fact in the wilderness. We must learn from their example to praise our God for all that he has done for us. Sing Psalter 256.

**April 13** ***Read Psalm 96***

God has given to his people the wonderful gift of song with which to praise him. How do we use it? Are we half-hearted singers, or do we with might and main seek to praise the Lord of heaven and earth? We do not have to be well-trained musicians in order to praise the Lord. If God has given to us the talent of music, we must use that gift in his service. But he has given to everyone the gift of singing. Later in the psalm we are told to worship God in the beauty of holiness. Our song is one of the ways we can participate in the worship services. Let us do that joyfully and willingly. Sing Psalter 259.

**April 14** ***Read Psalm 97***

In this psalm we are reminded that God is king not only over the world of man, but also over nature. Nature exhibits this fact and by its creation shows that it, too, gives glory to the name of God. How often have we not marveled over a beautiful sunrise, a lovely mountain vista, and many other beauties that we can see? That nature exhibits the glory of God is more reason that we need to praise him. God has given to us the ability to praise him. We must use that ability in gratitude for the salvation that Christ wrought for us on the cross. Sing Psalter 260.

**April 15** ***Read Psalm 98***

This psalm is very similar to the others in this section. Do we see the marvelous works of God in all aspects of creation, as well is in all aspects of our lives? It is easy to think about the majestic redwood, but do we consider the stars many miles away? How about the most minute cell that exhibits God's glory under the microscope? What about all the marvelous things that God has done in our lives? Do we consider those things? Even the most ordinary of incidents has God's fingerprints all over it. Let us recognize this thought and praise our maker. Sing Psalter 264.

**April 16** ***Read Psalm 99***

God is king! Do we acknowledge that fact in our lives? Do we live in ways that show that he is king and we are his people and servants? This we must do every day of our lives. We must bow to his sovereignty. In this way we will show that we seek from him all things necessary for body and soul. Each plan that we make will have the phrase "if the Lord will" appended to it. We will seek from him the salvation in the way he has decreed. He is a great king; let us praise him in the way that he has commanded us. Sing Psalter 266.

**April 17** ***Read Psalm 100***

This psalm is one that young and old know well. It probably trails only Psalm 23 in familiarity. Notice that it contains several commands and several reasons to obey those commands. The gist of those commands is to serve God with all our heart, mind, and strength. The gist of the reason is that he is the sovereign God of heaven and earth. We are his creatures and must serve him, who has no equal. He will care for us by his everlasting truth for all ages. Hallelujah, praise ye the Lord. Sing Psalter 270.

**April 18** ***Read Psalm 101***

David makes several statements about the way that he will live his life. Can we and do we make these statements ours? Do we vow and promise to behave wisely in all of our lives, no matter what our age is? Do we behave wisely in school by using the talents and abilities that God has given to us to his glory alone? Do we behave wisely in the work world by giving to our employer what is due him and giving to our employees what is due them? Do we behave wisely in our marriages or in the single lives in which God has set us? Do we behave wisely in the entertainment in which we partake? In doing these things we honor God in the way that he deserves as our sovereign lord and king. Sing Psalter 271.

**April 19** ***Read Psalm 102***

God's people can be and are afflicted in this life by those who hate God and his commands. As we are the closest to him, we become their targets. We must go to him in prayer and ask for help in those afflictions. We may not always be delivered from those afflictions; it is the testimony of Scripture that some of God's beloved will be afflicted even unto death. We can pray these prayers in the confidence that he will hear us because he is God forever and ever. In the midst of afflictions God's people can pour out their hearts to him. They do this knowing that God will bring their afflictions to a good end. Sing Psalter 276.

**April 20** ***Read Psalm 103***

Do you have a favorite verse in this psalm of praise? The opening words of several verses are "Bless the Lord..." We can speak well of him because he is our God and has done good things for us. We deserve eternal punishment for our sin; like a pitying father he sent his Son to take our place on the cross. For that reason alone we can say "Bless the Lord, O my soul!" God knows that we are weak and frail; he has made us strong by his grace. Let us praise him from whom all blessings flow! Sing Psalter 278.

**April 21** ***Read Psalm 104***

This psalm seems to be a continuation of the previous one. It is one that many people ignore because it ascribes to God the creation of the heavens and the earth. Those who have rent Genesis 1–6 out of their Bibles should do the same with this psalm. For us this psalm is a beautiful reminder of the greatness of our creator. We should take the time to examine the creation closely. When we do that, we see that it could not have come about by chance; rather, we see that it is the work of a great God, and then we should break forth in songs of praise for this Creator who sent his Son to be our redeemer. Thanks be to God! Sing Psalter 285.

**April 22** ***Read Psalm 105***

While the previous psalm calls us to praise God on account of the beauty and wonders of creation, this psalm calls us to praise God for his sovereign power in history. For the first readers of the psalm it was the history of their ancestors delivered from the slavery in Egypt. For us that history was typical. It pointed ahead to our deliverance from the Egypt of sin. We can look at this history and all of history and know that God cared for his people then, he cares for his people now, and he will care for his people in the days and years to come. We must not ignore this history, but learn from it so that we know the magnitude of the work God has done for us. Sing Psalter 289.

**April 23** ***Read Psalm 106***

Notice how this psalm begins and ends. Then see what lies between those two verses. The psalmist recounts the acts of rebellion that Israel committed in their history. This national psalm causes us to think about our own lives. Are we any better than Israel of old? We are not, and like Israel we deserve none of God's grace. Yet he looked down upon us in love and redeemed us by the blood of his Son. Is there anything else we can say but Hallelujah? Sing Psalter 290.

**April 24** ***Read Psalm 107***

"Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men!" What else can we say when we look at the various works enumerated by the psalmist in this anthem of praise? When we look at creation. how can we not be moved by God's wonderful works? When we examine the history of the world, even as it happens daily, do we not see his sovereignty on every page? When we consider his providence, as it is evident in each of our individual lives, what is our conclusion? Let us pause a moment often throughout our day and praise Jehovah for his goodness and wonderful works which are abundant around us. Sing Psalter 295.

**April 25** ***Read Psalm 108***

In writing this psalm, David is inspired by the Holy Spirit to use phrases and ideas found elsewhere in the collection of psalms. He groups them together under the main theme of our calling to praise God. What is the most convenient way to praise God? Of course, it is through singing. We need to begin the day with singing, we must sing throughout the day, and we should end the day in songs of praise to our God. These might not be the audible songs that we use in public worship, but these could be silent reviews of the songs of Zion. I hope you catch yourselves singing God's praises, and I hope someone else catches you as well. Sing Psalter 299.

**April 26** ***Read Psalm 109***

This psalm is both messianic and imprecatory in nature. We see a prophecy of Judas' treachery against Christ. We also read of David's prayer for deliverance from and for the destruction of his enemies. These enemies are also the enemies of Christ and his church. In the last part of the psalm David prays for help for himself. David finds himself in a low condition and realizes that his only help can come from God. We need to remember this fact. When feelings of despondency overcome us, we need to turn to him who will lift us up. He will help, as he is the God of all comfort. Sing Psalter 301.

**April 27** ***Read Psalm 110***

In this messianic psalm we see several of Christ's characteristics. He is not only a priest, but he is a priest after Melchizedec's priesthood. In that office he can and will pay for our sins by a sacrifice that no one else can make. He is also a king, as he puts all the enemies of God's church under him and reigns supremely over all. In verse three we see characteristics that can be perfectly exhibited only by Christ. Christ himself uses this psalm as proof of his divinely given work when confronted by the Pharisees in the week before his death. May we give thanks for this work, as it gives to us salvation that cannot be taken from us. Sing Psalter 302.

**April 28** ***Read Psalm 111***

This psalm is a Hebrew acrostic. Each phrase begins with a letter of the Hebrew alphabet. This is thought to have aided in memorizing the psalms as they were used in public worship. This tells us two things: first, we should memorize the psalms for the benefit of our worship; second, we should use the psalms as our songs as we worship God. Notice the last verse. This thought is often found in the book of Proverbs, although as we see here, it is found in other places. Do we want true wisdom? Then we must fear the Lord. In doing this we will praise Jehovah. Sing Psalter 304.

**April 29** ***Read Psalm 112***

This psalm seems to be a continuation of the previous psalm. The acrostic structure is the same, and the thought begun in the last verse of Psalm 111 is found in the first verse here. Notice that the man who fears Jehovah is blessed, or as the word can be translated, happy. How many men in the world would be happy to fear God and not themselves? How many men would consider themselves blessed to gain riches and then to give them to those in need as a way that then shows they fear Jehovah? Do we work so that we may have money to contribute to the relief of the poor that Christ told us would always be among us? Let us trust in God to supply us with what we need, and then let us thank him for such supply by caring for those in need. Sing Psalter 305.

**April 30** ***Read Psalm 113***

This psalm is the first of the great "Hallel" psalms. These psalms were used in the Jewish feasts and ceremonies, especially the passover and the feast of tabernacles. It may have been the "hymn" sung by Jesus and his disciples as they went out into the night in which Jesus was betrayed. It calls us to praise God for all that he can do and has done. It does not matter what kind of persons God's people are; he can and will care for them. As one of those blessed people, praise him at all times. Sing Psalter 306.

**May 1** ***Read Psalm 114***

Not only people see and tremble at the power of God, but the whole creation also acknowledges the power of the Creator. The creation waits for the day of its deliverance just as the church waits for that day. As God's church was constituted as they left Egypt, the members had great reasons for praise. We wait for our deliverance from the spiritual Egypt in which we live. We are called to praise him as we wait for that deliverance. Sing Psalter 307.

**May 2** ***Read Psalm 115***

To whom are we called to give glory? We must not glorify ourselves, as is the wont of some in this world today. We must not be guilty of overusing the pronouns "I" and "me". Second, we must not glorify some idol. This could be a thing such as money, power, or some institution, alhough today we might be inclined to glorify some famous star of entertainment, sports, or some other endeavor. These stars are either self-proclaimed or are stars because of evil pursuits. We must glorify God in whom we can place our complete trust, knowing that he will deliver us from all manner of troubles into which we may fall. In glorifying God we praise him for his wonderful works of mercy towards us. Sing Psalter 309.

### May 3 *Read Psalm 116*

This psalm seems to be a song of thanksgiving for deliverance from some great trouble in which the psalmist found himself. This trouble may have been health related and may have brought him to the brink of death. In penning these words the psalmist confesses that he loves God and knows that even in death he is precious in the sight of God. We need not fear death in any form, for death is the entrance into eternal glory and everlasting communion in the presence of him who regards our death as precious. Being delivered from his troubles, the psalmist goes to the courts of Jehovah to praise him. Are we found there often? Sing Psalter 313.

### May 4 *Read Psalm 117*

In this shortest psalm we find great worth. First, it is addressed to us, the church of the New Testament. We are the church gathered from all nations. What a gift we have been given! We are called to praise him for that great gift. Second, we are called to praise him because he has showed unsurpassed kindness to us in delivering us out of our sins and miseries. We have been given the truth of salvation by faith alone. This truth will never fail; let us praise our sovereign God for such a great gift. Sing Psalters 314–316.

### May 5 *Read Psalm 118*

There is much discussion about the author and purpose of this psalm, but there are a few truths about which there can be no dispute. Christ is mentioned in the psalm. He himself referred to the psalm during his last week on this earth. The New Testament church in Acts 4 recognized this fact as well. Verse 24 is one that all children of God should think of often—in fact, every day. Every day is a day that God has made for his church to glorify him. Do we think we have bad days? They are all God's for us to rejoice in. Finally, the psalm opens and closes with the same command and reason for the command. We must thank him whose mercies endure forever. Sing Psalter 318.

### May 6 *Read Psalm 119*

Even if you do not read this psalm in one day, the thought remains the same. God's law must be paramount in the lives of all believers. Of the 176 verses, only a handful of them do not specifically mention that law of God. How do we treat the law? Do we consider it unbreakable? Do we value it more than any thing else on this earth? Reading this psalm and singing the Psalter numbers associated with it give to us valuable instruction in the way we should go. We should read these valuable words of God more than once during the year. Sing Psalter 333.

### May 7 *Read Psalm 120*

This is the first of 15 "songs of degrees." Some say that they were used as the Israelites made their way up to Jerusalem and then up Mt. Zion to the temple. Others have said that they were used by the captives either in Babylon or as they made their way from Babylon. No matter what their original intent, there is much in them from which we may learn. In this psalm we learn to go to God in prayer because of an enemy who damages us with his tongue. We must learn that we cannot fight against such abuse physically; we should use the weapon of faith in prayer to ask God for deliverance. In this way we will find comfort. Sing Psalter 343.

### May 8 *Read Psalm 121*

While hills were places of defense for Israel of old, and while they may provide comfort and solace for some of us today, our help does not come from them. As we confess every Sunday, our help comes from the Lord who made all things. What a grand consequence of believing that God is the sovereign creator of all things! When we confess and believe in creation as delivered to us in Scripture, we then can have faith that our help in any situation will come from that same sovereign being. Nothing will stand in our way when we look to him for help. This should be our confession every day. May he grant us the grace to make it so. Sing Psalter 347.

### May 9 *Read Psalm 122*

Are you tempted to skip church this week? Are you making some other aspect of your life more important than attending the divine worship services? If you are—and this is true of most Christians in their lives, then read this psalm and then read it again. What else should make us happier than to hear a call from a friend to go to church? Jerusalem was a city built with the defense of its citizens in mind. The church and the order of worship found there also provides defense against Satan and all his wiles to the members as they gather there from week to week. Rather than running from church to seek the wicked's pleasures, we should run to church to receive a refuge from the wicked world. In that place we will find a peace that surpasses all else. Sing Psalter 348.

### May 10 *Read Psalm 123*

God's people throughout history continually find the scorn of the enemy against them. Sometimes this is truer than at other times. It is usually at these times that the church becomes strengthened in her conviction that God is God. Our first reaction to such scorn is to seek God in his word and by prayer to him. Through these means we will find a rest that will be found in no other way. We need God's mercy on such occasions, and we will surely find mercy in him. Let us not fear scorn, but let us turn to our God for help in time of need. Sing Psalter 351.

# God in His Mighty Power Created No Possibility for Evolutionism

## (6) Intelligent Design

The Intelligent Design movement is something extremely perplexing to the Reformed Christian—even more so than theistic evolution. Where theistic evolution is a contradiction, the Intelligent Design movement is just mind-bogglingly different. The Intelligent Design movement is another view on origins. Advocates of this movement contend there must be a designer or creator, as is evident from the universe around us. "The theory of intelligent design holds that certain features of the universe and of living things are best explained by an intelligent cause, not an undirected process such as [evolution's, RJK] natural selection."[1] Very few in the movement will say the designer is the God of the Bible, and others claim it may be another god of some sort. Some are theistic evolutionists and some are atheists, but most are agnostics—those who believe there is no possibility for proof of the existence of God, but do not deny the possibility that he exists. What is disconcerting is how Intelligent Design adherents cannot get from point A to point B, point A being a conviction that the universe was intelligently designed, and point B being an acknowledgment of *God* as the creator.

Intelligent design thinking (not creationism) was first promoted by a biochemist, Michael Denton, in the early 1980s, culminating in the publication of his book, *Evolution: A Theory in Crisis* (1985). During the 1950s and 1960s there were some rumblings of doubt regarding Darwinian Theory in the scientific community, but nothing that got scientists too agitated. Living during this time, as well as working at the genetic level, Denton realized that "nature is astonishingly complex," and "The multifunctionaility [*sic*] of things…struck me as an extraordinary thing to experience, and this level of complexity was not easily reducible to a simple, continuous, random process [natural selection, the mechanism of Darwinian evolution, RJK]."[2] This was the beginning of an idea known as 'irreducible complexity' advanced later by Michael Behe. Denton saw design in this, but did not allow into his thinking the possibility that it was God's design.

The underlying motive of the Intelligent Design movement is summed up in the words of one of its fathers, Phillip Johnson. "The question I want to investigate is whether Darwinism is based upon a fair assessment of the scientific evidence, or whether it is another kind of fundamentalism."[3] Johnson sought not so much to offer a new answer on origins beside Darwinism; he just wanted to destroy the notion that Darwinian Theory is dogmatic truth. Johnson does not provide a specific replacement such as the Creator God, but only proposes that the universe was designed…somehow…by means of "an agent (the creator) in a generalized act (creation)."[4]

When Michael Behe (whom we mentioned in the last article) came on the Intelligent Design scene with the publication of his book, *Darwin's Black Box* (1996), he pushed what is known as the theory of irreducible complexity. Behe defines an irreducibly complex system as "a single system composed of several well matched, interacting parts that contribute to the basic function, wherein the removal of any one of the parts causes the system to effec-

1 http://www.discovery.org/csc/topQuestions.php#questionsAboutIntelligentDesign.

2 Thomas Woodward, *Doubts About Darwin: A History of Intelligent Design* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2003), 36.

3 Phillip Johnson, *Darwin on Trial*, rev. ed. (Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity, 1993), 14.

4 Woodward, 100.

tively cease functioning."[5] This theory begins with a look at a quotation from *The Origin of Species* by Charles Darwin, in which he states: "If it could be demonstrated that any complex organ existed, which could not possibly have been formed by numerous, successive, slight modifications, my theory would absolutely break down."[6] From this quotation Behe contends that science has absolutely no idea how complex systems such as vision or blood clotting could have formed from step-by-step evolution. Behe contends that Darwinian Theory shatters because of irreducibly complex systems; therefore these systems reflect intelligent design.

## Removing God

Many argue Intelligent Design is a "pincer-movement" of creationism, but "well-camouflaged"[7] so as not to be considered having the religious implications of divine creation and therefore skirts the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment in order not to be banned from being taught in public schools. The Establishment Clause states that "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion."[8] In light of this the Intelligent Design movement vehemently separates itself from any biblical-creationist ideas and religious affiliations or implications of any sort.

The Intelligent Design movement is promoted and encouraged today by the "secular think tank," Discovery Institute. The Discovery Institute "supports the work of scholars who challenge various aspects of neo-Darwinian theory, and scholars who are working on the scientific theory known as intelligent design, as well as advocating public policies that encourage schools to improve science education by teaching students more fully about the theory of evolution."[9] The Discovery Institute touts itself as not being a religious organization, but does contain Protestant, Jewish, and Muslim members.

What struck me most while researching the Intelligent Design movement was the vehement defense of Darwinian theory as indisputable fact by those opposed to the movement, even when slapped in the face with the most compelling evidence that cuts iceberg-sized holes in the "unsinkable Titanic" of Darwinism. Ernst Mayr, a famous evolutionary biologist, when presented with mathematical evidence that contradicted Darwinian Theory, said, "Somehow or other by adjusting these figures we will come out all right. We are comforted by the fact that evolution has occurred."[10] There is a willing blindness in the scientific community to anomalies in the theory of evolution. "For this they 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…" (2 Peter 3:5). There is a vigorous opposition within naturalistic science to anything that has to do with God, so the proponents of Intelligent Design put considerable effort into promoting their idea as anti-God. Many atheistic evolutionists are still convinced that the Intelligent Design movement is promoting literal Genesis creation science. When Phillip Johnson presented his thesis (which eventually was reworked into his book) of anti-Darwinism, Stephen Gould—who himself had disagreement with some aspects of Darwinian Theory—said to him, "You are a creationist, and I've got to stop you."[11] Carnal man in his pride and religious devotion to naturalistic science takes great strides to stamp out even a hint of God. Phillip Johnson, although he is wrong in his conclusions regarding life's being intelligently designed, nevertheless has good insight into the motivating factor of secular science's adherence to evolutionism as dogmatic truth and mission to stamp out God as the creative force.

> Why not consider the possibility that life is what it so evidently seems to be, the product of creative intelligence? Science would not come to an end, because the task would remain of deciphering the languages in which genetic information is communicated, and in general finding out how the whole system works. What scientists would lose is not an inspiring research program, but the illusion of total mastery of nature [pride of man, RJK]. They would have to face the possibility that beyond the natural world there is further reality which transcends science.[12]

The "further reality which transcends science" is

5 Michael Behe, *Darwin's Black Box* (New York, NY: Touchstone, 1998), 39.

6 Charles Darwin, *The Origin of Species* (New York, NY: Barnes and Noble Classics, 2004), 1st ed., 159.

7 Woodward, 16.

8 http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/bill_of_rights_transcript.html.

9 http://www.discovery.org/csc/topQuestions.php#questionsAboutIntelligentDesign.

10 Woodward, 37.

11 Woodward, 96.

12 Johnson, 112.

God; Johnson fails to acknowledge this for fear of being rejected by the scientific community. When it comes down to it, the Intelligent Design movement is agnosticism and therefore idolatry. Thomas Huxley, better known as "Darwin's bulldog" for his fierce defense of Darwinian Theory, defined agnosticism as follows:

> Agnosticism, in fact, is not a creed, but a method, the essence of which lies in the rigorous application of a single principle [intelligent design, RJK]...Positively the principle may be expressed: In matters of the intellect, follow your reason as far as it will take you, without regard to any other consideration [Intelligent Design's belief that there is a creator, RJK]. And negatively: In matters of the intellect do not pretend that conclusions are certain which are not demonstrated or demonstrable [the conclusion that the creator is God, RJK].[13]

While we may agree with the majority of what the Intelligent Design movement contends for in its attempt to remove the aura surrounding evolutionism that protects its claim as dogmatic truth, this attempt is not enough for the Reformed believer. The supporters of Intelligent Design claim there is design, but most proponents of this movement skirt any mention of God's creative work. It is sad to see them so close and yet so far away from the truth.

*Ryan is a member of Grandville Protestant Reformed Church in Grandville, Michigan and associate editor of* Beacon Lights.

13 Thomas Huxley, "Essays upon some Controverted Questions/IX," (1892) *Wikisource, The Free Library*, http://en.wikisource.org/w/index.php?title=Essays_upon_some_Controverted_Questions/IX&oldid=3817202

Choosing a Vocation — Brendan Looyenga

# Science and Medicine as Vocations for the Reformed Christian

In the first article written for this series, I highlighted the clear biblical teaching that vocations first and foremost are a means by which the believer seeks to glorify God. While this calling can be achieved in many ways, one important way that God is glorified through our work is when "culture" is developed from the physical creation. This was *the* central command given to Adam in the creation, the so-called "cultural mandate" (Genesis 1:26–31). Since Adam represented the whole of mankind, we too receive the call from God to develop wholesome, God-glorifying culture with the talents and resources placed in our care.

The fact that humans are collectively called and enabled to cultivate all aspects of God's creation for his glory naturally leads to the question of *how* we are to go about doing this. How should we begin? I contend that the first way we begin any task is to find out about the nature of the task, and then use the understanding that we derive by that course of study to craft something beautiful. That is, first we do the research, then we build upon what is known to develop the materials we are given to work with. To me this sounds a lot like the scientific method, though it is not fair to limit the concept to science alone. The methodology of "discovery and development" can be applied to any facet of the creation—to language, or music, or art, or literature. This is how all creation is cultivated and developed.

Though the scientific method is universal to all of cultural development, when we speak of science we are generally referring to the study and development of the physical aspects of creation. All that can be observed and measured by our senses properly fits into this category, and therefore to be a scientist is to be someone who studies the nature and properties of God's creation. Science also encompasses a study of the laws by which God providentially governs his creation, laws that we decipher as a series of predictable patterns and mechanisms that are intrinsic

to the universe around us. So to be a scientist is to observe and understand what God has done by his creative power (Psalm 8). By science we peer—if ever so slightly—into the magnificence of God's creative power. To understand *what* God created is to see the depth of his creative thinking. To understand *where* we are situated within his creation is to grasp the vastness of the created universe, and how small we are within it. To understand *how* the creation works is to appreciate the intricacy with which God governs his creation. In short, the calling of the scientist is to cultivate creation by learning about it and by communicating this understanding to others so that they may collectively marvel at the depth, vastness, and intricacy of God's creative power, and thereby worshipfully marvel at the nature of their Master Creator.

That God has so chosen to reveal himself in his creation has been appreciated by the people of God throughout the ages, including David: "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament shows his handiwork" (Psalm 19:1), and the Apostle Paul: "For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead" (Romans 1:20). Scripture is replete with such references to what we call God's general revelation of himself. The Belgic Confession in Article 2 elegantly explains that we can know God "by the creation, preservation, and government of the universe, since that universe is before our eyes like a beautiful book in which all creatures, great and small, are as letters to make us ponder the invisible things of God: his eternal power and his divinity." Together with the lens of Scripture, general revelation allows the child of God to gain a greater understanding and appreciation—and thereby a greater love—for the Creator.

In light of this view of creation as revelation, the vocation of scientist becomes one of honor because it entails an indirect reference to ministry. The role of God-fearing scientist can rightly be considered a vocation of ministry in the sense that those in this profession plumb the depths of God's general revelation to communicate to others aspects of the nature and being of God. This ministerial role is certainly secondary to—indeed, wholly dependent upon—the ministry of the gospel, which is God's special revelation and the only way to understand the critical question of *why* God created. But the vocation of scientist is nonetheless a vocation of ministry. As such the calling to be a scientist is a high and honorable calling, not to be taken lightly.

Much responsibility, then, is given to those who are called to study, interpret, and communicate God's revelation of himself, and as such the calling is one that must be given to humility as well. This very unfortunately is not the consensus attitude among modern scientists, who in pride have "changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator" (Romans 1:25). What is this lie? Go no further than the secular account of creation, which is now instead referred to as a "big bang." Or better yet, look at the secular explanation of origins, where there is not a word of credit given to the Creator, but much credit given to the creature and its evolutionary adaptations. These lies, to which the unregenerate man will naturally gravitate, are a direct result of the fall, which essentially subverted the cultural mandate given to Adam such that the purpose was no longer directed toward the glory of God, but instead toward the glory of the creature.

The curse that sin brought upon humanity also weighs heavily on creation itself, yielding a stain upon the creature that is essentially two-fold. First, despite its intrinsic beauty—which was unchanged by the fall—creation is now seen by humanity in a completely different light. Whereas Adam originally understood that his role was to fashion the materials of creation into God-glorifying artwork, humanity now sees its mastery of creation as a means to enrich and glorify itself. The ideas of nurture/replenishment/stewardship, which were originally meant to characterize the relationship between man and creation, were replaced with the images of subjugation/domination/rape of the creation. This is the curse that the creation endures because of the fall.

Second, the curse of sin on creation is deeper and more direct, because it also changed the relationships *between* other creatures—both living and non-living—within the creation so as to corrupt the perfect harmony that God had initially instilled. In Romans 8:20–23, Paul provides remarkable insight into the effects of the fall on the entire physical creation.

> For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

> For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.

The curse on creation is even more explicit in Genesis 3:17–18, where God cursed "the ground"—symbolic of all creation—as a punishment for Adam's willing choice to disobey God. The connotation in this passage is again a loss of harmony between two creatures—man and the earth—within creation. What was once perfect harmony is now conflict. What was once perfect symbiosis is now infection and parasitism. What was once a perfect cycle of metabolic renewal between all the molecular components of living organisms became an endless competition between damage and repair that ultimately culminates in loss and degradation. Such was the consequence of sin on creation: a loss of relationships in every dimension—between God and humanity, between humanity and the creation, and between the non-human members of creation.

It is interesting to note that the disharmony in creation that was caused by sin led to a new branch of science that we call "medicine." This branch of science—which could not truly exist outside of the fall—is interested in the afflictions of the body caused by disease and dysfunction, by infection and degradation. I emphasize that this branch of science is derived from the fall rather than from the original creation ordinance. This distinction between *general science*—which is aimed at understanding and cultivating the original creation—and *medical science*—which is aimed at understanding and treating the physiological dysfunction caused by sin—creates somewhat of a philosophical problem for the argument with which I began this article. In his original state, Adam would have had no reason to cultivate an understanding of disease or disharmony in creation, for it did not exist. As such, there is no theological rationale to include the field of medicine within the cultural mandate, which we understand to be the creation ordinance that specified the vocational callings of mankind.

This leaves the inevitable question, then, of whether there is an underlying rationale outside of the cultural mandate to provide a vocational calling for Christians in the various fields of medical science. To answer this question I direct the reader's attention to a typical understanding of the medical vocation. By this I mean to refer to the notion of a Christ-like reflection that is often used in Scripture to compare such figures as David or Solomon to Christ. I believe that this point of view is particularly useful because Christ himself compared his ministry to the work of a physician. Three of the gospels (Matt 9, Mark 2, and Luke 5) directly quote Jesus as stating "those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick." This reference to himself—in addition to others in Scripture—has provided Christ with the title of "The Great Physician," which is often used in view of his being the only solution for the sickness of sin in our souls.

As such the medical vocation can properly be seen as a "typical" calling, much as the vocation of shepherding is often used in Scripture to describe "Jesus, the Good Shepherd". The qualities of Christ that are implicit in the physician type are most obviously healing and compassion: as Christ has compassion upon those who are sick and dying in sin and brings the healing mercies of salvation, so the physician has compassion upon those whose bodies are racked by physical degradation and brings the healing mercy of medicine. While we must be careful not to equate the mercy of the earthly physician with that of Christ, the type provides a powerful rationale for Christians—who would reflect the compassion of Christ—to find a vocational calling in the field of medicine.

In addition, I also emphasize that another critical aspect of the physician type is the notion of servanthood. This image is particularly striking because of the relative position of authority, knowledge, and power that is given to the practitioner of modern medicine. An enormous amount of education and training is required at all levels of medicine. To have the right to bring the scalpel to the body of a patient, a surgeon must dedicate upwards of thirteen years of his life to rigorous training. Such is also true of the medical scientist, the nurse, and other medical vocations. In light of this rigorous training, modern society has given high honor to the medical profession, and has also bestowed upon it a particular power in our society. Now contrast that honor and power with the actual role of medicine, which is simply to attend to the needs of others in what might rightly be considered a posture of servanthood. So it was with Christ, who being all-powerful and all-knowing God, "made himself of no reputation, and

took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men" (Phil. 2:7). As Christ is our physican-servant, so must the vocation of medicine be one that reflects the humble service of Christ.

I briefly draw your attention to some practical benefits of Christians being involved in the fields of science and medicine in our modern society. These benefits do not provide an underlying rationale for the involvement of Reformed Christians in the field of medical science, but they do embrace the most central of Reformed principles—that of God's sovereignty. When we see where God has provided a vocational calling, then it should also become evident through the eyes of faith how he will use us in that calling for the purposes of his kingdom.

The first benefit deals with the increasingly gray spectrum of science and medicine simply labeled "medical ethics." Remember that creation has been given to humanity by God for development, and as such "every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused" (1 Tim. 4:4) if it is received and used with an eye to God's glory. Such it is with modern medical technology. It is to be received with thanksgiving to God if and only if it is used in a manner consistent with God's glory. Unfortunately, the array of technologies and therapies that have become available or are under development boggle the minds of most scientists and physicians, to say nothing of the untrained member of modern society. Both knowledge and wisdom are needed in guiding the use and development of these technologies, which requires a degree of informed stewardship that we cannot expect to be exercised by the unregenerate world around us. Christians in the fields of science and medicine provide wealth of knowledge—and hopefully wisdom—to the conscientious believer who desires to do what is right with medical technology. Furthermore, Christians in these fields can also provide a voice of direction, caution, and eventually of warning to a medical community that is often bent on the glory and honor of humanity rather than that of God.

Last, it is also notable that those who provide the personal side of medicine—physicians, nurses, medical technicians and such—are often spectators of extreme emotional and spiritual vulnerability. Let us not be blind to the sovereignty of God in each and every position in which he has placed us. While it is no more the calling of a doctor or nurse to witness to the healing power of Christ than it is for a believer in any other profession, it is certainly true that the life and death issues that are confronted daily in the medical profession are unique. As such God places individuals in the medical vocations in a unique position to minister to the believing child of God who is hurting from loss or physical suffering, and to witness to those who do not know Christ, but are grappling with the reason for the loss and suffering that they are experiencing. These are practical benefits to the vocation of medical science, which reinforce the importance of these vocations as a calling for the Reformed Christian.

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Christian Living — Steve Bylsma

# Despising Not Our Youth

In 1 Timothy 1:1–2 we read, "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the commandment of God our Savior, and Lord Jesus Christ, which is our hope; Unto Timothy, my own son in the faith: Grace, mercy, and peace, from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord." From these opening words and other places in Scripture, we can learn much about the relationship between Paul and Timothy. Paul loved Timothy as his own son. We see this also from 1 Timothy 1:18: "This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy…" and from 2 Timothy 2:1: "Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." Additionally, Paul thought highly of Timothy as a fellow believer and preacher. 1 Corinthians 4:17 shows this: "For this cause have I sent unto you Timotheus, who is my beloved son, and faithful in the Lord, who shall bring you into remembrance of my ways which be in Christ, as I teach everywhere in

every church." Again, in Philippians 2:19–23: "But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timotheus shortly unto you, that I also may be of good comfort, when I know your state.... For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's. But ye know the proof of him, that, as a son with the father, he hath served with me in the gospel. Him therefore I hope to send presently, so soon as I shall see how it will go with me."

We can see from these verses that when Paul left Timothy at Ephesus, he did so with love and confidence that Timothy would be a faithful pastor to the church at Ephesus. At some point after Paul had left Ephesus, he writes this letter to Timothy to give him encouragement, and also to teach and admonish him. However, Paul also writes this epistle to the Ephesian church. Timothy was a young man at this time and was not yet clothed with sufficient authority to restrain the headstrong men in Ephesus. John Calvin in his commentary writes, "It is likewise manifest, that there were many things to be adjusted at Ephesus, and that needed the approbation of Paul, and the sanction of his name. Having therefore intended to give advice to Timothy on many subjects, he resolved at the same time to advise others under the name of Timothy."

We now look more closely at 1 Timothy 4:12 and see what it meant for young Timothy and also how we can apply this instruction to our own lives: "Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity."

In this verse Paul exhorts Timothy how he should live as a minister in the church. It is thought that at this time Timothy was about 30 years old. He would be a young man compared to the older members, the grandfathers and grandmothers, the widowers and widows. Timothy had to conduct himself so that he was not despised because of his youth. As we saw earlier, Paul writes this letter both to the church at Ephesus and to Timothy. Paul instructs the church that the age of Timothy should not prevent him from receiving the reverence that he deserves, provided that he conducts himself as a minister of Christ. The church was not allowed to estimate the amount of respect Timothy deserved based on his age. He also instructs Timothy how he is to live so that he is respected regardless of his age. He does this by telling Timothy to be an example to the believers. Timothy must be in the eyes of the world what they would expect to see in the best of Christians. Timothy must be an example of godliness. It must be evident to all around him that Christ dwells in his heart.

Paul then gives to Timothy six true marks of a believer. Paul says, " in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity." This list can then be broken down into two parts: first, in word and conversation, and second, in charity, spirit, faith, and purity. When Paul says "in word and conversation", he means "in all that we say and do." Timothy's words and actions were to go hand in hand. He couldn't say one thing and then do another. He could not preach Christ and then live as one of the world. The remaining four marks are parts of a godly conversation. The order in which Paul places them is important as well. Let's look at them in reverse order to help us understand this. Paul places purity last. Purity really sums up all of the other marks given in these verses. Rev. George C. Lubbers, in the *Standard Bearer*, Volume 38, Issue 15, writes, "This purity is not to be taken in the sense that moralism would teach purity, leaving God out of the picture, but it must most emphatically refer to the spiritual ethical purity of the sanctification which is ours through the Spirit of Christ. It is the purity of heaven, of the spiritual man, of the new man in Christ, in true knowledge, righteousness, and holiness. It is the purity of godliness, which is not merely a matter of form and convention, but a life which has the power of godliness. A minister must be a truly godly man."

We can see that if Timothy was to live with purity as described above, then he must walk in faith. Here, faith refers to both a justifying faith in Christ Jesus and a sanctifying faith from which proceeds good works. In the same Standard Bearer article, Rev Lubbers writes, "Such faith takes all its "purity" out of Christ; it eats and drinks the holiness of God in Christ, and reveals itself in the keeping of the commandments."

The next true mark of a believer is "in spirit". John Calvin, in his commentaries describes this spirit as "zeal for God". This zeal for God would be evidenced in Timothy's life if he lived a life of purity and faith. Without this zeal, Timothy's faith would be lacking, and he would not be living a true life of purity.

The last mark we look at is "in charity." Love energizes true faith. Timothy's faith would have no power if it was not motivated by the love of God. Rev. Lubbers, in the aforementioned Standard Bearer

article, says it best: "If a minister spoke with the tongues of men and angels, and had not love he is altogether nothing more than a noisy, clanging brass and cymbal. Only where such love is which is longsuffering, kind, rejoicing in the truth, and which love will endure eternity, is there true faith and real purity of God through the Holy Ghost." Thus, if Timothy had this true love, faith, and purity, they will be reflected in his words and deeds.

We see how these verses are written as an admonition and encouragement to young Timothy, but now let us see how they apply to us as young people, young adults, older adults, parents, and grandparents—all of us. We saw how Timothy, as a young man, had a place in the church of Christ. We also have a place in that church as young people. While our place in the church is not the position of minister, we nonetheless have an important place in the church. In 1 Corinthians 12 we read that each of us has different spiritual gifts and each of us is a different part of the body of Christ. We also read that each part of the body (each member of the church) is important for the life of the body. Since God has given us a place in his church, we must live our lives in such a way that we are not despised for our youth. We must look to Timothy as an example of how we must live our lives. It is easy, as young people, to defer authority and respect to the older generations in our churches, and we must give them this authority and respect. However, as young people, we also have unique opportunities to be a witness unto godliness. As young people, we have many opportunities to profess our love for Christ and to show by our walk that we are his children. Whether it be in school, in the workplace, or in our busy social life, there are many times when we have a choice to make—a choice to choose God or to choose to go along with the world. The decisions that we make affect our witness unto godliness.

Choosing to profess our love for God will help us to be an example of all the believers. Paul gives to Timothy the marks of a believer, and they must be evident in our lives. Our words and deeds must be those that are filled with charity, faith, and purity. 1 Corinthians 13 shows us how important charity must be in our lives. I will not quote the entire chapter here, but it would benefit all of us to read this again. In this chapter we see that if we have enough faith that we could move mountains and have no charity, we are nothing. This chapter shows us how charity (or lack of charity) affects all aspects of our life. This charity should be evident in the way that we feel about ourselves, the words that come out of our mouths, and the way that we treat one another. Only when we have this true charity of 1 Corinthians 13 will we have the true faith and purity of our God.

Timothy was exhorted by Paul in these verses to be an example of the believers, and from Scripture we see that Timothy followed that exhortation. Let us pray that we may also heed this exhortation from Paul and that our lives may be such that we too are an example of the believer, in word and conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.

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*Steve is a member of Trinity Protestant Reformed Church in Hudsonville, Michigan.*

## Church News

Melinda Bleyenberg

### BAPTISMS

*"But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children." Psalm 103:17*

**The sacrament of holy baptism was administered to:**

Myles Bartek, son of Mr. & Mrs. Bartosz Grochowski—Crete, IL
Hudson Jacob, son of Mr. & Mrs. Jordan Koole—Faith, MI
Brett Henry, son of Mr. & Mrs. Dave Zandstra—Faith, MI
Luke Eric, son of Mr. & Mrs. Eric Solanyk—Loveland, CO
Miles Joseph, son of Mr. & Mrs. Scott Gaastra—Redlands, CA
Grace Johanna, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Keith Wynia—Sioux Falls, SD
Graylynn and Gibson, children of Mr. & Mrs. Garth McKinney—Southeast, MI
Samantha Grace, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Dan Kooienga—Southwest, MI

### CONFESSIONS OF FAITH

*"Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses." I Timothy 6:13*

**Public confession of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ was made by:**

Bart Zandstra, Chelsie Zandstra—Lynden, WA

### MARRIAGES

*"Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it…." Psalm 127:1*

**United in the bond of holy matrimony were:**

Mr. Jesse Lanting and Miss Lydia Pols—Crete, IL
Mr. Nathan Rau and Miss Nancy VanSolkema—Trinity, MI

Connie Meyer

# The Creek

The creek swirled and gurgled by Annabeth's toes as she sat on a rock by the water's edge. The shade of several ancient oaks that grew around the bend of the creek cooled her from the afternoon sun. Sometimes a leaf floated by. Sometimes a water bug scooted across the bend. Sometimes circles of ripples caught her attention. Was it a fish—or a turtle—hiding beneath the surface of the murky water? Annabeth could spend hours sitting here, thinking, watching the water and listening to the crows caw for attention in the woods beyond.

But today she could not stay any longer. She had to get back to the house and finish her homework. She stood up and looked up through the tops of the trees. The leaves were bright green, but they looked black as they were silhouetted against the sun. She hopped from the rock to the boggy ground. The marsh grass tickled her feet.

She sat down once more to put her shoes on for the walk home. As she started her trip back, she turned around to view the scene once more. Trees by the water. It reminded her of Psalm 1. "And in his law doth he meditate day and night." Yes, it was good to spend time just thinking—thinking about such things.

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"Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. The ungodly are not so: but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away" (Psalm 1:1–4).

**From the above text, find every word that has three letters or more.**

# "Little Lights"

## ... let it shine!

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| W | T | H | E | O | O | S | R | G | U | N | G | O | D | L | Y | R | R |
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*Connie is a member of Hope Protestant Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan.*

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