

The Standard Bearer

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The Spirit of Ahab's Reign

"And Joshua adjured them at that time, saying, Cursed be the man before the Lord, that riseth up and buildeth this city Jericho: he shall lay the foundation thereof in his firstborn, and in his youngest son shall he set up the gates of it."

Joshua 6:26

"In his [Ahab's] days did Hiel the Bethelite build Jericho: he laid the foundation thereof in Abiram his firstborn, and set up the gates thereof in his youngest son Segub, according to the word of the Lord, which he spake by Joshua the son of Nun."

I Kings 16:34

King Ahab, king over the northern ten tribes of Israel, was a very wicked king. In I Kings 16:30 we read that Ahab "did evil in the sight of the LORD above all that were before him." Only a few verses later (v. 33), the idea is repeated: "And Ahab did more to provoke the LORD God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel that were before him."

Rev. Guichelaar is pastor of the Protestant Reformed Church in Randolph, Wisconsin.

What were some of the wicked things that King Ahab did? First, Ahab took Jezebel for his wife, a woman thoroughly committed to the worship of Baal. Then, following the example of his wife, Ahab himself began to worship Baal. Still more, Ahab even went so far as to build a house and an altar for this idol god right in the capital city of the ten tribes of Israel, so that all Israel might worship Baal with him. These are only a few of the wicked things that King Ahab did. King Ahab also made life very miserable for the faithful prophets of the LORD.

As God's Word describes for us the sins of King Ahab, it suddenly mentions another man in Israel, and what he did during the days of King Ahab: "In his days did Hiel the Bethelite build Jericho." These words are added to the passage in such a way that they should be understood as presenting the great extent of Ahab's development in sin. These words capture for us the spirit of Ahab's reign: complete hatred of and opposition toward the Word of the Lord.

These words also capture for us the spirit of *our own age!*

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The Great Sin

The great sin of Hiel was this: he tried to silence the Word of the Lord.

In order to see that, we must go back in history, around 520 years, to the time of Joshua and the destruction of Jericho. We recall how Jericho fell. However, after the city was utterly destroyed, Joshua spoke these significant words: “Cursed be the man before the LORD, that riseth up and buildeth this city Jericho: he shall lay the foundation thereof in his firstborn, and in his youngest son shall he set up the gates of it.” And in these words, it was not just Joshua speaking, for Joshua was the servant of the Lord. In these words, God Himself was pronouncing a curse upon whomever would rebuild the walls of Jericho. And now, during the reign of King Ahab, some 520 years later, the wicked man Hiel decided to ignore this curse of God.

Why would Hiel have done such a thing? Why would he ignore God’s curse?

One thing that we ought to bear in mind is that Hiel would not have taken on such a project on his own. In fact, we can be quite certain that King Ahab himself was deeply involved in this work. The situation was most likely this: Ahab wanted the walls of Jericho rebuilt, and he hired Hiel to be the architect and project manager of this work. That this was probably the situation is understandable when you bear in mind that these were the walls of an entire city that Hiel was going to rebuild—a job that would certainly require the support and funding of the king himself. Also, when you look at the geographic location of Jericho, you realize that Jericho was very close to the Jordan River, right at the edge of Israel’s borders. It was therefore a very significant city for travel, for trade, and for protecting Israel’s borders—something King Ahab would have been concerned about. It is safe to say that Ahab’s own orders were what motivated Hiel (a man who must have prized the king’s favor above God’s favor) to take on this work of rebuilding Jericho.

When we look at this event, however, there is something more going on. And to see it, we need to ask ourselves this question: “Why did Joshua, and why did God Himself, place this curse upon Jericho’s walls in the first place? Why was God against having Jericho rebuilt?”

To answer that, we must first recognize that in the

curse Joshua spoke, God was not forbidding that anyone could ever *live* in the city again. By the time of King Ahab, people had been living in Jericho for a long time already (see, for example, II Sam. 10:5; Jud. 3:13ff.). In fact, by Ahab’s day, the city had probably become a very great and important city. Rather, God’s curse upon Jericho was that whoever *fortified* the city—whoever cleaned up those fallen walls and rebuilt new walls—that man would lose his eldest son at the time of laying down the foundation of the wall, and he would lose his youngest son when the gates were being put in place. That is implied in the language of the curse itself.

But the question is still there: why did God make this curse concerning Jericho?

The answer is this: God wanted the city of Jericho, and those broken walls, to be a constant reminder to all the people of the great victory God had wrought for Israel against Jericho. Those city walls, heaped up in ruins, were a constant witness over the last 520 years that salvation was by God’s grace and God’s power alone. Those broken walls were a memorial of the Lord’s salvation. In a certain sense, those broken down walls of Jericho spoke the Word of God—and they spoke to everyone who saw them.

Those walls spoke, first, of God’s judgment and punishment. They told everyone that God will destroy all those who stand in the way of His people entering into their inheritance. They witnessed that God laughs at the supposed strength of men, and that with the mere shake of His hand, God brings down the kingdoms of men upon their own heads. They testified that judgment is real, and that the days of unbelievers are numbered.

But that pile of ruins also spoke of God’s grace and goodness. No Israelite could pass by Jericho without reading the inscription God had written on those fallen walls: “This city was given by God’s grace, and God’s grace alone! And this city was received by faith, and by the power of faith alone!” Through that pile of rubble, God was declaring to all: “Salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone.”

And therefore, when Hiel and King Ahab went to work cleaning up that pile of rubble and rebuilding Jericho’s walls, they were putting their efforts towards silencing the Word of God. With their actions, they were

saying, “No more! No more will God speak through these stones. No more will we hear of God’s judgment upon the wicked. No more will we hear of God’s gracious acts to those who lived by faith. We refuse to hear it any longer.” And instead, what they were saying was this: “We will put our faith in strong walls, in weapons, and in man’s power—just as Jericho of old did. We will put our confidence in the arm of flesh.”

This was in complete harmony with the spirit of Ahab’s reign: silence God by promoting Baal-worship; silence God by persecuting His prophets; and now, silence God by taking away this memorial to the wonders of God’s grace.

This is the spirit of our age too, is it not?

It is the spirit of the world, to be sure. We see it all around us.

It is the spirit of the apostate church as well, who use the same reasoning that King Ahab must have used in this situation: “Joshua’s curse upon Jericho’s walls? That was so long ago! It is outdated! No longer do those words apply! We live in a different day, in a different age! And besides, it was only a mere man who spoke those words! What did Joshua know?”

The Root Cause

What was the root cause of Hiel’s actions?

The root cause of Hiel’s actions was not ignorance. The fact that those ruined walls had not been touched for 520 years, despite the city’s geographical and political significance, demonstrates that this curse had been well-known. And you can be sure that also Ahab and Hiel knew about this curse.

The root cause was this: sin had grown and developed in the ten tribes of Israel. The people were becoming hardened in their sin. And it came to the point where now, with King Ahab, the people were even willing to challenge the very curse of God!

What we have with Ahab’s sin is a development in sin’s hostility towards God’s Word. With King Ahab, we no longer have only the *ignoring* of God’s Word; we now also have active *opposition* against God’s Word. God’s Word was so hated among the wicked in Israel, that God’s Word *must* be silenced even through the rebuilding of Jericho’s walls. God’s Word must not even be allowed to exist anymore! It must be man’s

voice, and man’s voice only, which is heard from the city of Jericho.

We have the same thing today, do we not? In the world. In the apostate church. Yes, it is what lives in *our own* sinful hearts as well. It is not ignorance, but rebellious opposition to God that so often explains our own sinful actions.

God’s Just Judgment

The events took place just as Joshua’s curse had declared. The cost involved in trying to silence God was this: Hiel lost all his sons. The idea of the passage is this: the man who rebuilt the walls of Jericho would lose *all* his sons, *starting* with his oldest and *ending* with his youngest. The man’s name would be cut off from God’s covenant people. It was a high price to pay. Yet wicked Hiel was willing to sacrifice his own sons for the sake of trying to silence God’s Word.

Yet consider: was Hiel successful? *Was* the Word of the Lord silenced? Absolutely not! For with the death of each one of Hiel’s sons, God’s Word was speaking louder than ever before. In his actions, Hiel was only confirming the power and eternal presence of God’s Word.

Strikingly, that was also the case when the wicked world tried to silence Christ by crucifying Him. Through Christ’s death, it seemed that the world was successful in silencing Him. But in fact, through the crucifixion, God’s Word spoke louder than ever before. All the Old Testament prophecies were being fulfilled, and God was saving His people.

That will also be true when Christ returns in glory. The wicked world today works hard to silence God’s Word. But through all its actions, the world is only doing what God’s Word said it would do. And though it may seem that the world is successful in silencing the Word, through its actions, the world is only working towards Christ’s second coming. At which time, the Word of the Lord will speak louder than ever before! ☞

What It Means to Be Reformed (10)

The Church: My Chief Joy (3)

Am I Reformed? Is my church Reformed? These are important questions for those who identify as such. And these are the questions we have been answering in this series of editorials—partly because being Reformed is somewhat faddish these days, and many “New Calvinists” are not Reformed, even if they make that claim. It’s not that they are as fake as the “Swiss-Made” watch my brother bought for five dollars in Mexico when we were boys (no, in our excitement we did not notice the misspelling), a watch certainly not Swiss-made and hardly a watch. But taking the name “Reformed” carries with it a comprehensive responsibility, just as labeling a watch with a certain country of origin.

We may admit that “Reformed” cannot be reduced too simply to a couple of elements. Still, we have been identifying five essential elements of “Reformed.” As the English language permits, and for memory’s sake, each of them begins with “C.” A Reformed church is Covenantal, Calvinistic, Church-oriented, Confessional, and has a peculiar view of the Christian life. In this editorial we conclude “Church.”

Previous article in this series: October 15, 2015, p. 29.

—WIMTBR—
COVENANTAL
CALVINISTIC
CHURCH
CONFESSIONAL
CHRISTIAN LIFE

The true church and her marks

The true church—Christ’s church, the Reformed fathers said—can be known by three identifying marks.

Last time we saw the importance of the first two marks (pure preaching and proper administration of the sacraments) and showed that because both preaching and sacraments are a part of the church’s *worship*, the true church may be identified by her *worship*. Worship was *the* major concern of the Reformation. Christ restored proper worship in His church, primarily by restoring truth in and giving priority to preaching; and secondarily by restoring the sacraments to their proper number and right administration.

But we also saw that the corruption of preaching and the sacraments was symptomatic of a deep and complete corruption of the whole of worship. Without being

so fastidious as to reject all churches whose worship is not identical to ours, we can say that a truly Reformed church is identified not only by truth in sermons and properly administered sacraments, but by her entire liturgy, in all its elements and dimensions. The Reformers—especially the Calvinistic branch—determined a complete overhaul of the church’s *worship*.

Something similar may be said about discipline—it is part of a larger reality.

The third mark: “church discipline... punishing sin”

Not many churches exercise discipline these days. Exercising discipline on people is hard. Exercising discipline on myself is too. But if a church does not exercise discipline on her members—loving, corrective, purifying discipline—she may not call herself Reformed, any more than I may call myself Christian if I do not discipline myself. Both are difficult; both are extremely painful; but both are necessary for survival. The Head of the church mandates it.

So the Reformed Belgic Confession says, “The marks by which the true Church is known, are these... if church discipline is exercised in punishing of sin.” Here is not the

place for an extended explanation of church discipline, but a number of important elements should be mentioned: 1) *Impenitent* sin is the reason for discipline, not *all* sin. A man who “*will not renounce*” his errors becomes the object of discipline (Heidelberg Catechism, Lord’s Day 31). 2) The “errors” for which one is disciplined are either embracing the lie or walking ungodly. “Doctrines or practices inconsistent” with the name Christian, is how the Catechism puts it. 3) Church discipline is proper discipline that pursues the impenitent until the sin is removed from the sinner or the sinner removed from the church. 4) Because discipline can still be improper if *motivated* wrongly, the church that is truly Reformed disciplines in love for the sinner, is interested in the purity of the church, is zealous for the glory of God, and is in constant and eager prayer that the lost sinner return—even after he has been cut off. All this the Reformed Church Order of Dordt teaches on the basis of Scripture (Matt. 18:15-18; I Cor. 5; II Thess. 3:14, 15; Titus 3:10; etc.).

Further, the Belgic Confession makes clear that mere *discipline* is not the mark, but biblical discipline, Christian discipline, discipline according to Christ’s will. For the Roman Catholic Church also exercised discipline, but was the false church, since she “persecute[d] those who live holily according to the Word of God, and [who] rebuke her for her errors, covetousness, and idolatry.”

“While the pious snore....”

Is my church a Reformed church?

If I never hear my elders announce a stage of discipline and call for the church’s prayer for an impenitent sinner; if the classis of which my church is part never reports that permission was given to such-and-such a member-church to proceed to the next step of discipline; if my congregation’s bulletin always reports only timidly that “So-and-so left our church to join _____ denomination”—while I know well that “so-and-so” left because he was living contrary to the Word and probably was dodging discipline, my church is either not Reformed or is losing its Reformed identity.

But if *I*, member of that church, never *do* anything about such failures—of congregation or classis—then not only is my church failing to be Reformed, but I must question my own commitment to the true church, my commitment to being Reformed.

At the time God was directing the Reformed fathers to formulate the Reformed confessions, a man named Heinrich Bullinger wrote his own personal confession of faith. Soon, the churches in many lands recognized it as biblical and sound, and adopted it as an *official* confession, called the “Second Helvetic Confession.” Sensitive as he must have been to abuse, Bullinger began the section on church discipline with a warning to the churches not to judge too quickly, not “to exclude, reject, or cut off those whom the Lord does not want to have excluded or rejected.” No extremism must be present in the Reformed camp. He cautioned against an unbridled and immature enthusiasm

in discipline. “On the other hand,” Professor Bullinger warned, “we must be vigilant lest while the pious snore the wicked gain ground and do harm to the church.” Do not fail to exercise discipline!

When Christ lives in a church—Christ’s presence is the most basic way to know if the church is true—the church will not be sleeping. The true church, the Reformed church, will behave Christ-like in “putting away from among yourselves that wicked person,” (I Cor. 5), in counting some unto them “as an heathen man and a publican” (Matt. 18), as well as in “forgiving and comforting” the penitent, lest they be “swallowed up with overmuch sorrow” (II Cor. 2).

Discipline is the third mark of the Reformed church. But, like the first two marks, it also is part of a larger picture.

Synecdoche: A part stands for the whole

In literature, one useful figure of speech has the writer referring to a *whole* by mentioning only a *part* of the whole. Or, refers to only a *part* by mentioning the *whole*. This way of speaking is called synecdoche. So a whole herd is called “100 *head*” and “Here come the *suits*” means “See the *businessmen*.”

In a certain respect, we may consider the mark of discipline as synecdoche—a part of a much larger picture, and the Reformed fathers meaning something broader than discipline when they describe it. The bigger picture is the *government* of the church, of which discipline is an essential part.

To illustrate, we may ask some easy questions. Who rules the church (and, thus, exercises discipline)? *How* is the church governed? Is the minister supreme ruler? Do the members have a voice in any part of the government (discipline) of the church? Do the members have a say in the appointment of officebearers? May they participate in, even object to, discipline? These questions alone make clear that, although discipline itself is the third mark of the church, discipline must not be considered too narrowly. Discipline implies the *entire government* of the church, as a suit implies a businessman, and a head a cow.

The Belgic Confession directs us here. And not only when it (apparently) is concluding the listing of the marks of the true church and says, “in short, if *all things* are managed according to the pure Word of God, all things contrary thereto rejected, and Jesus Christ acknowledged as the only Head of the Church (emphasis added).” That is, in summing up the marks, the Confession says, *the mark* by which the true church may be known is that Jesus Christ is her only Head (no pope may govern her), and all things *managed* according to Christ’s Word—that is church government.

Not *only* from that. The Belgic Confession is not finished describing the importance of church government in its positive statements. When it describes the false church, it *starts* by saying: “she ascribes more *power* and *authority* to herself and her ordinances than to the Word of God.” How does the Roman Catholic church exercise power? On what

basis does she rule? The Reformed fathers had their eye on how the church was *governed*.¹

Principles, not details

Here, too, we must be careful not to be too rigorous in our application of this point. We do not write off as “un-Reformed” those whose church government is not identical to ours. We do not *reject* those (that’s the language of the PRC’s Church Order) whose usages differ from ours in non-essentials. Reformed *principles*, wisely applied in especially four areas, show a church is Reformed in her government. The four major sections of the Church Order of Dordt are: Offices, Assemblies, Worship,² and Christian Discipline.

Although Reformed writers have gleaned different principles from Dordt’s Church Order and the Reformed Confessions, few would disagree that this is a proper summary of them:

1. Christ is the Only Head of the Church, who rules by His Word and Spirit.

¹ The Westminster Confession of Faith (Chapter XXX) approaches the subject of discipline in a similar manner when its section on “Church Censures” begins: “The Lord Jesus, as king and head of his church, hath therein appointed a government in the hand of church-officers....” For our Presbyterian brethren, the bigger picture, of which discipline is a part, is proper, Presbyterian church government.

² “Worship” is how I summarize the section entitled “Doctrine, sacraments, and other ceremonies.” The section begins by requiring officebearers to sign the Formula of Subscription. Thus, *doctrine* is first because no *worship* is acceptable without orthodox *teaching*.

2. Christ rules in His Church by biblically appointed officebearers.

3. Local congregations (“particular churches”) are autonomous, that is, self-ruling.


4. Every confessing member of the church, in the “office of all believers,” has the right to participate in the government of the church.

5. Local congregations freely join together in a federation (denomination) of churches, in order to manifest the unity of the holy catholic church of Christ.

A high view of Church

A Reformed man has a high view of the church. Which is not the same as going to church morning and evening every Sunday. It means that he regards the church and her offices, her formal worship, her official teaching, her requirement for membership, her determination to take all things seriously by discipline, as essential. He has a high view of the institutional church, her offices, her assemblies, her worship, and her government.

So we Reformed view Christianity not as mere personal piety and a personal relationship to Jesus (without which one cannot be a Christian), but as membership in the *body* of Jesus Christ. Active membership. Intelligent membership. Connected to other members and her officebearers and her life.

We also have high regard for the church’s history. But that comes next, when we will see that being Reformed is being “Confessional.” That is, the true church has deep roots. The Reformed church lives deeply and consciously in her history. 

Fellowship with Other Church Members

In the spirit of “iron sharpening iron,” there is a statement in Prof. Gritters’ October 1, 2015 editorial that I would like you to clarify.

Near the end of the editorial you wrote, “We will commit ourselves to living among the people of God who are members of the church”—first of our own congregation; then of our denomination; and “*so too the church members who are closest to our denomination in confession and walk*” (emphasis added, AJC). It is this last phrase that I would like you to clarify.

At present, the PRC, as represented by her Contact Committee with the yearly approval of synods, have no ecumenical relations with any Reformed or Presbyterian churches in North America because of significant doctrinal differences. Regarding the URC who, some may argue, are closest to us doctrinally, the *official* position of the PRC is:

- 1) As regards the creeds, the PRC are convinced that the creeds address such matters as common grace, the well-meant offer, and a conditional covenant, and in fact that the creeds condemn these errors. The CERCU [of the URC] insists that these matters are not confessional, and thus one may maintain or condemn them and still be within the bounds of the Reformed confessions. For the PRC to accept that position would not only be a compromising of all that we stand for, but would also deny the work of the Spirit of truth who has continued to guide Christ’s church into the truth. This we are emphatically unwilling to do (2002 Acts of Synod, 21, 22).

I am left with the impression that you are calling us to put into practice (*living among*) as individuals and families that which we will not do, for significant reasons, as a denomination. The church members you are calling us to live among are sincere members of denominations with which we have serious doctrinal differences—at least this is our official position.

Living among carries the idea of friendship, fellowship, and walking together in agreement (Amos 3:3). Am I to understand your exhortation to *live among* those “who confess like precious faith” in the same sense that I am to *live among* “the church members who are

closest to our denomination in confession and walk”? Do you have any particular denominations in mind?

Sincerely,
Aaron J. Cleveland
Grand Rapids, Michigan

RESPONSE:

The people of God must be able to see the significant difference between how a *denomination* may act in its official sister relationships and how *individuals* may act in their personal friendships. Although a denominational stance certainly sends a message to the membership in that denomination (there are differences!), it does not mandate what these members may do in their personal friendships. It is a mistake to argue this way: Because the PRC may not engage in *official* relationships with another denomination, PRC members may have no friendship with members of this other denomination.

To be clear: the editorial calls the membership of the PRC to live in the church. That is the main point of the article. Then, the three concentric circles of friendships, beginning with the inner circle, and with an order of priority suggested, was deliberate: First, Christians fellowship with members of their own congregation. We give priority to this. This is the body to which we belong and to which we give our energy. Second, as we have time and opportunity, we fellowship with other members of our denomination. This is *sensible* because we live in complete agreement with them. It is also *natural* when many PRCs are found in a certain locale. What with shared church functions, shared school functions, and friendships established in those schools, this is reasonable and healthy. But it does not have the same priority as our own congregational life. The third circle—and this will obviously have a lower, a “third-level” priority—refers to fellowship with other non-PRC Christians, beginning with those who are closest to us.

To have this as my “third level” is a recognition that they are not those whom I want closest to me, because there are differences that I do not want to influence my children. Scripture calls believers to fellowship with “the faithful in the land” (Ps. 101). To the extent that a Chris-

tian is less faithful to God according to my judgments, to that extent my fellowship will be less close. Thus, Mr. Cleveland's question is easily answered: No, not "in the same sense," as he asked.

But to *put* other Christians in a circle of friendship is also important. They are Christians. Even though we may believe that they are mistaken in some areas of doctrine or life, we do not judge them to be non-Christians. To refuse fellowship with them would be to say, I will have no fellowship with a *brother*.

To underline this point, I call the readers' attention to an official decision of the PRC (Classis East, 1946) to allow, under certain circumstances, members of non-Protes-

tant Reformed Churches (and, it is to be understood, non-sister-churches) even to partake of communion in a PRC. "...Members of other churches, not in all respects agreeing with our Protestant Reformed faith, may be admitted to our communion table...." Given that, it would be wrong to say, I will have no friendship, at any level, with them.

To conclude: to answer Mr. Cleveland differently would be leading the PRC into sectarianism, would not be following in the footsteps of the PRC "fathers," and would be radicalizing the PRC to our ruin. Read the Belgic Confession, Articles 27 and 29 and remember the circumstances in which this was written.

—BLG

ALL AROUND US

REV. MARTYN MC GEOWN

■ The Four Blood Moons

When the moon passes directly behind the earth, and the sun, earth and moon are in direct alignment, there is a lunar eclipse. Because in a total lunar eclipse the moon has a reddish glow, it is sometimes called a "blood moon."

In recent years and months, John Hagee, pastor of Cornerstone Church, San Antonio, Texas, has been fueling speculation of something significant happening on the date of these blood moons.

His theory is as follows.

First, God has given the sun, moon, and stars as "signs" (Gen. 1:14). Hagee interprets these signs to be God's "billboards," with which the Almighty warns the inhabitants of the earth, and especially Israel, of important events. Second, blood moons are associated in Scripture with the second coming of Jesus Christ (Joel 2:31). Of course, Hagee here assumes that when Scripture prophesies, "the moon will be turned into blood," it refers to a lunar eclipse. Third, since lunar eclipses (or blood moons) are relatively common, Hagee looked for some really significant blood moons in history. He focused not on individual eclipses, but on sets of four lunar eclipses, called lunar *tetrads*. Since there have been 87 such tetrads since the birth of Christ, Hagee zeroed in on lunar tetrads that have coincided with *Jewish feast days* (the Passover and

the Feast of Tabernacles). Of those, there have been (not counting the ones we have just experienced in 2014-2015) *eight*. Of those eight, Hagee ignores five (AD162/163, 795/796, 842/843, 860/861, and 1949/1950) and concentrates on three.¹

Those three occurred in 1493/1494 (the Spanish Inquisition), 1949/1950 (the "rebirth of Israel as a nation"), and 1967/1968 (The Six-Day War). Since very significant events happened for Israel on those three tetrads, Hagee speculated that truly momentous, earth-shattering events would happen on the most recent tetrad (2014/2015). God is getting our attention! Something big is about to happen for Israel! At least, that was his claim in his 2013 book *Four Blood Moons: Something Is About to Change*.

Something big *did* happen. Excitement and speculation grew; Hagee's book became a bestseller among gullible Christians; and the media mocked when (yet again!) nothing occurred in September 2015.

Hagee's theory falls apart upon closer scrutiny. Remember that Hagee arbitrarily discards five of the eight tetrads as theologically insignificant. What about the Spanish Inquisition? Hagee focuses on the Edict of Expulsion, by which King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella of Spain banished the Jews from Spain. It was signed on

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¹ Hagee, who borrows much of this theory from Mark Biltz, appeals to NASA for the accuracy of the dates of the blood moons. NASA's website, <http://eclipse.gsfc.nasa.gov/LEcat5/LEcatalog.html>, lists all the tetrads in history (accessed October 13, 2015).

March 31, 1492. The first blood moon of that tetrad occurred on April 21, 1493, *almost a year after* the Edict of Expulsion was signed!² Similarly, Israel was recognized by the UN in December 1948, *some four months before* the first eclipse of that tetrad in April 13, 1949, which means that again God's "signal" to the Jews was late. And as for the most recent tetrad (April 15, 2014; October 8, 2014; April 4, 2015 and September 28, 2015), nothing happened, except that some of us were able to admire the blood red hue of the moon.

Ah, but what about the significance of these tetrads falling on *Jewish feast days*? Is God not telling us something in that? First, since the Jewish calendar is lunar (our calendar is solar), full moons often fall on Jewish feast days, so there is nothing surprising in that. Second, lunar eclipses are beautiful, but they are not billboards from heaven warning us of impending doom. Third, if God was really interested in warning the Jews, why was there no tetrad before AD 70, or at the time of the Holocaust? Fourth, Jewish Feast Days are insignificant in the New Testament age, having been abolished with the coming of Christ (Col. 2:16; Belgic Confession, Art. 25). Fifth, God *has* warned the Jews, and all nations, in the sending of His Son, the resurrection of His Son from the dead, and the promise of a Day of Judgment, all of which are recorded in sacred Scripture (Acts 17:30-31). To paraphrase Luke 16:31, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though a lunar tetrad appear in the heavens.

Hagee is wrong on several basic points. First, the tetrads of lunar eclipses are not the fulfilment of Joel 2:31 and other passages that prophesy the moon turning to blood. That happens at the end of the world, and not throughout history. Second, we are not to find our eschatology in the stars (that is astrology, not eschatology) but in Scripture. Third, and probably most important, the modern state of Israel is *not* God's chosen people. Hagee is a radical dispensationalist. He believes that it is the Christian's duty to support Israel politically, financially, and in every other way possible. God does not have a "special program" for Israel which includes the rapture of the church.

Let there be no confusion. The modern secular, un-

² The exact dates of Hagee's first tetrad were April 21, 1493; September 25, 1493; March 22, 1494; and September 15, 1494.

godly state of Israel is not, and shall not be in the future, God's chosen people. God's people are the church. We must not be carried away by strange end times speculation, but be sober and wait for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Indeed, we should expect more eschatological foolishness as the coming of the Lord draws nigh.

■ Bob De Moor: the "Hockey Game" at the CRC Synod

Bob De Moor is the outgoing editor of the Christian Reformed Church's magazine, *The Banner*. Reporting on CRC Synod 2015, De Moor calls attention to disagreement in the denomination: "Deliberation was friendly—that is, until the question arose of whether or not to make declarations related to same sex relationships. Rather quickly a 'hockey game' broke out."³

Several parts of this "hockey" game will be of interest to SB readers.

First, in one decision, the CRC Synod declined a request from Classis Minnkota to "instruct and admonish" the consistories of two Grand Rapids churches to discipline their members who are part of "All One Body," an organization "advocating change in the stance of the denomination in regard to same sex couples in committed and monogamous relationships." Clayton Libolt reports:

Far more controversial was a proposal to synod from one of its advisory committees to add to their decision language partially borrowed from the Minnkota communication condemning the "public advocacy...of sinful behavior".... In a dramatic conclusion to the debate, the proposed statement about "public advocacy...of sinful behavior" was withdrawn by the advisory committee. The only action of synod was not to accept Minnkota's request for discipline.⁴

Also at CRC Synod 2015 delegates held a "listening session" on the subject of same-sex marriage. Libolt reports:

Delegates were divided into small groups and presented with three topics for discussion. The first two were

³ Bob De Moor, "Don't Walk Away," in *The Banner*, <http://thebanner.org/departments/2015/06/don-t-walk-away> (accessed October 13, 2015).

⁴ Clayton Libolt, "All One Body Controversy Discussed by Synod," in *The Banner*, <http://thebanner.org/news/2015/06/all-one-body-controversy-discussed-by-synod> (accessed October 13, 2015).

potential pastoral situations: the baptism of a child of a same-sex couple and the same-sex marriage of a child of a church leader. The third topic presented four views of the relationship between civil marriage and religious marriage, for the purpose of considering a Reformed perspective on such a relationship.⁵

“Listening sessions” and “study committees” are very popular, but studying something on which God has spoken clearly with a view to circumventing what God has said is wicked behavior. Advocating for sinful behavior is itself wicked behavior: “[they] not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them” (Rom. 1:32). Should a church member become a member of a pro-abortion advocacy group, a pro-adultery advocacy group, or a pro-idolatry advocacy group, he should be reprimanded, and, if he remains impenitent, disciplined. The same is obviously true of a pro-homosexuality advocacy group. The issues are not difficult to understand—they are just difficult to obey in an increasingly wicked world. To baptize the child of a same-sex couple is to profane the sacrament. To officiate at or even to attend the wedding of a same-sex couple is to profane the institution of marriage. To discipline a homosexual member of one’s family would be painful, but it is what God commands us to do.

De Moor laments the disagreement at synod. First, he explains the fundamental problem:

With a study report on the topic headed for Synod 2016, it seems we’re headed for trouble. Why? Because we can’t avoid our disagreements on whether homosexual practice is always sinful. That fundamental question will dog our discussions on how we are to pastorally deal with same sex relationships in our congregations. We won’t agree on what’s pastoral until we agree on what’s sinful. Synod 2015’s discussions indicated that many no longer agree with the position of the Christian Reformed Church that homosexual practice is always wrong or that such practice always requires church discipline. If we are unwise, we face years of conflict in which, as with the women’s ordination dispute, we oscillate between two extremes from year to year, based on who has more votes at synod. That will restart the hemorrhage of membership on both “sides.”

Notice what De Moor says—there is disagreement in

⁵ Clayton Libolt, “Delegates Hold Listening Session on Same Sex Marriage,” <http://www.crcna.org/news-and-views/delegates-hold-listening-session-same-sex-marriage> (accessed October 13, 2015).

the CRC on whether homosexual *practice* is sinful! The debate has moved from whether same-sex *attraction* is sinful—it is, just as lust is sinful (Matt. 5:28)—to whether the *practice* is sinful; and CRC officebearers, without fear of discipline, openly state that such practice is not sinful.

Then he explains his solution: let the local congregations and consistories decide. This, he claims, has worked with other issues—divorce and remarriage, and the ordination of women:

That “local option” helped us to clearly affirm biblical teaching, leave room for different perspectives on what is or isn’t a sin, and allows churches to exercise pastoral care and discipline in line with our understanding that the CRC confers primary authority on local councils. Would the “local option” erode our commitment to biblical teaching? No. Scripture teaches emphatically that we must “maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph. 4:3). And it promises that the Spirit will lead us together into all the truth (John 16:13). Determining together God’s will for folks with same sex attraction will take time.

The “local option” will not promote unity—it will destroy it. Each consistory will define sin as it sees fit. It will lead to men and women doing what seems right in their own eyes. And it will lead to what De Moor actually wants—the eventual acceptance of practicing homosexuals in all parts of the CRC.

■ ISIS Barbarism Continues

The Christian Post reports on a heartbreaking story from Syria, where Islamic State militants “heavily tortured and killed a 12-year-old boy, along with 11 indigenous Christian missionaries, after they refused to leave their homeland or renounce Christ.”⁶

The missionaries were Christian converts from Islam. Apostasy from Islam is punishable by death according to strict Sharia law. ISIS demanded that the Christians renounce Christ and embrace Islam. They refused.


First, the ISIS jihadists cut off the fingertips of a 12-year-old boy, while they forced his father, a Christian missionary, to watch. As they beat the boy, they told him that the suffering would stop, if he and his father reconverted to Islam. They refused. Finally, the Christians

⁶ <http://www.christianpost.com/news/isis-crucifies-11-christian-missionaries> (accessed October 13, 2015).

were *crucified* in front of a mob of spectators. Other missionaries were beheaded, and their women were *raped* before being decapitated. Then their bodies were left hanging on crosses for two days.

As I read this report, several things struck me. First, the malice of Satan is real. How he hates Christianity and Christians! The same murderous rage that led Saul of Tarsus to lay the church of Jesus Christ waste dwells in the hearts of these wicked ISIS jihadists. Only the Spirit of Christ can dispel such darkness. Second, the grace of

God is real. How much grace is required to endure torture and death for the sake of the name of Jesus Christ! Third, the power of the testimony of the martyrs is real. *Christian Post* reports that Muslims are turning to Jesus in Syria *despite the threat from ISIS*.

And fourth, a question pierced my soul? Could I—would I—be faithful to Christ in such situations? “And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death” (Rev. 12:11). 

BELIEVING AND CONFESSING

PROF. RONALD CAMMENGA

Of Interpreting the Holy Scripture; and of Fathers, Councils, and Traditions

(Second Helvetic Confession, Chapter 2, A)

The True Interpretation of Scripture

The apostle Peter has said that the Holy Scriptures are not of private interpretation (II Pet. 1:20), and thus we do not allow all possible interpretations. Nor consequently do we acknowledge as the true or genuine interpretation of the Scriptures what is called the conception of the Roman [Catholic] Church, that is, what the defenders of the Roman [Catholic] Church plainly maintain should be thrust upon all for acceptance. But we hold that interpretation of the Scripture to be orthodox and genuine which is gleaned from the Scriptures themselves (from the nature of the language in which they were written, likewise according to the circumstances in which they were set down, and expounded in the light of like and unlike passages and of many and clearer passages) and which agree with the rule of faith and love, and contributes much to the glory of God and man's salvation.

The first article of the Second Helvetic Confession (SHC) established the fundamental truth that Scripture

is the “true Word of God.” Scripture is the true Word of God because “God himself spoke to the fathers, prophets, apostles” and through the Holy Scriptures “still speaks to us” today. As the true Word of God, Scripture contains all that is necessary as “pertains to a saving faith, and also to the framing of a life acceptable to God.” In connection with the truth of the inspiration of Scripture, the SHC also establishes the closely related truth—of critical importance to the Reformation—that “the preaching of the Word of God is the Word of God.” Thus, “when this Word of God is now preached in the church by preachers lawfully called, we believe that the very Word of God is proclaimed, and received by the faithful.”

Chapter 2 of the SHC takes up the subject that is logically next in order. Having established the inspiration and infallibility of the Scriptures, the next matter of importance is the interpretation of these infallibly inspired Scriptures. Given the holiness of the sacred writings themselves, how are unholy and sinful men to interpret these Scriptures? What method ought they to employ and what principles ought they to implement?

The article begins with the negative—two negatives, in fact. First, no passage of Scripture is of any “private interpretation.” And, second, neither is the church to be

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considered the infallible interpreter of Scripture, as is the claim of the Roman Catholic Church.

First of all, no passage of Scripture is of any private interpretation. Here the SHC appeals to II Peter 1:20, “Knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation.” It is a questionable interpretation of II Peter 1:20 to appeal to it as a condemnation of the right of the individual to interpret Scripture as he pleases, apart from the Scriptures themselves and apart from what the church of the past has taught. As a matter of fact, II Peter 1:20 is not talking about what we usually think of when we refer to the interpretation of Scripture. At the end of this first chapter, the apostle Peter is not talking about the *interpretation* of Scripture, but he is talking about the *origin* of Scripture. He is answering the question: “Where did the Scriptures come from?” His answer is that Scripture did not originate in the private interpretation of those who wrote the Scriptures. In this sense, no part of Scripture is “of,” that is, does not arise out of, “any private interpretation.”¹ That this is the correct understanding of the verse is plain from what immediately follows at the beginning of verse 21: “For the prophecy [of Scripture] came not in old time by the will of man.” Scripture does not originate in the private interpretation of the men who wrote the Scriptures because Scripture does not originate in the will of man. What, positively, is the explanation for the origin of Scripture? “Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost” (II Pet. 1:21).

Even though, strictly speaking, II Peter 1:20 is not talking about the interpretation of the Scriptures, it is nevertheless true that Scripture is not to be interpreted according to the private opinion of the individual reader of Scripture. This is the foolish notion that has been resurrected in our day. Scripture means whatever it means *to you*. Many contemporary Bible study programs promote this view. No, Scripture does not mean whatever it means to you. Scripture means what it means. Scripture means what its one divine author intended it to mean,

¹ By “prophecy of Scripture” the apostle does not refer only to the prophetic portions of Scripture, in distinction, let us say, from the historical portions or poetical portions of Scripture. By “prophecy of Scripture” is meant all of Scripture from the point of view of the fact that all of Scripture is the Word of God. That is what “prophecy” is—the very Word of God. All Scripture is prophecy because all Scripture is the Word of God.

nothing more and nothing less. It is not our business to impose a meaning on Scripture foreign to the intended meaning of its author. No one has the right to do that with what someone else has written. Man certainly does not have the right to do that with what God has written. Our business is to discover the meaning of Scripture and apply that meaning to our life in the world. Our calling is to know the mind of God, and knowing the mind of God, know God who reveals Himself in Holy Scripture.

Principles of Scripture Interpretation

With regard to the right interpretation of Scripture, the first paragraph of this second article of the SHC sets forth a number of important principles. The first important principle of the interpretation of Scripture that is “orthodox and genuine” is that the meaning of Scripture is to be “gleaned from the Scriptures themselves.” In these words the SHC gives expression to the fundamental Reformation principle of the interpretation of Scripture: *Scriptura Scripturam interpretatur*, that is, Scripture interprets Scripture. Scripture is its own interpreter, which is to say, since Scripture is the Word of God, only God can interpret His own Word.

That Scripture is to interpret Scripture means also that attention is to be paid “to the circumstances in which [the Scriptures] were set down,” that is, the background, occasion, and context of specific passages. But especially does it mean that Scripture is to be “expounded in the light of like and unlike passages, and of many and clearer passages.” Scripture is to be compared with Scripture. This means that similar passages are to be compared with each other, and the more difficult passages interpreted in light of the easier, the less clear passages understood in light of those passages that are clearer.

The principle of Scripture interpreting Scripture includes the idea that the meaning of Scripture is to be determined “from the nature of the languages in which they were written.” Here the SHC gives expression to the importance of understanding Scripture in its original languages, the Hebrew of the Old Testament and the Greek of the New Testament. These were the languages in which God inspired the Scriptures to be written. The proper interpretation of Scripture is the interpretation that pays attention to the words of Scripture in the original languages in which it was written. By insisting on

the interpretation of Scripture according to its original languages, the Reformers rejected the Roman Catholic exaltation of the Latin Vulgate. Although the Reformers regarded Jerome's Vulgate to be a faithful translation of Scripture, it was, for all that, a translation—not Scripture in its original languages. Proper interpretation of Scripture means going beyond any translation of Scripture to the original upon which every faithful translation is based: the Hebrew of the Old Testament and the Greek of the New Testament.

Insistence on the importance of the original languages of Scripture also brings out another important Reformation principle. This principle stands closely connected to the teaching of the preceding article that the preaching of the Word of God is the Word of God. The preaching of the Word of God is the Word of God as that preaching is based on the original languages of Holy Scripture. In their preparation of the sermons that they preach, the ministers of the Word must wrestle with the original languages. They must pay attention to the specific words inspired by the Holy Spirit. They must pay attention to the peculiar grammatical constructions that are used in their text. They must compare Scripture with Scripture in the original languages of Scripture.

And since the Scriptures are to be interpreted in their original languages, the Reformers and the churches of the Reformation insisted on a trained and educated clergy. If the ministers of the Word must labor with the Scriptures in “the languages in which they were written,” aspiring ministers must learn the biblical languages. The Reformation was not only a return to the Scriptures, it was a return to the Scriptures in their original languages. Not just anyone who feels led by the Spirit ought to preach and teach in the New Testament church, but those who are called and sent. And those who are called and sent ought to be those who are duly trained for all aspects of the work, especially the most important aspect of the work of the ministry, the preaching of the Word.

That Scripture is its own interpreter means also that individual passages are to be interpreted according to “the rule of faith and love.” At the same time, those interpretations are to be judged as genuine that “contribute much to the glory of God and man's salvation.” The “rule of faith” refers to the overall teaching of Scripture. No interpretation of a specific passage is to be regarded as

correct that conflicts with the overall teaching of Scripture. For example, Paul's teaching in I Timothy 2:4 that God “will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the [saving] knowledge of the truth” cannot be interpreted to mean that God wills the salvation of every man, because this conflicts with the overall teaching of Scripture that He wills the salvation of some only, that He has chosen some men only to everlasting life, and that He has sent His Son to die for the elect.

At the same time, that interpretation “contributes much to the glory of God and man's salvation.” The view that God wills the salvation of every human being, but in the end is able to save only some, robs God of His glory and is a denial of the biblical truth concerning man's salvation.

Interpretations of the Holy Fathers


Wherefore we do not despise the interpretations of the holy Greek and Latin fathers, nor reject their disputations and treatises concerning sacred matters as far as they agree with the Scriptures; but we modestly dissent from them when they are found to set down things differing from, or altogether contrary to, the Scriptures. Neither do we think that we do them any wrong in this matter; seeing that they all, with one consent, will not have writings equated with the canonical Scriptures, but command us to prove how far they agree or disagree with them, and to accept what is in agreement and to reject what is in disagreement.

If Scripture is to interpret Scripture, how is the church to regard the writings of the holy fathers of the church? What status ought we to accord these writings? What authority do the ancient fathers have in the church today?

That Scripture is its own interpreter does not mean that we hold in contempt the writings of the ancient fathers. The writings of the ancient fathers, like Augustine of Hippo and Anselm, are and ought to be held in high esteem in the church. These men defended the truth against heretics. These men set forth the truth positively. These men were instrumental in the development of the truth, enriching the church's understanding of the biblical deposit of the truth. That we are to walk in the old paths and in the traditions of our fathers (Jer. 6:16) demands that we esteem what the fathers have written,

“their disputations and treatises.” That we have regard for the leading of the Spirit of the church of the past into the truth (John 14-16) also includes that we hold the writings of the ancient fathers in high regard. The church may be thankful for them, and centuries later continues to avail herself of their writings in the ongoing task of the church in the defense and development of the truth of God’s Word.

But we receive these writings and make use of these writings only “as far as they agree with the Scriptures.” At the same time “we modestly dissent from them when they are found to set down things differing from, or altogether contrary to, the Scriptures.” The Scriptures are the supreme authority in the church. These men were

not infallible and did not regard their writings as infallible. The church need not receive anything not found in the Scriptures, and may not believe anything contrary to the Scriptures. This is the viewpoint that any faithful minister, theologian, or teacher takes. He does not desire that the members of the church follow him slavishly and unquestioningly. Thus, “[n]either do we think that we do them any wrong in this matter; seeing that they all, with one consent, will not have their writings equated with the canonical Scriptures, but command us to prove how far they agree or disagree with them, and to accept what is in agreement and to reject what is in disagreement.” In this way, in the interpretation of the Scriptures we honor the Scriptures for what they are: the very Word of God. 

FEATURE ARTICLE

REV. RICHARD SMIT

The Role of Reformed Literature in Foreign Missions

I had the privilege to experience firsthand the topic of tonight’s lecture. I was not involved with Reformed literature on the mission field in the Philippines to the extent that Rev. and Mrs. Daniel Kleyn have been. They established and organized the “Reformed Bookshelf” in order to fulfill a goal of our mission work in the Philippines, which is to promote the spread of Protestant Reformed literature in the Philippines in a financially accessible way. They continue to manage very well the inventory, sales, and distribution of the RFPA literature in the Philippines, and annually report to the churches about that work.

Although I was involved in the distribution of the literature to a lesser extent to various contacts, I did experience all aspects of the role of our Protestant Reformed literature in our foreign missions. Moreover, I was given the opportunity to write a book that the RFPA published and that was for a few reasons beneficial for our mission

work in the Philippines. From firsthand experience then, I would like to explore the topic of the role of Reformed literature in our foreign mission work.

We believe that missions is the preaching of the Word. That sword the church must thrust into the world for the gathering of the elect remnant and for the destruction of the kingdom of darkness. In fact, that preaching, by the grace of God, remains the strength of foreign missions. In order to serve the advance of missions throughout the world along its appointed course in history, Reformed books have their rightful place. Although this role is rather obvious to us by reason of the very existence of the RFPA, so that this fact almost precludes a speech on this role, yet it may be worthwhile for us to be reminded of this role and so to be encouraged in perseverance in our honorable work.

We will notice, first, that Reformed literature has a role in missions that is biblical. Second, it serves a supportive, instructional role for foreign missions. Third, it promotes and prepares the expansion of mission work. Finally, it shares in the fruits and effects of the gathering of the Lord’s other sheep from the vain religions of this world.

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A Scriptural Role

When Paul was imprisoned in Rome for the second time, he said to Timothy, “The cloak that I left at Troas with Carpus, when thou comest, bring with thee, and the books, especially the parchments” (II Tim. 4:13). In other words, he said to Timothy, “Bring the books!” Although he may have had some books with him for his study, he needed more. What the scrolls and parchments that the apostle had in mind were, we are not specifically told, but the apostle viewed them as vital to his work from prison in the service of the Lord.

II Timothy 4:13 applied to our missionaries implies that the missionary needs to bring books that will assist him in his work. In fact, that place of literature in missions is set forth, either explicitly or by implication, in our denominational liturgy and Church Order.

For example, the “Form for the Ordination of Missionaries” outlines the duties of the missionaries: “In the first place, thou art to bring to their attention by all fit and lawful means the glad tidings that Jesus Christ has come into the world to save sinners.” Those “fit and lawful means” include pamphlets, magazine articles, newspaper articles, sermon outlines, catechism outlines, lecture notes, and books.

Similarly, the “Constitution of the Domestic Mission Committee” requires the missionary to report “... the number of pieces of literature mailed and personally distributed” (PRC Church Order, 51).

Finally, even the “Formula of Subscription” assumes that a missionary will be writing, or be using literature that has been written, and so requires him to “teach and faithfully defend the aforesaid doctrine, without either directly or indirectly contradicting the same, by our public preaching or writing.”

For his own sermon preparation and for his instruction of the people among whom he labors, the missionary needs books and literature that stand in harmony with Scripture and the Reformed confessions. These will serve the development of his own sermons, instruction, and writings according to the spiritual environment of the place where he is sent by Christ to labor. He needs the assistance of Reformed literature in the exposition of the truth over against the errors that he faces, because he does not always have the time to “re-invent the wheel” in the treatment and explanation of Reformed doctrine. Be-

cause of his limitations, he will need published literature, authored by his colleagues in the ministry, in order to assist him in his work with mission contacts and groups.

Such Reformed books that complement, not compromise, the proclamation of the Reformed faith need to be sent and brought to the mission work. This is necessary because we believe that the Reformed faith is our catholic, undoubted Christian faith.

In some Reformed circles, the usefulness of the “Three Forms of Unity,” and books that expound this doctrine, in foreign missions has been questioned and rejected. While they maintain that the church is catholic, they are unwilling to maintain that the faith into which the Holy Spirit has led the church after the Reformation is catholic. It cannot bring sufficient, effective, and reliable comfort in life and death to those of non-Dutch or European descent. Apparently, it is their understanding that the Reformed faith is culturally conditioned and does not transcend human culture.

We reject that on the basis of the Heidelberg Catechism’s statement in Lord’s Day 7 about what the Christian must believe. We must believe the “catholic undoubted Christian faith.” That faith is what the “Three Forms of Unity” teach, including the Protestant Reformed explanation of the “Three Forms of Unity” in regard to the doctrines of election, particular grace, the unconditional covenant, faith, and baptism, according to the “Declaration of Principles” of 1951.

Thus, the literature that promotes, defends, expounds, and encourages that true, catholic faith over against idolatrous and apostate religions has a role in foreign missions. Our missionaries say to the RFPA and its board, “Bring the books! and, more like them! And, if necessary, translate them!” Our missionaries say to the staff of the SB, “Bring the books!”

An Instructional Role

Missions is the work of the authoritative proclamation of God’s truth by means of instruction. The work of missions and its truth is not advanced by social programs, extensive sports ministries, movies, pizza parties at the malls, music concerts, fun runs and walk-a-thons, rallies, medical missions, and such like. All these things are the outwardly attractive ways of modern missions, and are simply erroneous.

Not that, but rather *instruction*. That is what Paul did in his mission labors.

In Acts 17:2-3 we read that “...Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the Scriptures, opening and alleging, that Christ must have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ.”

Then later, after being told by Christ to continue at Corinth to speak in the name of Christ the gospel truth, Paul “...continued there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them” (Acts 18:11).

Paul preached unto the Gentiles by means of instruction that was didactic, logical, probing-question and detailed-answer form. He delivered to them propositional truth. He expounded with great detail the truth over against the lie. He grounded his instruction in the Scriptures, both in the Old Testament and what was available to him of the New Testament at that time. By the reliable question-and-answer method in the service of the truth, he opened, alleged, reasoned, and came to logical conclusions concerning Christ, Jehovah, and salvation by grace alone.

In order to complement that work of painstaking instruction, the publication of similar Reformed literature is necessary.

In the first place, this helps the missionary with a more detailed exposition of what has been taught. One of the most difficult limitations a missionary faces is the lack of time to instruct. He experiences that, once the catechism class or Bible study gets started, after several blinks and a few verses of discussion later, the missionary and the group are surprised that the allotted hours for the evening are already gone. Alas, there are more questions that need to be answered than the time allotted, and more things that could be said in the answers already given! Often, the missionary finds relief in the resources that he can suggest for further reading and study in the days before the next meeting. For the missionary, the opportunity to recommend a book whose author and content further develop the doctrine discussed at the meeting, and whose author and content are known to be faithful to the standards of the Reformed confessions, is most helpful and reassuring.

In the second place, our Reformed books may cover doctrines that might not be the current topic of a cate-

chism lesson or Bible study that someone wishes to study. It happens that the topic at hand in a lecture is one thing, but those attending have earnest questions about another topic. Do we just ask them to wait until the question is treated three months or a year later, in an upcoming lesson or in a later verse in the Bible book being studied? If we had no Reformed literature at our fingertips, that might need to be the answer. Thankfully, in most cases, our missionaries have the opportunity to recommend and give our contacts an article or a book for their further instruction. Later on, follow-up with them will reveal what they have learned.

In the third place, our Reformed literature provides another faithful witness to the instruction of our missionaries, a witness that is particularly important where there may be only one full-time missionary. The need for two or more missionaries in a specific field of labor is not only warranted by a workload that one man alone cannot handle, but also by the need for verification. It is often the case that new contacts and converts will ask one missionary a question, and then ask another missionary or visiting pastor the very same question. Then, the answers are compared. When the testimony of one missionary is confirmed by the testimony of his colleague, that instruction is then often verified and settled in the minds and hearts of the contacts or new converts. Our RFPA books and *SB* have served the role of that second or third witness, so that every Word of God that is taught by our missionaries may be established by the work of the Holy Spirit in the understandings of the new believers as well as of the more mature believers.

A Promotional Role

Reformed literature serves a promotional role in missions.

It serves to increase awareness of the Reformed faith. It does that to those who will remain avowed enemies to the Reformed faith. The leaders of cults and of false churches are beginning to know through the RFPA's literature who the Protestant Reformed Churches are. Such literature exposes the lie of the vain religions and false gospels, and leaves them without excuse in their enmity against the truth. It also clarifies PRC teachings among those who have simply assumed that the common caricatures and straw men about the PRC are true.

Reformed literature serves to answer the curious about the PRC. When asked, “What do you believe?,” the brief verbal answer is often complemented with several books. When asked, “Why do you believe this or that?,” the thorough answer might be packaged and sent in the mail the next day. When charged that our faith makes us careless and profane, an apology (defense) is given and then confirmed in several books that show how the Reformed faith promotes true godliness.

Reformed literature equips new converts and long-standing members of the established churches on the mission fields for their own witness to family and acquaintances. They need those materials for their daily devotions that many often use in that way. They need the literature for the refreshing of their memories about what they were taught in regard to a particular doctrine of the Reformed faith in a sermon or Bible Study. They need the literature for their apologetics for the faith with their relatives, neighbors, acquaintances, and co-workers. They need the literature for Reformed instruction of their children at home.

Reformed literature has served the role of preparing groups for the resources of a full-time missionary from the PRC, which in comparison to most denominations have limited resources. The Foreign Mission Committee of the PRC has used literature since the late 1990s as a tool in preparation for full-time missionaries in the Philippines. While we never know where the books and pamphlets end up, the Lord directs it and uses it to draw others to the truth and to the faithful preaching of the Word. Reformed literature, as a tool of preparation for a mission field, assists in the early stages of the sifting process between those being called out of unbelief and darkness and those who might remain in darkness—even before the missionary may set foot in his particular field of labor. It has served as a means to test the genuineness of those among whom the missionary would labor for Reformed preaching and instruction.

In addition, Reformed literature helps in a very practical way in regard to limited-access regions and countries. There are some countries into which full-time missionaries cannot be sent, such as Myanmar. There are areas in the Philippines where it is simply not safe for Caucasians to go. Yet, Reformed books in the hands of the local contacts can freely enter and prepare an area for the presence

of full-time mission work, if and when the Lord might open such a door.

A Blessed Role

The blessedness that the authors and publishers of Reformed literature have in this role of Reformed literature in missions is related to the fruits of mission work. In the first place, there have been negative responses to Protestant Reformed literature, even in areas where PRC missionaries have labored in the Philippines. One RFPA book was gradually removed from a seminary library when it influenced some students to embrace the truth of unconditional salvation. Some contacts refuse to read the RFPA books that their spouses bring home and read from cover to cover. Avowed Arminians have shunned some of our contacts for having the books and spreading their contents with their Bible study group. Some Arminian pastors, opposed to the Reformed faith, demanded that their members never read Protestant Reformed literature. Books have been charged as hyper-Calvinist, ana-Baptist, anti-missions, heretical, narrow-minded, and more.

Nevertheless, in the second place, we are also thankful for the positive responses to our literature. Someone we know worked each week, and set aside from his weekly wage support for the church, then support for his family, and then money to buy RFPA books in order to satisfy his appetite for Reformed instruction. One man thought that he would just stop by the Reformed Bookshelf to buy one or two books he saw on the book list advertisement. He went home after several hours with an armload of books, expounding the pearl of great price. Others expressed deep appreciation for the books, with specific details about what they learned from the books and in what chapter they were reading. Parents were thankful for the Bible story book for their children’s instruction as well as for their own, not having had that instruction in their youth. Some, having read a book, bring their questions or comments to the missionaries the next time that they are available. Some expressed their joy at reading books that expounded the Reformed faith, giving them perspectives on the Reformed faith never seen before.

The blessedness that the authors and publishers of our Reformed literature have in the complementary role

in missions is spiritual happiness. That promise of blessedness in that role in our day and age does not guarantee continued financial success for the RFPA. Book distribution may reach a saturation point in a particular region, since the mission work and interest for the literature have been halted due to persecution or rejection of the truth. In fact, it is not hard at all to imagine how in the future Protestant Reformed literature might be seized and those responsible for it, the authors and the publisher, charged with hate crimes against humanity for exposure of and sharp instruction against prevailing heresy, false doctrine, and widespread immorality. The days may be coming in which RFPA books will be banned and burned. In the face of the increasingly active opposition from the kingdom of darkness against the Reformed faith, such is the spiritual risk that you share in a supportive and complementary role to Reformed missions.


What should our response be to opposition to the doc-

trinally sound content of our literature? Withdraw from the battle? Compromise the truth? Dull the sharpness?

No, as the apostles did when persecuted and suffering for the sake of Christ, so we must rejoice and count it a privilege to suffer for righteousness' sake.

While it is yet possible at this time in history to publish and serve foreign missions, bring the books! Publish the sound, edifying Reformed books! Advertise the books! Send the books!

And, pray that the Lord of the harvest may use this material as a means to destroy the kingdom of darkness and to lead His people out of the vain and cursed religions of this world into the blessed truth of that catholic, undoubted Christian faith once delivered unto the saints.

May the chief Shepherd of the sheep continue to establish the work of your hands (Ps. 90:17)—for the sake of His sheep gathered and those yet to be gathered, as God has ordained. 

Commemorating the Life and Work of Herman Hoeksema

One hundred years ago this month, on September 16, 1915, Herman Hoeksema was ordained into the gospel ministry at Fourteenth Street Christian Reformed Church in Holland, Michigan. Fifty years later—and fifty years ago this month, on September 2, 1965, the Lord took him to glory after an astonishingly productive life as an eloquent preacher, profound theologian, magnetic teacher, prolific author, and loving family man. Throughout those fifty years, God used Herman Hoeksema as the principal founder of the Protestant Reformed Churches and as a leader of those

churches for their first forty years. It should also be noted that our association, the Reformed Free Publishing Association, and its *Standard Bearer* magazine originated ninety-one years ago in order to give him a voice. So, in the year of our Lord 2015, on the occasion of the twin September anniversaries of Herman Hoeksema's ordination and glorification, the RFPA gives thanks to God as it commemorates the life and work of this beloved saint.

In order to celebrate the life and work of Herman Hoeksema this fiscal year, the RFPA has been busy with two important book projects. The first project, *Just Dad: Stories of Herman Hoeksema* by Lois E. Kregel, is an intimate biography as only a member of Hoeksema's family could tell it. The blurb on the back cover says it all:

Mr. VanUffelen is a member of Hope Protestant Reformed Church, Walker, Michigan and retired secretary of the RFPA.

Many people are familiar with the public persona of Herman Hoeksema. As one of the leading theologians of the twentieth century, a seminary professor, the pastor of a large congregation, and a prolific writer, he was well-known in ecclesiastical circles, as well as in the world in general. But to his family he was “just Dad.” This anecdotal biography written by his youngest child records many stories about him, some perhaps familiar but others never before told.

Complete with an engaging story, family pictures, and personal letters, this little book has been enthusiastically received by both old and young and by many around the globe. One Protestant Reformed reader states, “It is good for us to see that [Hoeksema] was a husband and father—a normal and fallible man, doing the work of the Lord placed before him.” A reader from New Jersey writes, “I am halfway through and enjoying it so.” Another from Wisconsin exclaims, “Delightful! Thank you, Mrs. Kregel.” The RFPa thanks Mrs. Kregel too, for her invaluable work on this beautiful, timely reminiscence.

The second book project highlighting this month’s anniversaries is a gorgeous update of Herman Hoeksema’s magnificent, ten-volume *Triple Knowledge* series—his most exhaustive literary work and the most extensive commentary on the Heidelberg Catechism in English. While *Just Dad* gives us a unique glimpse into Hoeksema’s life, the *Triple Knowledge* is a testament to his greatest work—that of preaching. Hoeksema loved the Heidelberg; and this series is the fruit of decades of his preaching the fifty-two Lord’s Days and echoing their warm, personal style. After many years of work, the RFPa is honored to finally present this comprehensive masterpiece as it was originally published beginning in 1943 by the Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company. Putting this series back from three volumes [its previous RFPa form] into ten, beginning with volume 1, *In the Midst of Death*, and ending with volume 10, *The Perfect Prayer*, the way Hoeksema originally organized the series, brings us closer to the Catechism’s three themes of man’s sin and misery, deliverance through Jesus Christ, and thankfulness to God.

In addition to *Just Dad* and the *Triple Knowledge* series, the RFPa has published three other books this fiscal year as well, including a second edition of Homer C. Hoeksema’s 1966 book *In the Beginning God*, a

defense of the doctrine of Scripture over against evolutionism; Herman Hanks’s *Faith Made Perfect*, a fresh and penetrating commentary on the book of James; and Connie L. Meyer’s *Gottschalk: Servant of God, A Story of Courage, Faith, and Love for the Truth*, an exciting, illustrated young adult biography illuminating the life of a medieval saint who sacrificed everything for the truths of sovereign grace. We thank the returning authors, Prof. Herman Hanks and Mrs. Connie Meyer, for their tireless efforts and their wonderful work!

With the release of *Gottschalk: Servant of God* as a pilot project, the RFPa takes another step into the uncharted territory of literature for children and youth. Significantly, this book marks our first book targeting a younger audience since Gertrude Hoeksema’s 1983 Bible storybook *Come, Ye Children*. The RFPa book committee and the office staff continue to investigate the possibility of organizing a children’s book division. In our winter *RFPa Update*, we asked for distinctively Reformed authors and illustrators to step forward with ideas. The response was encouraging and overwhelming, including art samples as well as fiction, nonfiction, and poetry selections. Clearly, there are many gifted artists eager to use their talents to foster among children a love for the truth. But do we have a reading constituency eager for children’s literature? As we continue to investigate the opportunities and challenges of publishing literature for Reformed young people, it is our hope that the reception of *Gottschalk* will give us clearer direction. We covet your feedback.

In the year ahead, the RFPa is pleased to announce that its Book Club members can expect to receive four new titles, including *The Rock Whence We Are Hewn*, a compilation of documents surrounding the early history of the Protestant Reformed Churches; *Christianizing the World*, David J. Engelsma’s defense of the Reformed faith against Abraham Kuyper’s common grace theory as it continues to develop in churches and Christian colleges today; Dr. B. Wielinga’s commentary on the Reformed churches’ “Baptism Form,” an edifying nineteenth-century work recently translated from the Dutch and made available to English readers for the first time; and *Less than the Least*, the updated memoirs of charter member and longtime pastor of the PRC, Cornelius Hanks (1907–2005). This autobiographical tour

of Protestant Reformed history has been meticulously edited by his granddaughter, Karen VanBaren, and will be generously sprinkled with maps, pictures, historical documents, and helpful appendices.

In addition to the publishing of books, the RFPA also publishes the *Standard Bearer*, North America's oldest continuously published subscriber-based Reformed magazine. The Board continues to work with the Editorial Staff to produce a magazine that is, according to our Constitution, "a witness to the truth contained in the Word of God and expressed in the Three Forms of Unity and to reveal false and deceptive views repugnant thereto." One reader recently wrote, "I am deeply grateful for the carefully done, studied writings in your publication." Another proclaims, "I thank God for your teachable hearts and for giving you a desire to be entrenched in his Word." The RFPA thanks the *SB* editors, Prof. Russell Dykstra, Prof. Barrett Gritters, and Rev. Kenneth Koole; the managing editor, Mr. Charles Terpstra; and the entire Editorial Staff for their continued labors on behalf of our magazine. We give thanks to God that the *SB* continues to sound the trumpet blast of the truth, as it has since the days of the magazine's first editor, Herman Hoeksema.

Although our *Standard Bearer* subscribers are down from last year's 2,211 to 2,187 and our Book Club members are down from last year's 1,172 members to 1,138, we remain confident that God will continue to work in the hearts of His people a deep love for Reformed literature. There are indeed many positive signs. In addition to the glowing reviews our association continues to receive in response to its books and magazine, the RFPA website continues to be a harbinger of good news and one of our most important tools. The site can be used to order books and the *SB*, to download ebooks, to pay invoices, to listen to historic sermons, and to access the theological wealth contained in the *SB* archives. Another popular website feature is the RFPA blog, hosted by Rev. Clayton Spronk, which has generated a great deal of interest and additional website traffic. In the last year alone, our website has had over 107,000 visits, and 73% of these were first-time visitors from fifty-five different countries.

In the year gone by, we have distributed our Reformed literature to many of these countries, including places as far removed as Ireland, Korea, and the Philippines.


In Northern Ireland, Covenant Protestant Reformed Church continues to order our books in bulk quantities to share with its contacts in the British Isles and beyond. In South Korea, after approving a request to translate *Come, Ye Children* into the Korean language four years ago, we sold 443 copies this past year and 521 the year before that. In the Philippines, the Protestant Reformed churches there sold 403 RFPA books this past year, including 270 copies of *The Sixteenth Century Reformation of the Church* and *The Reformed Faith of John Calvin* at a Reformation conference featuring RFPA author Prof. David J. Engelsma as speaker. Thanks be to God, the rich theological legacy of Herman Hoeksema is still finding an audience around the world fifty years after his death.

On another note, the RFPA building in Jenison, Michigan continues to meet our growing needs. Thanks to improvements paid for by the Snyder estate, a lighted sign and beautiful landscaping now complement the facility, which serves as our headquarters and includes office space, a bookstore, and a warehouse. It is here that our indispensable office staff, consisting of Evelyn Langerak, Tim Pipe, Paula Kamps, and Rachel Maatman conduct their work. We express heartfelt thanks to them for their diligence and sacrifice on behalf of the association, for without them, the RFPA could not successfully conduct its business. The attached warehouse, measuring 48 feet square and 20 feet from floor to ceiling, contains 95 titles and a total of 62,520 volumes of precious Reformed literature with a combined value of approximately \$340,000. In the mezzanine above the warehouse, *Standard Bearer* issues dating back to 1924 are stored, including complete sets, loose issues, and bound volumes for each of the ninety-one years of publication. Although this inventory has a value of \$18,000, it is, in fact, priceless.

Meeting monthly at the RFPA headquarters, the Board's standing committees, the Book and *Standard Bearer* Committee, the Finance and Operations Committee, and the Membership and Marketing Committee, have labored long and hard to make our publishing house run smoothly this year. As we look to the future, the Board is pleased to inform the association that it has organized a Long Range Planning Committee to review our current plans and to develop new ones. This committee has recently met with a professional consultant and is currently generating some exciting operational and budgeting

strategies that we hope to implement in the coming years.

Members and friends of the RFPA, on this one hundredth anniversary of Herman Hoeksema's ordination and entrance into the gospel ministry and on this fiftieth anniversary of his death and entrance into his eternal reward, the RFPA looks back and gives thanks to God for graciously preserving the Protestant Reformed

Churches, the Reformed Free Publishing Association, and the precious truths of sovereign grace. It is our prayer that by God's grace, in His strength, and for His glory, the RFPA will continue to publish, promote, and distribute the distinctive truths of the Reformed faith, as we have since the origin of this association—since the days of Herman Hoeksema. 

NEWS FROM OUR CHURCHES

MR. PERRY VAN EGDOM

Minister Activities

The Council of the calling church for the Philippine mission field announced a new trio from which to call a second missionary. Included were Rev. Garry Eriks (Hudsonville, MI PRC), Rev. Cory Griess (Calvary PRC in Hull, IA), and Rev. Brian Huizinga (Hope PRC of Redlands, CA). At the congregational meeting in Doon, IA held October 5, the call was extended to Rev. G. Eriks, who declined that call on October 25.

The congregation at Calvary PRC, Hull, IA recently helped move Pastor Cory Griess and family into their newly-built parsonage.

Prof. Herman Hanko celebrated his 85th birthday on October 10.

Rev. Allen Brummel marked the 20th anniversary of his ordination into the ministry in the PRCA on November 13. The Consistory of Heritage PRC in Sioux Falls, SD used the occasion of their monthly luncheon to surprise Rev. Brummel with a plaque of recognition

and presented him and his wife Crysta with tickets to the upcoming *Christmas Jubilee* concert. The entire congregation, and guests, were treated to cake and ice cream to top off the celebration.

Congregational Activities

The Canadian churches of the PRCA observed their Thanksgiving Day with special services on Monday, October 12.

At a congregational meeting held October 5, the members of Doon, IA PRC voted to change the time of their second service to 5:00 P.M. year around, which will take effect December 6.

Some of the members in Hope PRC, Redlands, CA felt the effects of the 4.0 earthquake near Yucaipa, CA recently. Rev. Brian Huizinga reports that while sitting in his study chair, he experienced a gentle rocking motion for a few seconds. No damage or injuries occurred that we are aware of.

Denominational Activities

Classis West met September 30 in Edgerton, MN with an office-bearers' conference the previous day

on the topic of "The Local Church and Missions." At a special call to worship the evening of September 29, Pastor-elect Ryan Barnhill led the service as part of his Classical examination. Rev. Ron Hanko led Classis in opening devotions from Zechariah 1 before turning over the chairman's duties to Rev. Brian Huizinga. In attendance were also students of the Free Christian School in Edgerton and upper grade students from the Northwest Iowa Protestant Reformed School in Doon. Pastor-elect Barnhill sustained his oral examination before Classis, with the approval of the Synodical deputies, and was ordained as minister of the Word and sacraments in Peace PRC, Lansing, IL on October 9, with Prof. Barry Gritters leading the service. We in the PRC rejoice with the Barnhills and the congregation at Peace that our faithful God has given another faithful laborer in His vineyard! Classis West plans to meet next on March 2, 2016 in Crete, IL PRC.

School Activities

The 61st Protestant Reformed teachers' convention was held

Mr. Van Egdom is a member of the Protestant Reformed Church of Doon, Iowa.

October 15 and 16 at Hope Protestant Reformed School in Grand Rapids, MI. Rev. Bill Langerak gave the keynote speech from Hebrews 12:1, "Surrounded by a Cloud of Witnesses." The convention ended with a fitting speech by Prof. H. Hanko entitled "Our Precious Christian Schools." The next convention is to be hosted by Heritage Protestant Reformed High School in Dyer, IN on October 20-21, 2016, D.V. We encourage our school teachers in their important work and calling!

On October 2 a lecture was presented in Heritage PRC of Sioux Falls, SD with Rev. Steven Key from the Loveland, CO PRC giving the speech. The fitting message was entitled "Why Protestant Reformed Education?," and was well attended by many from the Siouxland churches.

Sister-Church Activities

Late in September, fires burning in the land of Sumatra caused a smoky haze over the island of Singapore. One day the haze was significant enough to cause the schools to be closed. Rev. Andrew Lanning of the CERC of Singapore seized the opportunity to author a meditation on the topic of fire and smoke, showing from Scripture what God has to say about those things. Part of the meditation spoke of the end times: "And I will show wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke.' When Christ comes again, He will burn up the old earth and create a new heavens and a new earth, where we will live with Him

forever. That fire and smoke will be far more intense than the haze we currently see. Nevertheless, the haze over Singapore is a reminder that Christ is on His way to judge the wicked in His wrath, and to judge His own people in His mercy. Let us watch for His coming with eager anticipation, and let us conduct ourselves as is fitting for those who will live with Him forever."

Evangelism Activities

On Friday, October 2 the Evangelism Committee of Loveland, CO PRC presented a lecture delivered by Rev. James Laning of Hull, IA PRC. This speech was entitled "The Signs of the Coming of Christ and His Kingdom." The junior and senior classes of Loveland PR School hosted an ice cream social after the speech as a means of funding their upcoming trip to Chicago.


Prof. Ronald Cammenga addressed the topic of theistic evolution and the Christian's response at a lecture titled "Theistic Evolution: Should the Church Make Peace or War?" Southwest PRC invited all to this lecture at Grace Community Church in Hudsonville, MI, on Friday, October 9.

Young People's Activities

The Young People's Society of the Loveland, CO PRC thanked the congregation for their support in their recent Rent-a-Worker Fundraiser. Sixteen jobs were provided. Eighteen young people put in a total of 70+ hours, many working two to three different jobs raising money for their society.

Senior Activities

Crete PRC of Crete, IL hosted the Senior Retreat on September 22-25 at the comfortable accommodations of Cedar Lake Ministries in Cedar Lake, Indiana. Approximately 140 seniors, ranging from ages 50 to 91 attended the retreat. The group was blessed with beautiful weather, great food, and wonderful fellowship. Three thought-provoking speeches were given to develop the theme "Christian Living," using the booklet recently re-worked by Rev. John Marcus. Rev. Nathan Langerak spoke on "Christian Living and the Cross"; Rev. Carl Haak spoke on "Christian Living and this Present World"; and Prof. David Engelsma spoke on "Christian Living and the End." All the speeches were followed by great discussions. On-site activities included boat rides, pickle ball, bean bag toss, and a bonfire. The group traveled to Dyer, IN for an outing and were favored with a beautiful chapel by the students of our PRCS/HCHS. Chuck Terpstra encouraged the group by means of a "book chat" to "read often and read well." Thursday evening the retreat came to a conclusion with a special program, featuring various singing groups, a Family Feud game, and a photo-presentation by John VanBaren. All participants were blessed with a wonderful time of fellowship in our Lord.

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Wedding Anniversary

■ With thankfulness to God our parents, grandparents, and great grandparents,

JAMES and BEVERLY LANGERAK,

celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary on October 29, 2015. We are so thankful for their godly example that they have been to us by not only showing love for each other but above all to our Lord and Savior. We pray that God will continue to be with them in the coming years and that the words of their wedding text will be their guide and encouragement now as it was them: "Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths" (Proverbs 3:5, 6).

- ❖ Steve and Brenda Langerak
Daniel and Annie Langerak
Benjamin
Tyler and Laura Langerak
Brianna, Aaron, Larissa, Stephanie, Brendan
- ❖ Mark and Elizabeth Langerak
Meghann, Kayley, Trevor
- ❖ Scott and Sharla Moelker
Erica, Branden, Darren, Jorden, Rylee, Macy
- ❖ Jamie and Mary Langerak
Anna, Zachary, Jadon, Gabrielle, Victoria
- ❖ Brad and Esther Langerak
Carter, Aubrey, Luke, Ava
- ❖ Thom and Kelly Barnhill
Elijah, Polly

Grand Rapids, Michigan

Wedding Anniversary

■ With joy and thanksgiving to our covenant Father we celebrated the 40th wedding anniversary of our parents and grandparents,

BRUCE and DEB LUBBERS,

on November 7, 2015. God has blessed our family through their godly instruction and example. Our prayer is that He will continue to bless them in the years ahead. "For the LORD is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations" (Psalm 100:5).

- ❖ Jon and Melissa Lubbers
Travis, Braden, Connor, Mekenzie
- ❖ Josh and Sara Lubbers
Kelly, Jacob, Nicholas, Alayna, Lucas, Michael
- ❖ Joe and Stacey Lubbers
Maggie, Lily, Jase
- ❖ Rick and Carmen Mingerink
Hailey, Jack, Noah, Willem, Caleb
- ❖ Josh and Carrie Meulenberg
Sadie, Casen

Byron Center, Michigan

Resolution of Sympathy

■ The Council and congregation of Loveland PRC expresses Christian sympathy to Don and Lynette Schwarz, and their family, in the death of their daughter,

KERRI SCHWARZ.

"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble" (Psalm 46:1).

Rev. Steven Key, President
Victor Solanyk, Clerk

Resolution of Sympathy

■ The Men's Society of Hope PRC, Walker, MI, expresses Christian sympathy to member John N. Dykstra in the death of his wife,

MARILYN DYKSTRA.

"Nevertheless I am continually with thee: thou hast holden me by my right hand. Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory" (Psalm 73:23-24).

Mr. Harry Langerak, President
Mr. Gary Nienhuis, Secretary

Teacher Needed

■ In January, Faith Christian School will be needing a teacher as one of our teachers becomes a mother! This is a 22-hour per week position that includes working with our Discovery students, teaching 3rd grade math and language, and working with 1st & 2nd graders. Please contact Mike Vander Veen at 920-296-4406 or michael.vanderveen@yahoo.com or Ed Hoksbergen at 608-712-7514 or edhoks@gmail.com.