

---

# Pro Rege

---

---

Volume 40 | Number 1

Article 3

---

September 2011

## Saints in Training: The Career of a Dordt College Grad

Hubert R. Krygsman

Follow this and additional works at: [https://digitalcollections.dordt.edu/pro\\_rege](https://digitalcollections.dordt.edu/pro_rege)



Part of the [Christianity Commons](#), and the [Higher Education Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Krygsman, Hubert R. (2011) "Saints in Training: The Career of a Dordt College Grad," *Pro Rege*: Vol. 40: No. 1, 28 - 32.

Available at: [https://digitalcollections.dordt.edu/pro\\_rege/vol40/iss1/3](https://digitalcollections.dordt.edu/pro_rege/vol40/iss1/3)

This Feature Article is brought to you for free and open access by the University Publications at Digital Collections @ Dordt. It has been accepted for inclusion in Pro Rege by an authorized administrator of Digital Collections @ Dordt. For more information, please contact [ingrid.mulder@dordt.edu](mailto:ingrid.mulder@dordt.edu).

# Saints in Training: The Career of a Dordt College Grad

---



by Hubert R. Krygsman

**C**hairman Kroll, President Zylstra, esteemed colleagues, honoured friends and family, and dear graduates of the class of 2011. First of all, I bring you greetings from Redeemer University College. There are many connections between Redeemer, including our common purpose of post-secondary education from a Reformed Christian perspective, and we wish you God's richest blessings as you serve Him here at Dordt College. On a more personal note, let me also say how honoured and delighted I am to share this happy occasion with you. Nancy and I spent 20 years here, and all

---

Hubert R. Krygsman is President of Redeemer University College, Ancaster, Ontario, and former Associate Provost of Dordt College.

of our children and their spouses are Dordt alumni, so coming back to Dordt is the next-best thing to a homecoming for us. To my colleagues here on the stage and front benches, I remain deeply grateful for the "camaraderie" and for all that I have learned from you over the years. I also know well how you, and the Dordt College staff, have given yourself to your students to prepare them for this day. I think I can speak for the Class of 2011 in thanking you for your work. Finally, to the class of 2011, I want to say "congratulations." I've had the privilege of teaching many of you during your first years at Dordt. And—not that I had any doubts that you would make it—it is a great encouragement to see you here today, ready to graduate from Dordt College.

So what does this Commencement Day rite of passage—your fulfillment of the requirements of a Dordt College degree—mean to you? How will you use this degree? What will be the "career"—and by this I mean not only your job but also your life and the entire future of all that has gone into your college education and formation?

Today you join more than two million mostly young adults who are graduating from American colleges and universities this spring. Judging by the many brochures and advertisements that cross my desk about how to recruit students or how to lobby for government support, one might say that the main expectation and goal of a post-secondary degree in North America is to obtain a high-paying job and, for a few, perhaps to develop new products that will solve our health and environmental problems and restore our economic fortunes. In other words, many see post-secondary education as part

of the great myth of progress,<sup>1</sup> a narrative in which individuals seek liberation from all that corrupts us or weighs us down—like poverty, traditions, and stifling communities—so that we can achieve self-realization and self-satisfaction, especially in material terms. Commencement in these terms is a kind of modern escape from the burdens of civilization into the wilderness, a leave-taking, after due preparation, to seek your fame and fortune in new lands of opportunity. Perhaps some of you, too, are planning to head out for the big city lights to make your fame and fortune.

If this is your story for the meaning of commencement, then I worry for you. I'm sure that you already know the litany of economic, political, and environmental challenges that the Boomer generation, what in my time was called the "me" generation, has left you. These are massive challenges from which there is no escape, and that fleeting moments like the death of Osama bin Laden or the distraction of the fairy-tale wedding of Will and Kate will not resolve.

But besides these large-scale structural problems in our society, I am perhaps even more concerned that the largely bankrupt culture of the "me" generation has also wormed its way deep into the psyches and habits of *your* generation. It often is said that today's youth are idealistic and want to make a difference for good in the world, yet they feel deeply frustrated and alienated from established institutions. As Robert Putnam shows in *Bowling Alone*, and as I know from my own work, young adults are not "joiners" or "signer-uppers"; they are wary of traditional institutions and reluctant to commit to organizations and long-term relationships or habits, leaving a host of social institutions floundering. This is true even of Christian young adults, who seem no less ready to abandon church communities, schools, marriages, and other relational commitments. Young adults seem to prefer the informal, undemanding, and transient relationships of the new social media—though ironically these relationships have left young adults with such deep loneliness and social anxiety that universities and colleges are warning of a mental health crisis among their students. And a recent study of popular music by psychologist Nathan de Wall shows that song lyrics of this past decade show even more frequent

use of the words "I" and "me"—and expressions of both vanity and anger—than the romantic lyrics of the Boomer generation.<sup>2</sup> Bowling alone, it seems, is not all it's cracked up to be. Nor is it adequate to the larger challenges that are before us. That's why, if the career of your Dordt College education is escape, I worry for you, and for the larger world.

But here's the good news: I know that your Dordt College education has trained you for and inducted you into a story radically different from that of progress and escape. From the time of your first-term seminar, "Kingdom, Identity, and Calling," you have learned that your calling is first of all to discipleship, to being grafted and refashioned into the image of Christ and living inside the story of God's kingdom.

The story of this kingdom—what Hebrews calls the heavenly city, or what Augustine termed the City of God, or what John Winthrop called the City on a Hill—stands in sharp contrast to the modern story of progress and escape. It does not seek escape from the world with its poverty, violence, and suffering; for these, as Jesus said, you will always have with you as an opportunity for Christ-like witness and healing! This heavenly city is a place of peace, justice, and shalom, where all creatures can flourish, and which is bound together by the love of its citizens for God and for the world.

Your education at Dordt has been a training for becoming these citizens, that is, for becoming living saints who are Christ-like, self-sacrificing servant-leaders for God's kingdom in the world around you. Like the young runner described in Hebrews 12, you have been disciplined to "run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Hebrews 12.1-2, NIV). That discipline has included stretching your biblically-guided insight; exercising your critical and analytical reasoning, your imagination, and your communication and voice; exploring and deepening your faith; and cultivating your mature personality and social relationships. Through these exercises you have learned to understand both your major and all of life in the light of this transformative story. You know whose we are and whom we are called

to serve, you have learned how God has structured creation and calls us to live obediently according to his laws and norms, you have studied how the world has come to be as it is today, broken with the impact of sin and yet being made new in Christ and his redemptive kingdom, and you have been challenged to discover how we are called to live today as his kingdom citizens. In short, you have been trained into a Reformed perspective in a rich, intense, discipling community that has encouraged you to grow in wisdom and in all your gifts—an education that I hope you will continue to hold, practice, and grow in throughout your life-long race.

So let me put to you the challenge that Steven Garber gave to Redeemer students this past winter: have you, in coming to understand life within the story of God's kingdom, also developed the *heart* of a saint—a heart that will enable you to persevere in loving a world that is between-the-times, broken and imperfect, as God did in Christ, and one that will sustain your longing for and service to God's kingdom and community through good times and bad?

Now you might ask, what's love got to do with your achievement of a university degree? I expect you already know the answer. In the biblical model of wisdom, "knowledge" in its deepest sense means an intimate understanding and loving of others, and a desire to establish right relations with those others.<sup>3</sup> As Jesus declared, if you know me, you will love me and follow me (see John 14). Likewise, the Psalms, especially Psalm 119, repeatedly connect loving God with knowing and delighting in his law and acting according to it in doing justice and helping the poor, the orphaned, and the widowed (see also Isaiah 11). In other words, your knowledge needs to be rooted in the love of God and bear fruit in your love and service to your neighbours, your communities, and to all creation.

Remember also that the heavenly city is communal and therefore relational. Sustaining these relations requires more than an occasional You-tube "mob" event. As Andy Crouch writes, we are called as God's image-bearers and shapers of creation to weave God's Word of love into enduring habits, relationships, liturgies, and other cultural forms and institutions so that we embody and enable God's purpose and grace for the creation.<sup>4</sup> Such forms

and institutions will remain imperfect and in need of continuing transformation, but we must have them in order to fulfill our human nature and calling.

To sustain such habits and institutions, you will need to get involved and make long-term commitments. You will need to reach out to and share with your neighbours; you will need to build caring workplaces that strive for good stewardship of God's creation; you will need to be active contributors to your church congregations, local school boards, and local civic and political organizations; and so on. As Paul instructed the young Timothy, you should be bold and ready to serve, taking every opportunity to witness to and build toward the flourishing of God's kingdom in your work, families, churches, public life, and every other corner of God's creation.

Doing so, especially in a broken world, and with huge challenges and imperfect people, takes sustained hard work and the heart of a saint. Precisely! Don't expect the world to be perfect before you engage it—it is for Christ's sake, and in the strength of His kingdom, that we are called to persevere in loving and serving others and striving toward God's kingdom of righteousness.

Finally, let me add this: God's kingdom, and the community of saints, *needs* you. Take a look around you—your parents and grand-parents, your professors, even President Zylstra—we're all part of the Boomer generation that is ready to step down or retire. I myself became a first-time grand-parent only a month ago, an event that has given me a new sense of urgency about sustaining a vibrant, culturally-transforming Christian community for the next generation. At every turn, in all sectors of life and all around the world, there is growing need of a new generation of willing Christian servants and leaders. And as Rob Briner puts it, in his passionate appeal for holistic Christian higher education, Christians urgently need to be engaged in the leading sectors of our culture, like mass media and new media, the arts, business, and public policy, in order to be a transforming influence in today's culture.<sup>5</sup> This is your calling—not to escape, not even merely to occasionally participate, but to be fully engaged in the challenges, discourse, and institutions of our time, loving and serving the Lord with all your heart,

soul, and mind.

If you can't quite see yourself in this, or if the race seems too daunting with too many obstacles, remember that you do not face this calling alone. Let me give you a personal example. When I began my current position, three good colleagues remind-

---

*At every turn, in all sectors of life and all around the world, there is growing need for a new generation of willing Christian servants and leaders.*

---

ed me of those passages at the end of Exodus and beginning of Deuteronomy where the aging Moses commissions the younger Joshua to lead God's people into the promised land with the words "be courageous, for the Lord our God is with you." It was a beautiful and welcome reminder, but I had no idea what it would come to mean for today. Its significance became clearer this past year as we at Redeemer faced a difficult challenge from the 65,000-member-strong Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT), which purports to represent professors from public universities in Canada. After supposedly investigating Christian universities like Redeemer, the CAUT claimed that because they require a faith a commitment on the part of their faculty-members, Christian universities infringe upon academic freedom and, therefore, are of questionable status as universities. As you might imagine, we considered this a threatening attack from a militantly secular organization that could seriously injure the cause of Redeemer and Christian higher education in Canada.

My colleagues and I thought long and hard about strategies for defending ourselves and managing publicity. But in the end, we concluded that the only real and truthful option was to follow Martin Luther's "here I stand, so help me God" witness:

we affirmed that we are indeed a Christian university, we do hire Christian faculty, that in the context of our Christian university we have opportunity for both faithfulness and freedom to seek insight into all of reality in the light of God's Word, and that this educational vision is a long-established public good for which there must be room in Canada.

When the CAUT's investigation of Redeemer hit the media, we expected a rough ride, but to our wonder, and to no credit for our own efforts, people from many different corners of the country spoke up in support of us—including Christians from all different denominations, academics and politicians across the country, and even the Canadian Civil Liberties Association. We were amazed and humbled to be reminded how the living God, who can raise people from the dead, continues to work in powerful ways in the world around us.

It is our task simply to walk faithfully with God, exercising and using all the gifts he has given us and confident that he will bring all things into his kingdom. As you do this, remember at least these two sure realities. First, remember God's commitment to his people Israel through the prophet Isaiah to keep his promise of redemption through all the obstacles they might encounter (Isaiah 43, NIV):

- 1 But now, this is what the LORD says—  
he who created you, Jacob,  
he who formed you, Israel:  
"Do not fear, for I have redeemed you;  
I have summoned you by name; you are  
mine.
- 2 When you pass through the waters,  
I will be with you;  
and when you pass through the rivers,  
they will not sweep over you.  
When you walk through the fire,  
you will not be burned;  
the flames will not set you ablaze.
- 3 For I am the LORD your God,  
the Holy One of Israel, your Savior;....
- 5 Do not be afraid, for I am with you;

And second, remember also that one of the ways God works is through the encouragement and support of the community of saints of all ages. That passage in Hebrews 12 about how you are being trained to run the race, to live as saints begins with

this: “*Since* you are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses....” That cloud is recited in Hebrews 11, going all the way back to Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Rahab, and on, and on. All of these lived and walked with God in faith and stretched toward that heavenly city, which God has been preparing through His redemptive kingdom. We could add to this list the apostles, the church fathers, the Reformers, and many others, including *this* crowd of saints gathered here today. All of these were instrumental in living out God’s kingdom and in preparing you for this day. And now they are cheering you on as you take up the baton and run your leg of the race in shaping the future toward God’s kingdom.

As you go on from here, may the Lord go with you; may He fill you with the love, wisdom, grace, and power of His Spirit; and may He use you, in-

cluding the career of your Dordt education, mightily for building up His body and for the coming of His kingdom.

### Endnotes

- 1 Nancy Pearcey, *Total Truth: Liberating Christianity from its Cultural Captivity* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), chs. 2-3.
- 2 John Tierney, “A Generation’s Vanity, Heard Through Lyrics,” *New York Times*, April 26, 2011.
- 3 Harry Fernhout, “Serviceable Insight: Wisdom at Work,” in *Marginal Resistance: Essays Dedicated to John C. Vander Stelt* (Sioux Center, IA: Dordt Press, 2001), 7-8, 17-18.
- 4 Andy Crouch, *Culture Making: Recovering Our Creative Calling* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2008).
- 5 Bob Briner, *Roaring Lambs: a gentle plan to radically change your world* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993).