Beacon Lights

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Stangers and Sojourners
Who We Are

Scripture uses many names to describe God's people. Some of them are nouns, such as elect, saints, God's people, the righteous, the beloved. Collectively they are called children, church, brethren, a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people, Zion, and Jerusalem. Sometimes individuals are addressed, such as Timothy, Titus, and Philemon. Adjectives include called, sanctified, faithful, holy, justified, meek, merciful, pure in heart, poor in spirit, and many more. The list is extensive and diverse; each word describes a different aspect of God's people. All of these terms are used by Scripture to teach us who and what we are, and for that reason are useful and edifying.

Among these descriptive terms are the two that form the title of this article: strangers and sojourners, which occur together in Psalm 39:12. They do not necessarily have greater merit than many other words, but they are important as descriptions of God's people. Because they are important, and because they are interesting, I have chosen these words as the general theme for a series of articles. I intend to explore various facets of what it means to be strangers and sojourners. Some of these I already have in mind; others will appear as they occur or are suggested to me. The series will be open-ended as to its length and content. Readers are encouraged to submit suggestions. I intend to write for the general edification of all those who read, but with specific application to our young people, who are beginning their life's sojourn.

These two words are significant because they

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describe the Christian life. Who are we? We are strangers and sojourners. That is our identity.

The terms picture life as a journey comprised of a beginning, a trip, and a destination. The first and last elements are not stated expressly, but are implied in the figure. Our collective life has a beginning. For us as Christians that starting point is heaven, or perhaps more accurately, the life of heaven known to us as regeneration. Our lives originate with God in heaven by virtue of the truth that he is the creator who forms us in our mothers' wombs and gives us physical as well as spiritual life, bringing us into this world both as his creatures and as his children. By the working of his Spirit in the wonder of regeneration, he infuses the new life of Christ into us, spiritually making us his people as he places us on life's path. So where do we come from? Simply put, from God himself.

Our life also has an end, which is heaven. Our place of origin and our destination are essentially the same. About this destination I intend to say more in the future, because the wonder of heaven serves as an incentive to us on our journey. Besides, the figure itself demands an end. Our journey is not an aimless wandering, a helter-skelter roving hither and yon, but a trip with a purpose. We have a place that we need to reach, a place to which we very much want to go, so that we bend every effort toward our arrival in glory. Where are we going? To heaven.

Although the beginning and end are integral parts of the figure of a journey, the emphasis falls on the trip itself. This is especially evident from the term sojourner. The word in its various noun and verb forms and translated in the English as sojourners is used with only a couple of exceptions in the Old Testament. It is the translation of similar Hebrew words that have essentially the same meaning. Wherever it occurs it has the idea of staying someplace only for a time, to dwell temporarily, to be always on the move because a sojourner is on a journey. This calls to mind the familiar figure of camping. Many of us do this, staying in a tent or in a trailer when we go on vacation. We do this because we do not intend to stay in one place more than a night or two as we travel to different parts of the country. We do not buy or build a house, because we do not purpose to live permanently in a given location. We are not dwellers, but campers. This idea is biblical. Scripture tells us that the patriarchs did not build houses, but lived in tents; from time to time they pulled up their tent stakes and moved on.

Such is the life of Christians. We are spiritual sojourners who have no abiding place here. The world is not our home either in the physical sense or especially in the spiritual sense. True, we live here for a time, and though we build houses, whether humble abodes or mansions, our hearts are not set on the things below. We live in tents, for we are only passing through the world on our way to heaven. It is not our goal to pile up the possessions of this world, because they only hinder us on our journey. How is it possible to camp when we have to take truckloads of stuff with us every time we pull up our tent stakes and move? This is even more true in a spiritual sense: we cannot be encumbered by the value system of this world, which is eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die. No, for seventy or eighty years we camp in this world, always journeying toward our destination.

The companion idea of sojourners is strangers. The word appears 211 times in Scripture, all but a handful in the Old Testament, where four words are used to describe us. They are not substantially different from one another, and are used interchangeably. Together they mean alien, foreigner, outsider, stranger. They convey the idea of not belonging and not fitting in. The primary word used in the New Testament has the similar idea of someone who is of another kind, and therefore different or strange. Perhaps "resident alien" best expresses the meaning. We understand that that this term refers to someone who comes from another country to the United States with the intention of staying here for a while, and perhaps of someday immigrating permanently. He obtains permission from the government to stay here for a time and to take up residence. Yet he is not a citizen, but remains an alien; he may live in the U.S., but he really does not belong here completely.

Such strangers we are. We live in the world. We live, work and sometimes play in the world. We are born the same way, grow up the same way, eat the same foods, wear the same clothing, go to school, play sports, get jobs at many of the same places, find girlfriends and boyfriends, get married, buy a house and a car or two, have children and grandchildren, retire, grow old, and finally die. When someone looks at us, we do not seem to be very different from the people of the world. And in reality we are not so different. The reason for this is that God has created mankind as an organic unity. God made man not as an unconnected and unrelated collection of

individuals, but as a race of creatures. Rightly it has been said that we have all things in common in this world except grace.

Yet we are different. Although we have all things outwardly in common, the difference between us and the world is exactly grace. Grace, as we know, is God's favor, his attitude of love toward us. Not to everyone, for his grace is not common, but toward his elect people. His grace is completely undeserved and unmerited on our part, as Scripture teaches in many places. He gives us his grace in his work of regeneration, by which he implants in our hearts the seed of the new life in Christ. He gives us his grace through the death of his Son on the cross, by which we are justified, free from guilt and righteous before him. He gives us his grace by leading us in the way of sanctification, a life and walk of holiness as his people in the world. Precisely here is the difference between elect and reprobate, righteous and wicked, the church and the world, saints and heathen. Grace is what makes us strangers. In most aspects of our life we are not apparently dissimilar from the children of the world. Yet there is an essential difference, and that difference is grace. Because that difference is grace, the idea of the antithesis is implied in being strangers and sojourners. We do not simply live side by side with this world, but because we are different, there is a tension, a relationship of enmity: although we live in it, we are not one with it, and we do not get along with the world.

It is striking that the Bible presents our being strangers and sojourners as a fact. In all the numerous places that these terms are used, we are never told that we must become strangers. How we must behave as strangers, yes indeed. But never what we must be. We are strangers; this is assumed when Scripture uses these words to describe us. This is exactly because of grace: by it God has made us strangers, so strangers we are.

In several instances Scripture uses strangers and sojourners together (Lev. 25:6, 23, 35). This brings up the question of the relationship between the two terms. Are we sojourners because we are strangers, or are we strangers because we are sojourners? Both are true. The answer depends on our perspective. The fact that we are strangers means that we are sojourners, for those who are not strangers have no reason to be sojourners; they fit right in with the world. And that we are sojourners means that we are strangers, because those who sojourn are by that fact strangers. The one idea implies and complements the other.

Being strangers and sojourners, how then must we live? What do we look like spiritually? Specifically as young people, how ought we to behave ourselves on the way to our destination? The answers to these questions we will explore in future articles.

Editor's Notes

We all know by now that the Roman Catholic Church has elected a new pope, Francis I, from Argentina. For the first time in hundreds of years a cardinal from Latin America has been chosen to lead the church. This almost makes one wonder whether the Roman church was listening to Wesley Granberg-Michaelson, its Reformed advisor, and decided to follow his counsel (see the April 2013 editorial). But the church has still done nothing but trade one antichrist for another.

Some time ago Mr. Tom Cammenga wrote a series of fiction articles that appeared in *Beacon Lights*. The first article was entitled "The Gift," which was followed by a number of articles that developed the story contained in the initial article. After a hiatus, he has again taken up his pen to continue his series. *Beacon Lights* is pleased to announce the publication of all previous articles, together with future articles he is writing. An article will appear approximately every two weeks on our website (www.beaconlights.org). For some good Christian fiction, check this out.

In this issue we present the three top rated essays from the 2012 scholarship competition sponsored by the Protestant Reformed Scholarship Fund, a function of the Federation of Protestant Reformed Young People's Societies. The articles in this competition are written by future teachers and ministers, and are well worth your reading.

I have saved the best news for last. We are pleased to announce that *Beacon Lights* is expanding. For some time it has been twenty-four pages in length. Starting in this issue, it will increase to twenty-eight pages. A couple of factors influenced this decision on the part of the staff. One is that we are receiving good articles at a sufficient rate to necessitate this expansion. We thank those who have written for the magazine, and encourage others to write as they are motivated. The other reason is that we have some projects in the planning stages,

and they will require increased space as they come to fruition. Still more good news: The subscription price will stay the same. Today it seems as if we are paying more and getting less for just about everything. *Beacon Lights* is bucking that trend, giving our readers more for their money. We think it's hard to argue with that!

Choosing a Vocation — Joel Minderhoud

Teaching: A Blessed Calling

It was a grade-school science teacher's enthusiasm and demonstrations that first hooked me on science. And then God gave me a pair of chemistry and physics teachers who showed me some of the most fascinating aspects of God's creation and helped me understand "why" things in creation do what they do. These experiences solidified in my mind that I wanted to work in the physical sciences. In addition, a Bible teacher once took me aside and told me that I might have the ability to be a minister and strongly encouraged me to pursue the ministry. Although not convinced that I should enter the ministry, I did see in myself an interest in working with the young people and a desire to teach.

Consequently, before my high school years were completed, I knew clearly that I was called to be a teacher in a Christian high school chemistry/physics classroom. Where else could I get to "do" science every day? And what could be more satisfying than to share my love for this aspect of God's creation with the covenant young people? High school was the right age group—they could tie their own shoes, were past the "she-has-cooties" stage, and could begin to think abstractly and appreciate deeper learning. Therefore, I felt called to be a high school chemistry/physics teacher.

I believe that this is how God shows each of us what our calling is regarding a profession. He does so by showing us what gifts and interests he gives us through encouragements from family and friends, as well as through the situations in our life. Young people have to learn, with the guidance of their parents, to examine their lives and see God leading them towards particular vocations.

Necessary Qualities

I believe that there are two *essential* qualities that anyone desiring to be a teacher must have. Those qualities are a love for the student (and working with the student) and a passion for the content.

First, anyone desiring to be a teacher must love children and working with them. An elementary teacher, for example, must love the children and their hundreds of questions, as well as their need for help on the simplest of tasks. This love for the children is ultimately grounded in the covenant. It is imperative for prospective teachers to have a proper understanding of the covenant that God establishes with his people and the place of children in the covenant. When a teacher understands the love of God for his covenant children—including the lambs of the church—then the teacher cannot but love these children.

Although all the members of the body of Christ love the children of the covenant, not everyone is called to be a teacher. In addition to loving the children of the covenant, one called to be a teacher must genuinely love *working* with these children. The teacher must have the gift of patience to work with the young people, as well as the ability to interact and instruct the children at their level.

This love for the children manifests itself in several ways. First, a teacher who loves his students has a *genuine interest* in their lives. "What do you have for lunch today?" "Boy, I sure enjoyed your piano playing at the program the other day!" "Did I see your grandma in church yesterday? Is she in town visiting you for a while?" This love for the children also manifests itself in an *ability to interact* with students. Those interactions may include playing with them. "Hey kids, let's play hockey at recess today!" It may also involve simple conversation, which sometimes may simply be related to their learning. "Are you ready for that test next hour? No? What are you concerned about from this past chapter?" Finally, a love for the children manifests itself in a *willingness to discipline* the children. No parent loves their children whom they

will not discipline. This is one of the deepest manifestations of love a teacher can show his students. Unfortunately, a great temptation for teachers is to try to manifest love in other areas at the expense of discipline. As grievous as discipline is for both parties (Heb. 12), it is necessary and will bring forth good fruit in the lives of the covenant children (Prov. 22:6). Teachers must be encouraged to discipline the young people faithfully, confident that God blesses the faithful discipline with good fruit.

The second essential quality that a teacher must have is a passion for the content that he must teach. Can a teacher be effective if he greatly loves the children but has no subject-specific knowledge or has no interest in the material he must present? Such a teacher will not be of much service to the parents who called him to teach their children these things. That passion for the content manifests itself in a number of ways. First, a teacher must have a general love for learning. There is a familiar saying that says, "Teachers who love teaching teach children to love learning". Teachers must love to read and study – particularly to read God's word, but also a variety of other good books to broaden their perspective and knowledge base. A love for learning is a key characteristic a successful teacher must have. Second, the teacher must not only love learning, but must also delight to share God's wondrous works with others. The teacher must have a passion to bring the content to the students in light of God's word so that the students ultimately see God in all their work. Finally, a teacher must be able to bring the content that he loves down to the level of the student whom he must teach.

Besides having these two essential qualities, it would be helpful for a teacher to have a few other skills. A teacher should be aware of the pedagogical techniques available to him in order to help teach the students the necessary content. A teacher must be very careful in this area, however, for many of the techniques and ideas about education are based on a wrong view of the child, of the teacher, or of the content. Therefore, a teacher must have a keen sense of discernment—to use only those things that are truly profitable to the student.

In addition to a knowledge of pedagogy, a prospective teacher would profit greatly from a truly Reformed "developmental psychology" course. So much of Christian education (from instruction to discipline) is based on a proper view of the child. A great place to start would be to read Prof. Hanko's *Biblical Psychology* syllabus and listen to his speeches on *Biblical Psychology* that were recorded a few years ago by the Federation of Protestant Reformed School Societies (for access to these, contact Alex Kalsbeek, Executive Director).

Finally, a teacher ought to have a working understanding of the history of the Christian school movement and the principles and practices of Reformed education, including a thorough grasp of the concept "*in loco parentis*." This will help guide the teacher towards the correct goal in his work. School boards would do well to encourage future teachers to take the "Principles and Practices of Reformed Education" course that is currently taught every other year by Prof. Dykstra. And no teacher ought to step into a classroom without having read Prof. Engelsma's excellent work, *Reformed Education* (at least 3 or 4 times; and then yearly thereafter).

Preparation

Typically, a prospective teacher will need to earn a 4-year college degree. That degree will include education courses (i.e., theory and practice) and content-specific courses (i.e., chemistry). The teacher must be especially discerning with regard to what is taught in many of the education courses. Whether at a Christian college or public university, you will not likely agree with the college's "world view" regarding education. Nevertheless, you will be faced with important opportunities to express and articulate your "world view" (especially at a Christian college). It will be critical at those times to grow in your understanding of Reformed principles that apply to education by your own study of the word and the reading of good books (as well as discussions with teachers at PRTI conventions).

A prospective teacher will get into the classroom setting early in the teacher preparation program. Make good use of these opportunities to get a feel for what it is like to be on the "other side" of the desk. Experience some of the joys, as well as the frustrations, of trying to get kids to understand something. This will help to solidify whether or not you are called to be a teacher. Enjoy your student teaching experiences and try to grow from them, but always understand as you practice teach that things will be different when you have your "own" students (because then you will have the opportunity to set the classroom climate as you desire *from day one*).

Teachers must also be on top of the news and trends/fads in education. I was surprised in my own

experience how many faculty meetings and other settings involved a discussion of educational philosophies and trends in education. Often it is necessary to critique these trends to protect our schools from the danger of adopting practices that will be to their detriment. In this is required much wisdom. Prospective teachers would do well to prepare now for attacks that our schools may face in the future by studying and understanding the trends of the day (and the past).

As part of the preparations to teach, prospective teachers would do well to learn to acknowledge their own mistakes. You will make many mistakes—some which are worthy of a good laugh and others that are more serious. Students will be quick to let you know of your mistakes and foibles. Always acknowledge your mistakes, because nothing is more damaging to the classroom atmosphere than a teacher who is "never wrong."

The last thing a prospective teacher ought to do in preparation for teaching is to buy good shoes.

Day-to-Day Experiences

Once hired, a teacher will have much opportunity for a variety of experiences. Each classroom has its own "chemistry," providing a variety of experiences from hour to hour and year to year. Almost everyone is quite familiar with the activities and duties of teachers from their own observations from their school-days. But the "behind the scenes" responsibilities of teachers are myriad, and perhaps less known. Teachers need to make lesson plans for each class of the day (what will be taught, how to teach it, what activities or technology to use, what assignment to give, etc). The teacher must learn how to make good lesson plans efficiently and to evaluate them each day for their effectiveness. With those lesson plans will come plenty of grading (tests and quizzes; daily homework; lab reports; papers). This grading, though difficult and time-consuming, can be done at flexible times and locations—during pre-dawn hours when no one is at school; by staying late after school and getting it done; or by taking a break and enjoying the company of your wife and children and grading later when the kids are in bed—and sometimes at all three of these times. But our teaching does not focus only on the academic; it primarily aims at the spiritual heart of the child. Covenant children must be taught how to use their gifts as obedient servants of God in whatever calling he gives them. They also must be taught to see the sovereign hand of God in all things. Therefore a pressing and demanding part of teaching is applying biblical principles to the various content topics. This takes a working knowledge of the content material as well as of the Scriptures and the confessions. Weaving biblical truths into the content is one of the great joys of teaching.

Other "outside the classroom" duties may include coaching, parent-teacher conferences, giving chapel speeches or teacher convention sectionals/speeches, preparing for field trips, and committee work. Other miscellaneous tasks also crop up from time to time. For example, in addition to writing this article, I spent a couple of hours this week writing college recommendations for students.

The Blessings

Today I busy myself in my 18th year of teaching. It has been a rich blessing for to me to teach in our schools. Because of the covenantal basis of our schools, the labor is an important and high calling. Although laboring with others in the sphere of the covenant to help nurture and instruct the children of the church is a heavy responsibility, it is also a very rich privilege. It is a labor that is filled with blessings and that bears much fruit.

The blessings of teaching can be found in the day-to-day duties of the teacher. Showing students "how" and "why" things in the creation work as they do and how this shows God's greatness and wisdom is a rich blessing. For in doing this, I personally grow in my own appreciation of God's handiwork. One of the greatest joys in teaching is to watch students respond when they recognize that something I taught them several weeks ago was a necessary step in order for them to learn what they did today (i.e., when they see the whole forest, not just the trees). When this happens I have had the great opportunity to show the young people the intricacy and inter-relatedness of God's creation. What a blessing it is to be a part of this! There are also rich blessings in opening and studying God's word, either in devotions, in the classroom instruction, or during lesson plan preparation. Having the opportunity to discuss spiritual matters in class, chapel, or on an individual basis with students is another way in which the work of teaching has its rich rewards. Even the challenging parts of education (i.e., discipline or grading) are rich in blessings. In order to discipline properly, I find myself in prayer at the throne of grace looking to God for the wisdom and strength to properly lead the lambs of the church in the right and proper way. And when overwhelmed with the load and weight or busyness of the work,

I am sustained by the grace of God and by the encouraging words of colleagues and the cooperative and caring parents in whose place I stand. In all of this, the central blessing of teaching is knowing that God graciously uses me and my colleagues *to help parents train and equip the covenant seed to obey and fear God* in whatever calling/station he gives them in this ever-increasingly sinful world.

The labors of the teacher are rich and abundant in blessings. One who has been given the gifts and qualities to teach and uses those gifts faithfully in the instruction of the seed of the covenant will find a great reward and a satisfying "career" (calling). May God richly bless our schools with faithful, qualified teachers!

Mr. Minderhoud is a teacher at Covenant Christian High School in Walker, Michigan. He is a member of Hope Protestant Reformed Church.

Where We Stand — Prof. David J. Engelsma

Christianizing the World? (3)

Those who promote the Christianizing of the world as the duty of the church and of the Christian present the project as the coming of the kingdom of God in the world. The Christian colleges that are on this bandwagon beat the drum of the coming of the kingdom. Not much is heard of church or covenant. Kingdom is all: seeking the kingdom; promoting the kingdom; living the life of the kingdom; and the like.

This emphasis on the kingdom, as though Christianizing the world brings about the kingdom of God and is the chief aspect of the kingdom, goes back to Abraham Kuyper, the source of the notion that the church's calling is to Christianize the culture first of one's country and then of the entire world.

In his influential *Lectures on Calvinism*, the playbook of the game of Christianizing the world, Kuyper appealed to the "Sovereignty of the Triune God over the whole Cosmos, in all its spheres and kingdoms," that is, to the kingship and kingdom of God (*Lectures on Calvinism*, Eerdmans, 1953, 79).

In a book on Common Grace in Science and Art, Kuyper pleaded for the Christian's cooperation with ungodly scientists and artists who by "common grace [have] been active…greatly promoting the spiritual development of the human race." In this context, Kuyper stressed the "kingdom of God": "the Kingdom of God is not in the least limited to the institutional church but rules our entire world-and-life-view" ("Common Grace in Science," in *Abraham Kuyper: A Centennial Reader*, ed. James D. Bratt, Eerdmans, 1998, 458, 459).

The Charge of World-flight

In keeping with their conviction that Christianizing the world represents the coming of the kingdom of God and is a noble kingdom-venture, the Reformed zealots on behalf of Christianizing the world charge the Protestant Reformed Churches and their members with a serious lack of kingdom-vision and with grave dereliction of duty concerning promoting the kingdom of God. A serious shortcoming, if true! This charge is rightly disturbing to Protestant Reformed students at these colleges.

An especially painful aspect of this charge is the accusation that Protestant Reformed churches and believers are guilty of the unbiblical, shameful evil of "world-flight." The common grace, cultural-Calvinists consign us to the ranks of the Anabaptists of the time of the Reformation. They dismiss us as belonging to the company of Munzer, John of Leyden, and Menno Simons. We are no genuine Calvinists at all! We are no children and heirs of Luther, Calvin, and evidently of the Reformed confessions (although the cultural-Calvinists offer precious little proof for their theory of Christianizing the world and for their charge of "world-flight" from the creeds).

I write "unbiblical" evil of world-flight because our Lord forbade world-flight: "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world…I [have] sent them into the world" (John 17:15, 18).

So serious an evil is the Protestant Reformed refusal to participate in the project of Christianizing the world that, according to the proponents of the

project, we make ourselves guilty of opposing and obstructing one of the two great works of God in history and, therefore, one of his two main purposes with his world: the creation of beautiful, noble, good, even godly culture, worldwide, by virtue of common grace.

Listen to the father of the cultural-Calvinists, Abraham Kuyper:

> There is a particular grace which works Salvation, and also a common grace by which God… relaxes the curse which rests upon [the world], arrests its process of corruption, and thus allows the untrammeled development of our life in which to glorify Himself as Creator (*Lectures on Calvinism*, 30).

In his work on common grace, Kuyper wrote: "There is beside the great work of God in special grace also that totally other work of God in the realm of common grace." That "totally other work" is to "consummate the world's development" ("Common Grace," in Kuyper, ed. Bratt, 176).

How wonderful a work of God the Christianizing of the world is, in the thinking of its advocates, and therefore how woefully deficient, if not sinful, those Reformed Christians are who decline to involve themselves in this work, Herman Bavinck suggested when he exclaimed, "We have to aim at that mighty, glorious, rich ideal to Christianize the world by bringing in our Reformed confession into all areas of life" (Bavinck's farewell address to the Kampen seminary students in 1902, in Willem J. de Wit, *On the Way to the Living God*, Free University Press, 2011, 58). It might give the contemporary cultural-Calvinists pause that Bavinck spoke of the necessity of bringing the Reformed confessions into all areas of life. From the contemporary form of the project of Christianizing the world, the Reformed creeds are noticeably missing.

But the zealots for Christianizing the world are utterly and wholly mistaken. They are mistaken with regard to their conception of the kingdom of God. They are mistaken with regard to their notion that Christianizing the world by common grace has anything to do with the kingdom of God and its coming. They are mistaken in their false accusation that the Protestant Reformed Churches are indifferent and passive with regard to the kingdom of God and its extension in this world.

What the Kingdom of God is

First, the advocates of a Christianized world are mistaken regarding their conception of God's kingdom in this world. A society, a nation, or even an entire world of mostly unbelievers that has been influenced by Christianity outwardly is no more the kingdom of God than a set of ungodly Hollywood actors dramatizing the life of Martin Luther is the Reformation of the church or an extension of the Reformation.

The kingdom of God in this world is the reign of the triune God in Jesus Christ, God's great servant in the world. This is the kingdom whose coming Christians desire and pray for in the second petition of the model prayer, "Thy kingdom come." It is the kingdom of God's "dear Son" (Col. 1:13).

This kingdom does not come by a common grace of God. Rather, it comes by God's "Word and Spirit," as the Heidelberg Catechism explains: "Thy kingdom come; that is, rule us so by Thy Word and Spirit" (Q&A 123; emphasis added).

Of this kingdom, only those are citizens who are elect believers. The citizens are those whom God "hath translated…into the kingdom of his dear Son" (Col. 1:13). All other humans remain under "the power of darkness" (Col. 1:13), in the kingdom of the prince of darkness. These unbelieving people have no interest in the kingdom of God, except to will its destruction (Psalm 2; Rev. 13).

As to its nature, the kingdom of God is heavenly, not earthly; spiritual, not carnal. This was Jesus' description of the kingdom to Pilate, on the day of Jesus' establishment of the kingdom on the foundation of the righteousness of his death: "not of this world"; "not from hence" (John 18:33–37). Correctly explaining this description of the kingdom of God, John Calvin wrote, "spiritual," "heavenly," and "separated from the world" (*Commentary on John*, vol. 2, Eerdmans, 1949, 209).

Therefore the kingdom does not come with "observation" (Luke 17:20). The kingdom of common grace, in contrast, comes with observable developments in social relations, economic advancements, and political progress, at least in the imagination of the dreamers of this kingdom.

The benefits of the kingdom of God are not earthly peace and carnal prosperity—the main goals of the kingdom of common grace—but "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost" (Rom. 14:17).

One thing more about the kingdom Jesus stressed to Pilate in their discussion of the kingdom:

the kingdom of God is founded on "the truth": "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice" (John 18:37). This was Jesus' response to Pilate's question, "Art thou a king then?" (John 18:37) and Jesus' description of the nature of his kingship and kingdom. The truth is the gospel of Scripture as summarized in the Christian and the distinctively Reformed confessions.

Not even the most enthusiastic defender of the kingdom being promoted by the cultural Calvinists—the kingdom of common grace, in cooperation with Roman Catholics and unbelievers—will dare to contend that that kingdom is based on the truth. That kingdom can make progress and take form only by the compromising, if not the complete silencing of the truth. Roman Catholics and unbelievers reject the truth. The kingdom of common grace therefore is no kingdom of God. It is no kingdom in which any Calvinist, indeed any professing Christian, should have any interest, except to oppose it as a rival kingdom to the kingdom of the truth, that is, the kingdom of God in Jesus Christ. (For a more complete treatment of the vitally important truth of the kingdom, see my booklet, "The Kingdom of God," Evangelism Committee of Southwest PRC, 2002).

The Reign of God in the Heart

That the kingdom of God is heavenly in origin and in nature does not imply that it is not on the earth and in the world. The kingdom is in the world, and its primary location is the heart of the elect believer. There Christ has his throne; there God reigns in Jesus Christ by his grace and Spirit.

Kuyper and his cultural-Calvinist disciples disparage the reign of grace in the hearts of the people of God. They criticize the spiritual and doctrinal Calvinists who emphasize this, as though by this emphasis we restrict the kingdom to the heart. A scholar of Kuyper is correct when he states as a main concern of Kuyper in his program of Christianizing the world by common grace that Reformed people "restrict the reign of Christ to the 'spiritual,' to the private rule over the human heart" (John Bolt, *A Free Church, A Holy Nation: Abraham Kuyper's American Public Theology*, Eerdmans, 2001, 193).

The rule of God in the human heart is fundamental to the presence of the kingdom on earth. Apart from this rule in the heart, whatever outward conformity there may be to Christianity, the entire project of Christianizing the world is obnoxious to God and is certainly not the coming of his kingdom. God looks to the heart! God is pleased with willing service from the heart!

In fact, apart from the reign of grace in human hearts, men and women will not, do not, and cannot seek the kingdom of God, even outwardly. As slaves of Satan, they hate even the appearance of the kingdom of God. They exert themselves to destroy God's kingdom. They energetically build the kingdom of antichrist.

And if Christ reigns in one's heart, that man or woman will and must live the life of the kingdom of God—in all spheres of human life.

The fear of the cultural-Calvinists that believers will be passive and Anabaptistic is groundless. The fear does not reckon with the heart as the source of all the issues of life, or with the mighty, all-comprehensive lordship of Jesus in the heart.

Do not disparage or underestimate the reign of Christ in the heart! With this, the Heidelberg Catechism begins its explanation of the second petition of the model prayer: "that is, rule us so by Thy Word and Spirit, that we may submit ourselves more and more to Thee." The meaning is: Rule us in our hearts.

Sovereignty in All Spheres of Life

Such is the rule of Christ in the heart of the Reformed Christian that he or she submits to Jesus Christ in all spheres of earthly life. Thus, the Reformed Christian lives the life of the kingdom in all spheres. Thus, the kingdom is extended to all spheres. Thus, the believer raises the banner of the kingdom of God over every sphere: "Jesus the Christ is king and lord of all."

Thus, altogether apart from a common grace of God and without any participation in the project of Christianizing the world, the spiritual and doctrinal Calvinist—the genuine Calvinist—does full justice to Kuyper's famous, stirring declaration, "There is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is Sovereign over all, does not cry: 'Mine!'" ("Sphere Sovereignty," in Kuyper, ed. Bratt, 488).

Demonstrating and illustrating this kingdom-life in all the spheres will be the content of the next article.

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Watching Daily At My Gates

May 11 ***Read Psalm 124***

Let us consider the first words of this psalm. Look at that first little word if. We think about a lot of if's in our lives. How often do we not begin a sentence or more with the phrase "if only…"? How do any of those situations match up with "If it had not been the Lord…"? Without Jehovah God helping us, what would be the result for us? Israel needed to contemplate that fact as they went up to Mt. Zion to worship. We need to consider that fact as we live our lives on this earth. When all is said and done, we must conclude with the words of the last verse, "Our help is in the name of the Lord who made heaven and earth." Is that your confession, people of God? Do you cling to the name of Jehovah for all help in your lives? That is what we must do, and by God's grace we can. Sing Psalter 352.

May 12 ***Read Psalm 125***

We do not think about mountains as places of defense for our earthly life, but for Israel the mountains on which Jerusalem was built were those places. They provided them protection from many enemies that came up against them. God gave to them those mountains as pictures of the defense that he gives to his people of all ages. For us the mountains of defense are his word, prayer, and worship. We can and must pray daily that God will do good for us. This good may not be what we would define as good, but rather it is the good that leads us to salvation and eventually to heavenly glory in the New Jerusalem. May this be our oft-repeated prayer for us and for all of God's people. Sing Psalter 354.

May 13 ***Read Psalm 126***

We need to consider the context of this psalm. It seems to have been written as Israel was returning from the Babylonian captivity. Those people of God could easily say, "The Lord hath done great things for us." When we consider our lives, can we confess the same things? We may not understand how they are great, but they are in his sight. A death, an illness, and other so-called calamities may not seem like great things, but in God's sovereign plan they are. Great things are not to be judged by man's standards; they need to be weighed on the scale of God's counsel. He has done great things for us; let us be glad! Sing Psalter 357.

May 14 ***Read Psalm 127***

As we read this psalm we become aware of at least two truths. First, we see that whatever we do is ordained by God, and the way in which it turns out is the way that he has ordained for us. We can do nothing in our lives apart from him and his help. The second truth concerns covenant children. They are given to us by God, and this includes the number and timing of them. They are a heritage to us in that covenant, and they are signs of the blessing God has given to us in that blessed covenant of friendship and fellowship. Children are not burdens in the life of the believer; children are blessings to help throughout the way that God has ordained for us. Sing Psalter 359.

May 15 ***Read Psalm 128***

This psalm either seems to be a companion of the one before it, or it was attached to it at one time. It again shows to the believer the happiness that is to be found in the blessedness of the covenant family. Young men, look for a wife who will help you in your way. This is not to be any wife, but it is to be a wife who can help you in the things of the Lord. Young women, seek a husband who will lead you in a way that God has ordained for his people. Seek for a husband who will help you raise a family in the fear of the Lord. This is the happy way for God's people, and there are many blessings to be found in such a way. Sing Psalter 360.

May 16 ***Read Psalm 129***

Some writers have surmised that this psalm was written near the end of the Babylonian captivity. The unknown writer looks back at Israel's history and sees that it has been afflicted many times. This psalm would fit well with the theory that the psalms of degrees were used as Israel went back to Jerusalem from Babylon. I find the last verse extremely touching. Do we pronounce God's blessings on those of the church that need him the most? Let us pray for those who are in affliction, and let us go out of our way to help them in the time of their need. Sing Psalter 361.

May 17 ***Read Psalm 130***

This psalm is one of those that have been labeled penitential psalms. It is a psalm the believer or the church can use when they feel the trials caused by sin overwhelming

them. When the Christian is in the depths of despair, he can look toward the covenant God for deliverance from those depths. Just as someone who has been assigned the night watch eagerly looks for the morning, so the child of God looks for the safety which will come when the "Sun of righteousness arises with healing in his wings." Even though our sins are great, God will not hold them against us as he looks at us through the blood of our blessed Savior, Christ Jesus. Watch, people of God, and watch in the hope of the dawning of the new heavens and the new earth. Sing Psalter 362.

May 18 *Read Psalm 131*

In this short psalm we find two main thoughts. First, David asserts that he has not been proud during his history. We know that in his later life his desire to number the people refutes this idea; therefore, this psalm was probably written during his flight from Saul or just after it. Being patient in the way that God leads us is the way not to be proud. When we are patient we can calm ourselves, knowing that all things are in God's hands and serve for our good. Second, David urges Israel and hence the church of all ages to trust in the Lord. When our trust is in Jehovah, we will be able to fight the sin of pride. Let this be our desire throughout our lives. Sing Psalter 366.

May 19 *Read Psalm 132*

Commentators are divided on both the author and the occasion of this psalm. Some say it was written by David as he was making preparations for the building of the temple. Others say it was written by Solomon for the dedication of the temple. It obviously has the idea of the temple in mind and the zeal that David had for that temple. It also states that the temple was to be God's dwelling place. But there is a truth that we must not miss. The psalmist calls on God's promises that David's line will continue until Christ comes. Israel had to call upon those promises amidst much turmoil in their history. We can be assured in those promises that Christ has come and will come again to receive us unto his dwelling place. Sing Psalter 368.

May 20 *Psalm 133*

In this psalm we have an admonition to live together with our brothers and sisters in the church in unity. David is not writing this to the world; he is not telling Israel to live in unity with the Philistines, but he commands Israel, God's covenant people, to live in harmony with each other. He shows how precious this unity is by two figures. In the second one he shows that that unit is as precious as the dew from the mountains surrounding Jerusalem. Israel could not live without that dew, and neither can the church live without harmony within it. Finally the psalmist reminds us that that unity brings a blessed reward from God. Let us seek that unity; let us pray for it daily; and let us be the cause of that precious unity that is sweet-smelling to God. Sing Psalter 369.

May 21 *Psalm 134*

This is a fitting doxology to the fifteen psalms of degrees. Notice that three times the word "bless," meaning "to speak well of someone," is used. In the first two, men are called to bless the Lord. While there is a direct reference to those who did service in the temple, we are all priests in the office of believer. We are called to care for his holy things and to speak well of our God as we are carrying out this office. The final "bless" is a blessing from God upon his people. As we serve him in whatever office he has blessed us, there is a promised blessing from the creator of all things. Let us seek that blessing as we do his will every day. Sing Psalter 372.

May 22 *Psalm 135*

Men are unsure who the author of this psalm of praise is, and it does not matter. As a psalm of praise it could have been written by any of the psalmists for Israel at any stage of their history. Israel and the church of all ages is called upon to praise God for who he is. He is the God who has made us his people. He preserves us just as he preserved Israel throughout its history. He is a living God in opposition to the dead gods of the heathen. The psalm ends with another call to praise God by all in his church at all times. Is this our desire? Do we praise God every day and every hour of every day that we live on this earth? This is our calling from God. Sing Psalter 375.

May 23 *Psalm 136*

This psalm is not filled with vain repetitions as many so-called songs of praise are today. This psalm was composed for a type of worship in Jerusalem and may be used with great profit for us today. This antiphonal psalm was penned to be performed by two groups of people. While one chanted the reason for praise from Israel's history, the second responded with why God was so gracious. Today we must see that God's mercy extends to us throughout our lives. After realizing this fact we must give thanks to that great God whose mercy indeed endures forever. Sing Psalter 378.

May 24 *Psalm 137*

Some would not have us read this psalm, especially the words of the last verse. More would not have us sing its sad, melancholy words. But the child of God has been given this psalm to use in worship and in daily devotions. He has been given this psalm to help him in his spiritual pilgrimage on this earth. We are all in Babylon. This is not our home. Our home is the new Jerusalem. Many there are who would mock us by asking us to sing our songs of praise to Jehovah. We may never forget our real home and our God. We must sing Zion's songs. Finally, we must pray for God's vengeance on his enemies and the enemies of his church. Let this psalm instruct us as we await the journey to the new Jerusalem. Sing Psalter 379.

May 25 ***Psalm 138***

This psalm of David seems to have been penned in the latter part of his life. In it he thanks God for giving to him his place in the kingdom. He calls himself to praise God, and he calls God's people to praise him. It is good for us to look back to see what God has done for us in our lives. We must see the manifold goodness that God has bestowed upon us. After musing on those things, can we not help but break out in songs of praise to our gracious covenant God? Sing Psalter 381.

May 26 ***Read Psalm 139***

David begins and ends this psalm with the same thought: that God searches him. In the first part of the psalm he asserts that God has searched him and knows him in all his sins and weaknesses. David knows that God has caused his formation from the moment of conception. This knowledge causes David to extol God's greatness. David seems to be writing this when he is under attack of wicked men. Even in trouble David confesses God to be the great sovereign God. Finally, David ends the psalm by asking God to continue to search him. Like David, we must make this prayer, for in it we place all our trust in God to bring us to glory and appear before him washed in the blood of the Lamb. Sing Psalter 384.

May 27 ***Read Psalm 140***

This psalm of David, as well as the next three psalms, seems to have been written as David was fleeing from Saul. First, he calls upon God's name as his God. Then he calls upon God to deliver him from his persecutors, and he prays for their destruction. David can do this because he knows God is a righteous God and a just God. We must have that confidence as well, as we go through life in this valley of the shadow of death. Finally, David expresses his trust in God as the deliverer of his people even from death, as God takes them to dwell with him in heaven. Sing Psalter 385.

May 28 ***Read Psalm 141***

David seems to have written this psalm during the same time period as the previous one. David is in distress. What does he do? He prays. We need to learn from David. Each of us has distresses in this life. We must learn to lift our eyes unto Jehovah in prayer. We learn that prayer is the chief means of thankfulness for the child of God. It is also a chief means for us to come boldly to the throne of grace and lay our needs before our sovereign God. Let us pray without ceasing, knowing that our covenant God hears our prayers and will answer them. Sing Psalter 386.

May 29 ***Read Psalm 142***

Once again we have a prayer of David. David pours out his heart unto God while he is on the run, most likely from Saul. David realized that his help could only come from God. He was in a place in which no deliverance could come from any other source. Notice why he wished to be delivered. It is not for his good or his future life. No, David's one desire is that he can praise God with the church. Is that our desire when we are in distress? Do we wish for deliverance in order that we can praise our deliverer, Jehovah God? Sing Psalter 388.

May 30 ***Read Psalm 143***

This psalm, like the ones before it, is written when David is in trouble because of some enemy. Which enemy this is has been a matter of speculation. The thoughts that David penned could be uttered under many circumstances in his life. While we may not have the physical enemies as David did, we do have enemies sent against us by the enemy, Satan. David longs for spiritual help in his fight. This we must do as well. We would do well to reread this prayer in order to gain guidance for our prayers day by day. Sing Psalter 391.

May 31 ***Read Psalm 144***

This psalm of thanksgiving and supplication seems to have been written after David ascended to the throne in Jerusalem. He is thankful for victories over his enemies and asks for continued help in defeating the enemies of God and his church. There are many phrases that we can use in our prayers; in fact, some of the statements found in this psalm are found in others. Near the end of the psalm David says that the reason for his prayer is that the nation of Israel can be blessed. He prays for the salvation of his children and the children of God's church. These sentiments we must bring into our prayers. Our children and all of the covenant children need our prayers in the wicked world in which we live. Sing Psalter 393.

June 1 ***Read Psalm 145***

The final six psalms are psalms of praise. We see this in the titles, we see this in the words, and we see this in the subject matter. This particular one is an alphabetical one in that each verse begins with a letter of the Hebrew alphabet except one. In this psalm we have a call to praise, and we have reasons that we should praise Jehovah. As you read through it, did any particular verse stir you to praise Jehovah? We need such psalms so that we are daily reminded of our calling to praise God from whom all blessings flow. Sing Psalter 397.

June 2 ***Read Psalm 146***

This is a personal call to praise. David, who most commentators seem to think wrote this psalm, calls his soul to praise the Lord. This is where we must start. Every day we must remind ourselves to praise Jehovah for all the manifold goodness he has bestowed upon us. We praise him and not some other authority because he is the sovereign one. We praise him because he has created all things. (An evolutionist cannot praise God.) We praise him because he alone has the power to do all

things. Each day let us praise Jehovah our mighty God. Sing Psalter 400.

June 3 *Read Psalm 147*

There are at least three thoughts to be found in this psalm. First, we must praise God in our singing. This means what we sing must praise God and only God. Then in the manner in which we sing, we must show that we truly believe that we must praise God. Physically we must open our mouths and sing so that others hear us. Second, we praise God for his works. Here in the northern climes we must understand that the snow and ice storms that he sends are reasons to praise God. They are his, and not only does he send snow and ice, but he also sends the warm spring winds to melt away that ice. Finally, only his people have a reason to praise him. Sing Psalter 402.

June 4 *Read Psalm 148*

As the psalmist looked around all parts of creation, he noticed that all of God's created beings were called to praise him. Article 12 of the Belgic Confession sets forth this truth. Take the time to read the article, especially the first paragraph. Every flower praises God with its beauty. Every animal in its function on this earth sings a song of praise to its maker. That is why Paul in the book of Romans says that creation groans as it awaits the second coming of Christ. Finally, the psalmist calls all kinds of men to praise God. God has chosen his people from all walks of life. They all have the same common calling: Praise the Lord. Do you obey this calling? Sing Psalter 405.

June 5 *Read Psalm 149*

Another reason for praise as we find it in this psalm is that God has redeemed us from all of our enemies, and especially the enemy of sin. We need to praise our God for such redemption. Adam tried to redeem himself with the work righteousness of fig leaves. God had to show him that he needed to be covered with the skin of an animal. This meant that blood had to be shed. We cannot be redeemed through our works; all are filthy rags, according to Isaiah. We must be redeemed by the blood of the slain Lamb, our Lord Jesus Christ. As redeemed ones we must praise him who provided such redemption. Sing Psalter 407.

June 6 *Read Psalm 150*

This psalm forms a grand doxology for the last six psalms, the fifth book of the psalms, and, of course, the whole of the psalms. It first gives reasons that we must praise God. Then it tells us how to praise God. Finally, it tells us who must praise God. The psalms give to us much material to aid us in our lives here on this earth. For this material we must praise God. This psalm, like the ones before it, begins and ends with the words, "Praise ye the Lord." In the Hebrew that word is hallelujah. In our first day in heaven we will join that huge heavenly choir singing unceasing hallelujahs. Are you ready to sing? Sing Psalter 409.

June 7 *Read Proverbs 1*

We come to another of the books of poetry. Most of these words were penned by David's wise son, Solomon. We can find much wisdom for practical everyday life. But we also find much to lead us on our spiritual journey in this life. In the first chapter we are instructed that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. What kind of wisdom do you desire? There is only one kind for the child of God. It is not found in the thoughts of man; it is to be found in God's thoughts transmitted to us by the Holy Spirit. The wisest thing that we can do in this life is to flee from sin and seek God. That is the instruction of Solomon to his son. Do we instruct our children in this way? Sing Psalter 41.

June 8 *Read Proverbs 2*

The walk of those who seek only true wisdom must be an antithetical walk. This is not a popular teaching today. We are told to amalgamate with the world in order to help the world. This was not Solomon's teaching to his son. In order to understand God's wisdom, we must walk in his ways all the days of our lives. We cannot join with the world in its entertainments or its teachings. We must seek Jehovah in all that we do. Only in this way will we find the proper way to live and to obey God, the giver of all wisdom. Sing Psalter 24.

June 9 *Read Proverbs 3*

Do you really understand what verse 5 means? I do not mean just its words, but also the manner in which the command must be carried out. Trusting in God alone is a calling found throughout Scripture. When Jacob, David, and Peter put their trust in other but God, they had disastrous results. This is true for us as well. If we put our trust in some earthly idea, we will find that we will walk into some trouble. It we try to "pull ourselves up by our own bootstraps" in many things, especially those spiritual, we will come to sad ends. Trust in the Lord, people of God, in that way we will enjoy all the blessings of salvation. Sing Psalter 73.

June 10 *Read Proverbs 4*

Many of these first chapters of Proverbs are addressed to "My son." As parents we must follow Solomon's example and entreat our children to follow the ways of the Lord. We must implore them to seek after the wisdom that comes from above and is far greater than any wisdom of this world. As children and young people we must obey our parents and seek that sort of wisdom. As we do this, we must remember the fifth commandment. It is a commandment with promise, as Paul says. Seeking the true wisdom of Jehovah will have an end that is far more glorious than anything on this earth. Sing Psalter 89.

God in His Mighty Power Created No Possibility for Evolutionism

(7) Darwin's Findings

In this article we step back in time and analyze Darwin's basic theory of evolution by means of natural selection. Before we do this, we need to recall some terms we defined in the second article of this series. *Evolution* is descent with modification. *Evolutionism* is a world view using evolution to explain the origin of all things in one common ancestor millions and billions of years in the past. Evolutionism leaves no room for God, the creator and sustainer of all things.

In December of 1831 Charles Darwin (1809-1882) departed England aboard a survey ship, the HMS *Beagle*. Throughout the voyage Darwin made several observations regarding the plants and animals of South America. Darwin observed the various characteristics of plants and animals that made them well suited or adapted for their respective environments. He also observed that much of the life in South America resembled that of Europe. The bulk of Darwin's later research and conclusions he made stemmed from his exploration of the Galapagos Islands, located off the western coast of South America. Darwin observed several species of finches on different islands. Some of these were only found on one island, while others were to be found populating several neighboring islands. While studying the finches, Darwin observed many adaptations which are "characteristics of organisms that enhance their survival and reproduction in specific environments."[1] During his five-year voyage Darwin read *Principles of Geology* by Charles Lyell. His reading about uniformitarianism in Lyell's books led him to doubt the earth was as young as was commonly accepted.[2] These misgivings concerning the biblical timescale no doubt contributed heavily to his misinterpretation of the data he gathered and his concluding theory of descent from a common ancestor over millions of years.

There is a common misconception that individual organisms within a population evolve. We need to clear this up before we go farther. Individual organisms do not evolve. Individual organisms do not *adapt themselves* to a certain environment; they are *adapted* for that environment. When they have inheritable traits that enable them to survive in that environment and pass on those traits to the next generation, this means they *are adapted* for that environment. To clarify this distinction and get a better understanding of what evolution is, let's consider a case that was observed in the late seventies.[3] The island Daphne Major, which is part of the Galapagos archipelago, is home to a species of medium ground finch (*Geospiza fortis*). In 1977 a drought devastated the population of this particular species. The population went from around 1,200 finches down to about 180 survivors. Researchers observed that the surviving finches tended to have larger, deeper beaks than those finches that did not survive the drought. Also observed was that small, soft seeds that were easy to eat were not readily available because the drought had decimated those species of plants on the island as well. The finches could for the most part only feed on seeds from plants that had survived the drought. Those plants had seeds that were larger and harder than the ones that had not survived. The finches with the larger, deeper beaks that had survived were able to crack the larger, harder seeds much easier than the finches of their same species that had smaller beaks. The large-beaked finches survived and

1 Campbell, Neil A., Jane B. Reece, *Biology* 8th Edition (San Francisco: Pearson Benjamin Cummings, 2008), 456.

2 Campbell, 454.

3 Campbell, 468.

passed their traits on to the next generation, while the smaller-beaked finches of the same species did not. The large-beaked finch *was adapted* better for the drought; it did not *adapt itself* to the environment; it did not change itself into something better. In the generations of this particular species (containing big and small beaks) of finch, the bigger-beaked birds were more fit and had offspring while the smaller-beaked ones died off and were not able to pass their small-beakedness on to another generation. The individual finches themselves did not change and grow bigger beaks. This species of finch changed over time in its generations. This is *evolution*. This population of finches *descended with modification*. This does not in any way take away from God's sovereignty in creation. This example actually points to God's providential hand in creation. The researchers did not acknowledge God's providential hand directing the events of the earth so that there would be a drought at that particular time. The researchers say this documented case of *evolution* proves *evolutionism*. They say that this was just part of the process of natural selection that has been happening for millions of years, which has slowly evolved the finch from the primordial soup that we all came from to what the finch is today with its large beak. Natural selection is a process that does occur and has occurred within the biblical timescale, as we saw with the finch example. Jonathan Sarfati explains natural selection as follows.

> Natural selection occurs when a creature has some inheritable trait [finches with big beaks, RJK] that gives it a better chance of passing on this trait to the next generation. Creatures without this trait [small-beaked finches, RJK] are less likely to survive to reproduce, so they don't pass on their genes. Therefore this trait will become established in the population.[4]

If God with his providential hand would not have sent a drought at the right time (his time), the small-beaked finches mentioned earlier would still be living and reproducing. After a few generations the island may have been teeming with finches, which may have led to overcrowding. But "we believe that the same God, after He had created all things, did not forsake them, or give them up to fortune or chance, but that He rules and governs them according to His holy will, so that nothing happens in this world without His appointment" (Belgic Confession, Article 13). We read also in Psalm 104:27–29, "These wait all upon thee; that thou mayest give them their meat in due season. That thou givest them they gather: thou openest thine hand, they are filled with good. Thou hidest thy face, they are troubled: thou takest away their breath, they die, and return to their dust." Before creation God ordained that the drought he would send at that specific time in history (1977) would wipe out the smaller beaked finches. "Thou takest away their breath, they die, and return to their dust" (v. 29). In that same God-sent drought the large beaked finches of the same species would thrive. "That thou givest them they gather" (v. 28).

Darwin was correct in saying that plants and animals are adapted to fit their respective environments; however, we disagree with his assessment of these observations. What Darwin took away from these observations is laid out in his book, *On the Origin of Species*. Darwin speaks of descent with modification *from a single ancestor over long periods of time*.

> On these principles [descent with modification within a kind, something biblical creationists have no problem with, RJK], I believe, the nature of the affinities of all organic beings may be explained. It is a truly wonderful fact–the wonder of which we are apt to overlook from familiarity–that all animals and all plants throughout all time and space should be related to each other in group subordinate to group.[5]

With Darwin's conclusion that all organisms can trace their lineage back to one common ancestor, he also believed that one *kind* of animal could eventually evolve into a different *kind* of animal. Before we look at Darwin's fantasy of one kind evolving into another kind, we need to define what a 'kind' is. When two different species (a horse and a zebra) can combine, with true fertilization,[6] to form a hybrid (zorse), they can then trace their lineage back to a common created kind of Genesis 1:24–25: "And God said, Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind, cattle, and creeping thing, and beast of the earth after his kind: and it was so: And God

4 Jonathan Sarfati, *The Greatest Hoax on Earth? Refuting Dawkins on Evolution* (Atlanta: Creation Book Publishers, 2010), 42.

5 Charles Darwin, *The Origin of Species*, 1st ed. (New York: Barnes and Noble Books, 2004), 112.

6 Sarfati, 35. True fertilization only takes place when the chromosomes of both parents take part in the formation of the embryo.

made the beast of the earth after his kind, and cattle after their kind, and every thing that creepeth upon the earth after his kind: and God saw that it was good." Another example of a 'kind' is the deer family. The deer kind, or family, contains many species of deer, including whitetail deer, mule deer, fallow deer, caribou, elk, and reindeer.

Now we get to Darwin's fantasy of evolution from one kind into another kind. In Darwin's book he has an idea of "a race of bears being rendered, by natural selection, more and more aquatic in their structure and habits, with larger and larger mouths, till a creature was produced as monstrous as a whale."[7] The example he gives is evolution from one kind into another kind, which is impossible. Nevertheless, this idea of evolution between kinds is what Darwin took away from his observations on the Galapagos Islands as seen in his sketch in Figure 1 below. He took his findings of true (providential as we saw in the finch example) evolutionary change and traced them back not only to their original created (Darwin would not agree that they were created) kind, but also back to one common ancestor, point 1 in his sketch or the trunk of his evolutionary tree of life.

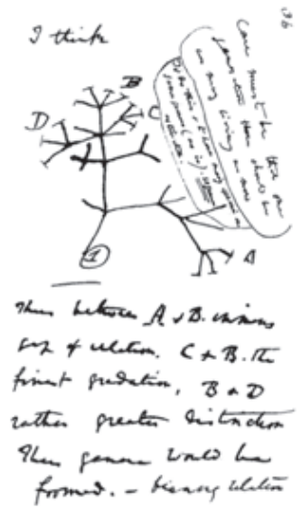

Figure 1.[8] Darwin's single tree of diversity with all species traced back to one common ancestor.

Notice what is written at the top of Darwin's sketch: "I think." Well, he thought wrong. He should have taken his findings and applied them to the biblical timescale in order to produce a diagram representing diversity that looks more like Figure 2.

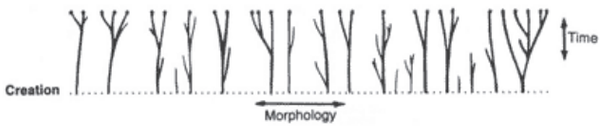

Figure 2.[9] Creation's orchard of diversity with related species traced back to their created kinds (individual trees within the orchard) that diversified after the flood. One tree is the dog/wolf kind, another tree is the deer kind, another is the bear kind, etc.

We agree with Darwin that descent with modification did occur. Where we differ from him is that the diversity we see in creation today can be traced back only to the kinds that were in the ark, not back to a single common ancestor millions of years ago. A good example of this is the diversity of the deer family. The deer family is one of the kinds represented as one tree in the orchard of creation (Figure 2). We can safely agree that there was only one species of deer on the ark, which was the kind that diversified into the various species of deer we see today. This includes: whitetail deer, mule deer, fallow deer, caribou, elk, and reindeer. The same example can be shown in the canine kind: all domesticated dogs, wolves, coyotes, foxes, and hyenas are one kind that has descended from a common ancestor, the canine kind that was in the ark and diversified after the flood.

Genesis 9:2 is a verse that we might easily read over. "And the fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth, and upon every fowl of the air, upon all that moveth, upon the earth, and upon all the fishes of the sea; into your hand are they delivered." In this verse God gives man dominion over the animal kingdom, but don't lose sight of the beginning of the verse where the fact is that God puts the fear and dread of man into the animals so that they scattered. The fear of man was put by God into all the animals after the flood so that they scattered throughout the earth into various environments. Let's look at the bear kind. Within this kind of animal (bear), animals possess adaptations or variations (polar bear with a long muzzle and neck that enables it to search in deep holes for seals, and sharp, wide claws for good traction on ice) that cause them to be more fit in their environment (Arctic Circle). Animals that were fit for the environment

7 Darwin, 155.

8 Image obtained from Wikimedia Commons, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Darwin_tree.png#filelinks.

9 Image obtained from Wikimedia Commons, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Creationist_orchard.gif#file.

survived and brought forth offspring, and animals that were not fit for their environment died off without passing on their traits to the next generation. You won't find a black bear in the Arctic Circle. This is providential. God ordained before creation that after the flood there would be many environments with different extremes (hot or cold, wet or dry). He also ordained that within these various extremes of environments, some variations or adaptations within a kind would be more favorable than others.

God's ordinance in Genesis 9:2 made possible his decree in the previous chapter, where he commanded Noah and his family to exit the ark and to bring all the animals with them "that they may breed abundantly in the earth, and be fruitful, and multiply upon the earth" (Gen. 8:17). God's instilling of fear and dread of man into the animals was his means of scattering the animals throughout the earth. These animals would then produce the amazing diversity of species we see today. In this we see God's providential hand providing for man and beast. We confess with the Belgic Confession in Article 13, "We believe that the same God, after He had created all things, did not forsake them, or give them up to fortune or chance, but that He rules and governs them according to His holy will, so that nothing happens in this world without His appointment…"

When it comes down to it, Darwin was right as far as the natural explanation of diversity goes, but he stretched his findings too far. People are often scared and a little hesitant to agree with anything Darwin wrote because of how he applied his findings. He looked back millions of years to one ancestor. He ignored God's creative act and providential care. This is where Darwin went terribly wrong in analyzing his observations.

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Scholarship Article

Nathan Price

Church, Home, and School: One Source and an Eternal Purpose

Question: *In the Protestant Reformed community there are three institutions that dominate our lives: the church, the home, and the school. From a Reformed perspective, how do they relate to each other?*

As Protestant Reformed believers, there are three institutions that dominate our lives: church, home, and school. These institutions do not rule us with an iron rod, as some in the world around us might suppose; rather, what is meant is that our lives are led and directed within these institutions. The institutions of the Protestant Reformed church, home, and school are blessings from God; they have been chosen by God as a picture of certain spiritual truths of God's covenant with us, his elect children. Additionally, these institutions comprise the sphere of the covenant, within which God sees fit to nurture his elect children. The doctrine of the covenant, as it is manifested in these three institutions, is made tangible and experiential to the Reformed believer. God's covenant is made manifest, through his grace and the Spirit, by our participation in and support of these institutions.

The first subject we will look at is the question of what an institution actually is. A close-fitting definition from Noah Webster's *First Edition of the American Dictionary of the English Language* is this: "A system, plan or society established, either by law or by the authority of individuals for promoting any object, public or social."[1] This definition, although not a perfect explanation, assists us in understanding

1 Noah Webster, *American Dictionary of the English Language* (Facsimile of 1928 ed.), (San Francisco: Foundation of American Christian Education, 1967), s.v. "institution" 3.

what an institution is. In this definition, three important concepts are mentioned: the act of establishing, the authority required to establish, and the objective or purpose in establishing. In the first section, we will look into the act of establishing as well as the authority required; in the subsequent section we will examine the purpose.

God's Institutions

The institutions we are considering (the church, home, and school) are all established by God. By virtue of being the creator, God himself has the authority to institute. God's purpose in creating the earth was that he might show forth his glory in the salvation of his elect through the work of Christ. Ephesians 1:4–5 speaks directly to this truth: we were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world. This precise number of the elect is the church proper. By his promise of the Redeemer to Adam and Eve in Genesis 3:15, God established the church, the earthly manifestation of those whom he had determined to save. The church is an institution that belongs to the sphere of redemption. In the Old Testament, the church was made manifest in the line of promise: from Adam to Abraham and then to the nation of Israel. This earthly manifestation of the church is the church institute. In the New Testament, the church institute is no longer identified with the children of Abraham; the church institute is now the local congregation, "an assembly of those who are saved" as The Confession of Faith defines it.[2] John Calvin refers to the church institute as God's "own institution", and indeed, it is.[3]

After God had created, he instituted marriage by his act of bringing Eve to Adam; with marriage he instituted the home, as recorded in Genesis 2:18–24. Marriage is an institution that belongs to the sphere of creation. Genesis 2:24 is particularly clear about the construction of the home: Adam says, "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh." The construction of marriage between a man and a woman is clearly seen here, with the implication being that children are to be born into and raised within homes with both a father and a mother. One of the primary reasons for the breakdown of the biblical model of marriage in society is found in the widespread rejection of God's literal six-day creation. If the world evolved, then God has no authority to institute marriage and the home; consequently, the evolving creatures would then have the authority to institute whichever type of family structure fits their purposes. This is certainly not the case!

As we observe the relationship between home and school, it is impossible to establish a division between God's act of instituting the home from that of the school. For this reason and in our current context, it is correct to speak in terms of two institutions, namely, the church and the home. Genesis 2:24 tells us that children are to be raised by a father and mother in the home until the time of maturity. In order for a child to arrive at maturity, it is imperative that he or she be educated. Ephesians 6:4 commands fathers to "…bring them [their children] up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." This is what sets the good Christian schools apart from those of the world. The worldly schools are institutions of men and have a secular purpose at their core. Protestant Reformed parents make a vow at the baptism of their children "to see these children…instructed and brought up in the aforesaid doctrine, or help or cause them to be instructed therein, to the utmost of your power."[4] God's word commands that the children of believing parents receive a Christian education, and our baptismal vows reflect that.

God's Eternal Purpose

To establish more firmly in our minds the relationship between God's institutions of church, home, and school, we must proceed to an examination of his purpose for them. The chief reason for which God instituted the church and home, with the school by implication, is to glorify himself. Specifically, as we have already seen earlier in God's purpose for creating, God determined in eternity to glorify himself in the redemption of his elect in Christ. God establishes his covenant with his people, and he reveals himself to them as the covenant God. Psalm 25:14 states that "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him; and he will show them his covenant." The church, home, and school are means that God uses to nurture those with whom he has established

2 Confession of Faith, Article 28, quoted in *The Psalter* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Printing Company, 2002), 48.

3 Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), 4.1.5, 2.1017.

4 "Form for the Baptism of Infants," quoted in *The Psalter* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Printing Company, 2002), 88.

his covenant, and there are specific ways in which each of these institutions manifests God's covenant relationship with believers.

God's work for the church institute is the preaching of the word, the administration of the sacraments, and the application of church discipline. God gathers his people by the preaching of the word, teaching them about himself. He encourages them by their partaking of the sacraments. God also corrects those whom he loves by disciplining them. Through both discipline and teaching, God defends his people from error in lifestyle and doctrine. The children of God are united together as one in a common confession of the truth. The church is the body, united in the Spirit, under Christ her head. The Apostle Paul writes of this in 1 Corinthians 12:27, where he writes: "Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular." The context makes the meaning of this verse especially clear: there are many members, but only one body.

In the home, the husband and wife are to represent the relationship of Christ with the church. Ephesians 5:23 reads: "For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the Savior of the body." Marriage is a wonderful picture of the covenant fellowship that the church has with Christ; the husband and wife become one as Christ and the church are one. Marriage is one aspect of the family that is a reflection of the covenant, but the parent-child relationship is another that is well worth examining in this respect. Ephesians 1:5 says that God "…predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will". Even as children have earthly fathers who (ought to!) care for them, we have a heavenly Father who has redeemed us in Christ.

As pointed out earlier, in the institution of marriage and the home, God requires that parents train their children in the "nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Eph. 6:4). This is particularly the responsibility of fathers as the heads of their homes. As surely as God is our heavenly father and makes himself known unto us, earthly fathers are to educate their children in the truth which God has revealed in his word. However, as the church is one, children are born not simply to covenant parents as individuals, but children are born into the church, within the sphere of the covenant. For this reason, education is not simply the responsibility of individual covenant fathers, but it is the responsibility of the covenant community. Upon this basis Protestant Reformed parents must tirelessly strive to establish and maintain the good Christian day schools, with the avowed intent of training covenant children in the fear and admonition of the Lord. God has determined to establish his covenant with the seed of believers in the way of covenant education.

Conclusion and Implications

God is the author of the instituted church and of the home with the school. These are his institutions, established by the authority that he alone possesses as the creating and redeeming God. They serve his eternal purpose, the establishment of his covenant with the elect. It is true that these institutions operate in different ways and in different spheres within the life of the believer, but nonetheless, God's eternal purpose for them is the same: to establish the covenant with believers and their seed. This common purpose that God has for the church and home entails solemn obligations and responsibilities for believers.

Believers are to gather together in the church institute, manifesting their unity as the body of Christ. This unity must always be unity in the truth, as God has revealed it to us; in our Protestant Reformed Churches we are blessed to have this truth officially proclaimed to us from week to week. This preaching of the word includes Heidelberg Catechism instruction for the youth as well. May we never tire of this preaching nor neglect the gathering of ourselves together. In our churches, we are also encouraged by participating in the sacraments of baptism and the celebration of the Lord's Supper. Finally, there is the admonition and discipline of the elders for our correction. We are to give thanks to God always for these blessings that the church alone has been given authority to administer.

God has made it clear in his word, that he works in the line of continued generations; passages such as Acts 2:39 and 2 Timothy 1:5 make this explicit. There is a great benefit to the children of believers in that they are raised within the sphere of the covenant, witnessing the godly marriages of their parents and being led by their godly example. This is not the exclusive way in which God works, but it is the ordinary. As children or young people being raised (or having been raised) in Godly homes, we must give thanks to God for this blessing! To subvert the authority which God has entrusted to parents is

to despise the authority of God. Rebellion against one's parents is rebellion against God.

The school is an extension of the home; therefore, the same thanks we must give for Godly homes must be given to God for the good Christian schools. The authority that God has entrusted to covenant parents is present not only in the home, but in the school as well. Rebellion in the school is rebellion against God. Parents who slander or discredit the authority in the school subvert not only their own authority, but also the authority of other covenant parents, which is God's authority. Whether a parent, student, or simply a member of the covenant community, let us think about this before we open our mouths to criticize harshly those who diligently labor in our good Christian schools.

In summary, the church and the home with the school are God's institutions. They are established by God's work and under his authority. The believer spends his or her regenerated life participating in and supporting these institutions. These institutions comprise the sphere of the covenant; they must not be viewed as a bane and burden or worse yet, as a curse! These are God's means for raising up and preserving the Church. Let us give thanks to him!

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Scholarship Article — Stephan Regnerus

Question: *Common grace is alive and well in the Reformed church world today. Our own churches have their origin in the controversy over common grace. The minister must be vigilant in opposing any practices that are rooted in common grace. As a minister in a Protestant Reformed church, where would the theory of common grace manifest itself in the practices of the church today?*

The three points of common grace, wisely rejected by the founders of the Protestant Reformed Churches in 1924, are still wreaking havoc in nominally Reformed churches of today. The Christian Reformed Church, since its open acceptance of common grace, has quickly fallen down slippery slopes. Many other Reformed churches have succumbed to the outwardly inviting doctrine of common grace and have no good fruit to show for it. With thankfulness to God, the PRCA has stood resolute in its rejection of the three points. We have maintained our biblical understanding that God's grace is sovereign and particular—not common to all men. It is our prayer that God will continue upholding the PRCA in the defense of uncommon, particular grace.

As we look to the future, our looking may not be a passive sitting and waiting. Now is not the time to relax in an easy chair, trusting that because God has cared for us in the past, certainly he will continue protecting us in time to come. Satan, the great worker of iniquity, cannot be accused of laziness in his attacks against the church. Satan will be busy about his work of attempting to destroy God's church until the very day that Christ returns. For as long as Satan is busy attacking, so long must God's people be busy fighting the battle of faith. Rather than passively sitting and waiting, God has called us to a life of diligent preparation for the future. God's church, and particularly the leaders of his church, may not be lazy in their preparation for the attacks of Satan. We must be vigilant in looking for ways that Satan attempts to sneak into the church. Satan's work is deceitful and carnally appealing, so the eyes of God's children must be carefully attuned to the tactics that Satan uses, lest we too be swept astray.

Common grace is certainly one of the tactics Satan has used in the past to deceive the church. In 1924 he used it to deceive the leaders of the CRC. At that time the PRCA was formed in response to the CRC's acceptance of common grace. However, simply because the PRC rejected the doctrine of common grace does not mean that Satan has given up on using that venue as a means of attack in the present. Still today Satan attacks God's people by attempting to sneak variations of common grace into the PRC.

To understand the different ways that Satan still uses common grace, we must have at least a basic understanding of the three points. In brief summary,

the first point teaches that God has a favorable attitude toward all people, not only toward his elect.[1] The second point teaches that God restrains the sinfulness of the wicked, so that they are not as perverse as they could be. Following in close connection with the second point, the third point states that reprobate man, although incapable of doing any saving good, can perform civil good.

What becomes immediately obvious about the three points is the great emphasis on man, not God. Regarding the first point, all of mankind is deemed worthy of the favor of God, not only the elect through the shed blood of Jesus Christ. Regarding the second point, man is not as sinful as he might be. Regarding the third point, man is capable of doing good works. Just as Adam and Eve were led by Satan in the garden to believe that man could and should have some power for himself, so too acceptance of the three points leads man to think that he is of some value in his fallen state. The doctrine of total depravity is done away with, and men focus more and more on self, not God. False teachings arise which teach that man is important, that man has power, that man has knowledge; the list goes on.

What specific heresies should the church be on the lookout for as Satan continues using different angles of common grace to attack the church? There are many possible heresies, but specifically one is the teaching that we, the church institute, need to be busy "redeeming" this creation and the people therein. The argument goes as follows. God, because of his common grace, has a favorable attitude toward all people. Because God has a favorable attitude towards all, he would like to save all people and all things (immediately one notices that double predestination and God's omnipotence are done away with). Through the mandate given in Genesis 1 and elsewhere in Scripture, God places upon us the burden of spreading his kingdom. Our responsibility, then, is to go out redeeming all parts of creation.

Initially, people from a conservative background might respond, "What? There is no way I would ever believe such ludicrous reasoning! Christ alone redeems, and my calling is to live out of love and thankfulness for his redemptive work." Such a response is good, but caution must still be taken. What must our work of thankfulness include? What is the role of the church? Unorthodox churches would like us to think that our work of thankfulness includes working for the world. Some, in fact, would go so far as teaching that the work of the church is not self-serving at all, but rather has an entirely outward focus. Moltmann, a renowned church leader, has expressed the following: "The church does not live for itself but rather exists for the world. Therefore, the church lives for and out of mission. But even mission has to be shaped by the principle of the openness…. The church is not self-serving but serving the world and the kingdom."[2]

Is focusing on the external things truly what the Lord has instructed the church to be busy about? Does the primary calling of the church revolve around mission, and in particular a mission that is "open"? I believe not. The Bible teaches not. Our creeds teach not. And yet we so easily are tempted with this outward, "missional" mindset. It is much more rewarding to feel blessed when you see the work of your hands. Putting up a building for a poverty-stricken family feels so right. Certainly the Lord is pleased to use me as his hands and feet while I dish out portions of food to a starving African family. What could possibly be wrong about doing a fundraiser to support families affected by natural disaster?

As we contemplate such questions, let us remember the parable of our Lord regarding two houses built—the one on sand, the other on a foundation dug deep into the ground. Both builders thought they were doing good deeds. Both builders thought they were doing the will of the Lord. And from all appearances, the man who built his house on sand was doing a much better job at building the kingdom—doing mission work, helping others, etc. He immediately started nailing boards together as the house was framed in, and those watching stood mesmerized with how quickly and efficiently he served the Lord. This kingdom builder was certainly doing a good job. On the other hand, the one who built upon the strong foundation was not making as much apparent progress. Before nailing any boards together, he began his work by digging a hole. In Luke 6:48 we read that "he digged deep." This digging was tedious, slow labor with little reward at the end of the day to show for the work. Instead

1 Herman Hoeksema and Herman Hanko. *Ready to Give an Answer*. Grandville, MI: Reformed Free Publishing Association, 1997.

2 Karkkainen, Veli-Mattie. *An Introduction to Ecclesiology*. Downers Grove, IL: Inter Varsity Press, 2002, pg. 130.

of working upward above ground, he first worked down below ground.

We all know well the final result of the two men's labors. The house built with a deep foundation stood when the test of severe weather came, whereas the house built on sand experienced a tremendous fall. As we apply this lesson to our lives and in particular to the work of the church, let us remember the work of the man who dug his foundation deep. He was not concerned about the external show of things. Rather, his primary concern was upon doing the work of the Lord exactly as he had commanded. We are taught by the Lord that his kingdom dwells in the hearts of the elect. The kingdom is not external. The Lord dwells within us. As we proclaim in the Belgic Confession article 22, "We believe that…the Holy Ghost kindleth in our hearts an upright faith, which embraces Jesus Christ with all his merits, appropriates him, and seeking nothing more besides him." Let us be diligent embracing Christ in our hearts and seeking him alone. We seek not earthly sanctuaries to worship in. We seek not world peace. We seek no other fruits of common grace. Rather, we seek alone the glory of our almighty Father, who loves us with a particular grace reserved only for his children.

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Scholarship Article

Alisha Joy Rus

Question: *In Psalm 90:12 we are commanded to "number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom." Discuss how you as a minister or teacher can teach and personally apply a true Christian approach to time management and prioritization.*

We are commanded in Psalm 90:12 to "number our days, that we may apply our hearts to wisdom." This verse is referring to the use of Christian time management, a subject that should not be overlooked. As a future Protestant Reformed school teacher, I must heed my calling of helping to rear God-fearing children in the walk of God. This includes providing them with subconscious and conscious learning about how and why to prioritize through a number of efforts made throughout my classroom, which will aim at providing them with a foundation of faithful lifetime prioritization.

What is time management? Time management means to pursue systematically and order events, schedules, and duties according to importance, while giving each a certain amount of time and dedication. In other words, it means to prioritize according to level of importance. For followers of Christ, time management has significant meaning and application for our lives. Time management orders the Christian to ask him or herself, "What is most important to me if I am to walk a godly life?" In essence, it is to prioritize one's life with the fundamental priority laid as being a disciple of Christ, and from this all the other duties of life should revolve. Paul speaks to us in 1 Corinthians 15:58 about how we should prioritize in life. Here he writes, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord." It is clear from this verse that God requires of us a life of God-fearing priorities and not excessive idleness or wasting of time, but rather a life always geared toward the "work of the Lord."

Time management not only helps create enough time to get the most important tasks completed, but it is also required by God. God has proclaimed there is a time for all things, and since we are disciples of his word we are meant to heed this declaration and apply it to our lives. This meaning of time as defined on earth is best described by Solomon in Ecclesiastes 3:1 where he writes, "To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven." God has acknowledged that we must consciously

consider our time and the purposes with which we spend our time.

Also because we are disciples of God, we are made in his image. God is the creator of order; therefore since we have been granted this attribute of God, we are capable and commanded to adhere to living orderly, prioritized lives dedicated to him. Scripture is full of examples testifying of God as an orderly God. The clearest example is the creation, when God set aside each of the six days for a new creation and a seventh day for rest.[1] In the fourth commandment, God expands on this by requiring that we diligently labor six days out of the week and rest on the seventh day; this is a broad yet descriptive overview of our weekly schedule.[2] For example, do we restrain ourselves on the Sabbath from other labors such as working or mowing our lawns, and instead make it a wanted priority to attend church to enjoy the fellowship of God and his believers?

If we truly manage our schedules to reflect how God wants us to use our time, then we are "redeeming the time".[3] Our time, then, is useful and serves the purpose of glorifying God. It also serves as a blessing for us as a way to avoid sin when we schedule our time wisely. God calls us always to be laboring in Christ.[4] If we are consciously considering how our days should be spent, then we are less prone to the evils such as drunkenness or slothfulness.[5] There are numerous distractions in life that can take us away from what God wills us to be doing, such as pursuing our callings in work, school, family, or in the church, but with God-fearing prioritization more of these distractions are defeated because we know what is required of us and the tasks that must be done.

When we are able to avoid these distractions, this provides the time needed for God. How easy it is for us to put earthly priorities first or to become distracted by earth's entertainment when we no longer find the time for deep communion with God at home as well as in church. Personal devotions are necessary for a follower of Christ. Professor Herman Hanko emphasizes the importance of prayer as part of personal devotions and throughout our days: "Prayer is to the Christian what breathing is to a healthy person." We desperately need prayer constantly, as it is a "holy conversation between the living and eternal God and the redeemed child of God."[6] Prayer and knowing God are both required by God, because they are both ways in which we worship God and dwell closer to him. In reality, it does take time to search and study the Scriptures thoroughly and to have intimate prayers with him where we ask for his grace. However, if we are faithfully managing our time, we soon find we have the blessing of abundant time and ways to seek this communion in which we find deep joy.

Another part of fulfilling a sincere desire for living to God means providing time for his saints. Each one of his saints is blessed with abilities and characteristics suited for tasks within the church. Central to Christ's heart is his love for the needy, who are those who fill the church. This is truly reflected in his calling for us to "visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world."[7] We are constantly to seek ways to follow this calling, and it is important to note it is a continual, lifelong calling. This means putting constant, conscious effort into planning and implementing ways to use our talents and abilities within the church universal and to live a holy, God-fearing life.

It is important to establish what is meant by time management and why it is required of Christ's citizens, because it will be part of my duty to teach my students these things and how to apply time management to their lives. Because these children are coming from God-fearing parents, I will bear in mind that they are little children who have the mind of Christ, and that the parents are saying to me, "The mind of Christ in these covenant children must be informed, instructed, and through your instruction disciplined and developed."[8] This is an extremely humbling duty and privilege to help God's children build a foundation for life established in the Lord. Especially since I will be an elementary teacher I have a great responsibility to help children learn how to

1 Genesis 1:27.

2 *The Psalter*, Lord's Day 38 Q. &.A. 103.

3 Colossians 4:5–6.

4 Rev. Miersma, "Discerning the Good in the Activity of Life." *Standard Bearer* 87.1215 Mar. (2011): 284-85. Print.

5 Proverbs 6:6–8; Romans 13: 11–14

6 Herman Hanko, *When You Pray: Scripture's Teaching on Prayer*. Jenison: Reformed Free Publishing Association, 2006. pg.1. Print.

7 James 1:27.

8 Marvin Kamps, "The Spiritual Capacity of Covenant Children." *Perspectives in Covenant Education*. 35.1 (2009): 10-13. Print.

manage their time so that the later distractions in life can be averted.

Herman Bavinck gives an excellent definition of what he believes is the goal of Christian educators when he says it is, "True piety organically combined with sound knowledge and genuine culture. Thus we form men of God, equipped unto every good work, completely equipped unto every good work."[9] When I teach my students what is meant to prioritize and why it is important, I am really giving them equipment for handling present and future tasks in life. Time management governs our whole lives; everything about our lives revolves around some aspect of time. This does not mean that there can be no relaxation, but it does mean there are responsibilities and a calling to seek God with every minute.

How will I teach my students in both upper and lower elementary what it means to be faithful stewards of time? As a teacher, I will serve as a role model for my students, so the way I manage my time will drastically reveal itself to my students. Are my lesson plans completed, and is my classroom organized? Do I talk openly with my students about what I do throughout the day, the importance of my own devotion time? Do I make sure to schedule a sufficient amount of time for class devotions, and not rush through them because we are running behind on curriculum materials? My life will be a living testimony to the students of how I prioritize my life, whether for the good or the bad. Lord willing, I hope they will see my work as being dedicated to God in that I am faithful to my tasks as a teacher, meet the individual needs of my students in love, and live a God-fearing life outside of my work too.

Ideas for teaching students how to apply time management to their lives greatly revolve around how my classroom will be organized. These are the basic elements of the classroom that will subconsciously teach the students about making decisions with their time. These elements will include having the schedule on the front of the room so the students know what their day consists of, having a class calendar with important dates emphasized, notes home to parents about the agenda for the week so they can assist the students in completing the tasks, and take-home folders with completed and uncompleted assignments. I would also like each of my students to start a planner, even in early elementary education, of what tasks they need to complete by a certain date and to keep track of what they have completed. These ideas immediately give the students the knowledge of how to implement a time management system. They also give me a perfect opportunity to introduce priorities and time management while I am explaining these different items.

I would also like to discuss with my students at the beginning of the year some possible choices for them to do during free time once their tasks such as tests or assignments have been completed. This will be a great opportunity for me to discuss with them the importance of not wasting time, while also giving them some ideas geared towards their interests to do during this time. For example, spare time options could be drawing and coloring, reading, or completing other assignments that are not complete. This is showing them that there is always something worthwhile to be doing during free time.

Another idea that comes to mind is to have a journaling system that will greatly help with students practicing their writing, and it is a great method for specific topics to be discussed and motivates them to put deliberate thought into what they are writing about. Some of the topics would include writing about their devotion time at home, what they have learned or read about, their God-given talents and what they are doing with them, and hobbies that they like to do in their free time. This is also a great way for me to get to know my students even better, to know their strengths, motivations, and interests. It gives us a great range of discussion topics, either sharing amongst the class or solely between the teacher and a student.

As difficult as it is to admit, homework is a way for managing the students' time so that they stay focused on a task, gain practice with a task, and avoid wasting time playing, such as video games or overuse of Facebook. I will not promote excessive or non-constructive homework assignments, because there is great benefit and need in relaxation too. However, I believe it is possible to have constructive homework assignments that are greatly beneficial. An idea would be the journaling system, or another idea would be for the students to practice or create ideas based on class lessons. I desire to give my students options for their lives so that they can actively pursue their callings in life from God at an early age, using their talents. I also want to provide

9 Engelsma, David J. *Reformed Education: The Christian School as Demand of the Covenant*. N.p.: Reformed Free Publishing Association, 2000. 86. Print.

other options for them to do during their free time that are enjoyable but constructive as well. For example, while discussing health or after gym class we would have some lessons on a healthy lifestyle. I would ask them to think of and try some activities that promote this, for example, taking walks, running, or playing outside. While showing them fun games at school, I would hope they would want to play them at home. I would also promote their interests such as piano lessons, band, musical instruments, or sports related activities. It is here that I would like to mention the importance of keeping the parents involved by sending notes home so that the parents can add to this encouragement and so they are informed of my goals.

A simple yet often neglected way to teach time management in the classroom is to discuss it openly. I want to know from my students if they know what "time management" or "prioritization" means and why it is important. This adds greatly to integrating multiple subject areas as we can discuss this throughout our writings, studying time, and Bible lessons regarding God's orderliness and our responsibility. Bible memory and discussion are excellent ways to employ these requirements of God while also discussing priorities. I think this most influential: let them talk and explore it.

While reiterating to myself what is meant by time management and its God-given and required purposes, I am humbled to find this such a necessary building block for my students' education in a Protestant Reformed Christian elementary school. Time management is a true blessing from the Father to his children to help them stay focused on his works and to glorify him. It is my heartfelt desire that by teaching my future elementary children the importance of time management, I am adding to a foundation for their future lives that are built on Christ, so that each of us may shout in unison, "I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do."[10]

Alisha is a member of Grandville Protestant Reformed Church in Grandville, Michigan. She is a college senior who intends to teach elementary education.

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10 John 17:4.

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:

Kent Michael, son of Mr. & Mrs. Jason Elzinga–Byron Center, MI
Lana Marie, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Joshua Dotson–Crete, IL
Amelia Jane, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Ben Kuiper–Faith, MI
Bentley Wade, son of Mr. & Mrs. Bill VanOverloop–Faith, MI
Cornelius James, son of Mr. & Mrs. Mark Feenstra–Georgetown, MI
Jordan Jon, son of Mr. & Mrs. John Kooiman–Georgetown, MI
Robyn Michelle, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Jonathan Key–Grandville, MI
Tate Douglas, son of Mr. & Mrs. Doug Mingerink–Grandville, MI
Wyatt J., son of Mr. & Mrs. Jordan Vander Kolk–Grandville, MI
Elijah Jake, son of Mr. & Mrs. Brian Wierenga–Immanuel, Lacombe, CAN
Jordan Randy, son of Mr. & Mrs. Jason Koll–Providence, MI
Brielle Nicole, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Ross VanBaren–Randolph, WI
Kenna Mae, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Todd Ferguson–Redlands, CA
Hailey Beth, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Ben Feenstra–Redlands, CA

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:

Joel DeJong–Holland, MI
John Wear–Loveland, CO
Austin Potjer–Redlands, CA
Michael Westra–Southwest, MI

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. Steven Tolsma and Miss Melissa Span–Immanuel, Lacombe, CAN
Mr. & Mrs. Frank and Marisa Tolsma–Loveland, CO

Connie Meyer

"LITTLE LIGHTS"

... let it shine !

TULIP: T (Total Depravity)

"Rotten Fruit"

A large wooden bowl filled with assorted fruits decorated the kitchen table. Shiny red apples and fresh-smelling oranges were mounded in the center of the bowl, while bright green grapes spilled over the edges. It was a beautiful arrangement.

"May I eat one of the fruits?" Ellisa asked her mother.

Mother shook her head. "There's more in the fridge to eat, but these are for decoration. I want them to last into next week if possible. Company's coming, and a bowl of fruit looks very inviting, don't you think?"

Ellisa nodded. It looked so inviting, it made her mouth water. She couldn't help touching one of the grapes. She felt its firm, translucent roundness.

Ellisa kept an eye on the fruit bowl. More than a week had passed, and the apples weren't so glossy anymore. One of the oranges had a spot of mold.

"I guess the fruit has had its day," Ellisa's mother said. "We can use the apples for sauce, but the rest will have to go."

"That seems such a shame," said Ellisa. "Isn't there anything that can make the rotten fruit to be fresh again?"

"No, Ellisa. When something is rotten, it's rotten. Nothing will make it better."

Ellisa nodded as she inspected some of the fruits. She quickly dropped a grape that began to ooze and squish between her fingers. "Ee-ew."

"Our sinful natures are like that, you know," Mother went on. "Our old man of sin never improves. By nature we can never do any good. We're dead in sin. That's why it's such a miracle that God changes our hearts and makes us spiritually alive. We still have the old nature of sin, but our inmost hearts are made new."

Ellisa helped her mother put the apples into another bowl. She thought on how her day had gone so far. She still felt sorry about some things she had said and done. "Yes, we still have the old man," she said sadly.

"Yes," said Mother, "that old man is rotten as ever. But in the new man we don't want to sin. That's Christ in us."

Ellisa helped gather the rest of the fruit into a plastic bag.

"And Christ has the victory," Mother added as she left to peel and core the apples.

Ellisa pondered these things as she took the bag of rotten fruit away. She still felt bad about her sins that day. Was there really victory over the old man? But yes, sorrow over sin was evidence of it. That was Christ in her. She truly did not want to sin, and hated it. She dropped the rotten fruit into the trash.

* * * * *

Therefore all men are conceived in sin, and by nature children of wrath, incapable of saving good, prone to evil, dead in sin, and in bondage thereto, and without the regenerating grace of the Holy Spirit, they are neither able nor willing to return to God, to reform the depravity of their nature, nor to dispose themselves to reformation. (Canons III/IV, Article 3)

In the puzzle below, find all the words of Canons III/IV, Article 3, as quoted in the story:

G	O	D	T	U	O	H	T	I	W	B	E	H	T	O	G	C
T	H	E	S	V	F	Y	H	F	R	R	E	E	S	W	H	O
H	W	H	O	L	Y	T	E	V	A	H	Y	G	H	I	D	N
E	L	N	L	S	P	I	R	I	T	L	N	A	L	L	N	C
R	M	O	F	N	D	V	E	V	H	O	I	D	Y	L	W	E
E	E	I	E	L	B	A	F	T	T	V	R	N	C	I	N	I
T	N	T	I	N	Y	R	O	A	H	E	R	O	D	N	A	V
O	O	A	U	O	V	P	R	O	N	E	D	B	F	G	T	E
D	D	M	T	R	F	E	E	W	H	F	I	G	T	J	U	D
S	O	R	C	U	N	D	L	T	D	R	S	R	M	H	R	D
M	R	O	F	E	R	C	I	N	C	A	P	A	B	L	E	V
S	C	F	G	L	K	E	A	V	F	T	O	C	B	A	M	Y
I	M	E	R	G	N	G	N	I	V	A	S	E	D	N	R	G
N	R	R	T	S	E	V	L	E	S	M	E	H	T	D	N	E

Connie is a member of Hope Protestant Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

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Romans 1:16

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Rev. Cory Griess: Paul, a Servant of Jesus Christ
Rev. Jonathan Mahtani: Living Unashamed of the Gospel Today

Speeches

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