

# *The Standard Bearer*

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# Victory in the Battle

*I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.*

*II Timothy 4:7-8*

Even in the darkest hours, when the battle has been raging the fiercest, as soldiers of the cross, we are able to sing: “Christ shall have dominion over land and sea, Earth’s remotest regions shall His empire be.” That confidence of victory in the battle of faith we must have! As soldiers of the cross, we need that personal assurance. And nowhere do we find a more personal testimony in this regard than in this Word of God.

Bear in mind that the inspired apostle Paul writes this second letter to Timothy during his second imprisonment in Rome. He expected to die presently. This letter is really his farewell message as a Christian soldier. The

sixth verse here in chapter 4 makes that plain: “For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand.” Paul speaks of his life being poured out as a thank offering to God. He speaks of his death as a “departure,” literally, a being set free, a being released. And these words certainly have the ring of triumph in them: “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness....” These words are certainly not the expression of doubt, of despondency, of defeatism—oh, no. They echo with the ring of victory and triumph! This soldier, having finished his course, has fought the good fight and has kept the faith! He is victorious! He is assured of receiving the crown of righteousness!

## The Testimony:

The apostle Paul is retiring from the field of battle as the victor! Such is the entire tone of these verses. But, perhaps, you wonder, how can that be? He is a lonely prisoner in Rome. He expected very soon to appear before Nero, the corrupt Roman emperor—which was like putting his head into the mouth of a lion! The time of

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his departure is at hand! His death is imminent. Looking back, what a difficult struggle it had been. Certainly judging by ordinary standards, Paul's life had been a failure. He had suffered the loss of all things, had thrown away position and honor, had exposed himself to sorrows and trials. He had been despised and rejected by many, had been persecuted. And now the end is near—he is in prison and the sword of execution is waiting for him. How can he testify: “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith”?

Make no mistake, the apostle is speaking of the battle of faith. He is speaking of the same spiritual battle against the principalities and powers of darkness and against our own sinful natures which we all must fight as God's people. Paul says, “I have fought a good fight,” literally “I have fought *the* good fight.” Who can dispute it? From the time of his conversion on the road to Damascus, Paul had been in a bitter fight from a physical point of view. Already in Damascus the Jews had taken counsel to kill him. As a missionary to the Gentiles, he was often pursued from city to city. He was beaten with stripes more than once and left for dead. Nevertheless, the essence of that fight was *spiritual*. How he struggled with that thorn in the flesh which he calls “the messenger of Satan to buffet me!” Paul terms himself the “chief of sinners.” His cry in Romans 7 is: “O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” But even then, he ends on a triumphal note: “I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

By the grace of God we know that fight, the battle of faith! For we too are but sinners saved by grace! We struggle all our life with our own sins and weaknesses, with that old man of sin that still besets each of us. We too can only take refuge in our Lord and Savior. And for that very reason we must always ask whether we are fighting the good fight *diligently*. We must examine ourselves to see whether we are even *aware* of the battle. For most people today see this world as a *playground* not a battlefield! Are you engaged in that spiritual battle of faith? Can you say it: “I have fought the *good* fight”? A “good” fight is a fight that is waged in such a way as to insure the victory. Literally, this is a “beautiful” fight, for every movement is coordinated to guarantee the victory! The faithful soldier always fights with his eye upon the crown, with a view to the victory that we have in Christ.

And the apostle has almost finished his course—that too is his testimony. “I have finished my course,” that is, the course divinely assigned to me, the place and calling that God has laid upon me. The courses of God's people are not all alike. They vary according to the station and calling the Lord has given in this earthly life. Our course is that particular position in which the Lord places us to serve Him and the cause of His kingdom in this life. It concerns whether we are single, husband, wife, father, mother, grandparent; it pertains to the work or vocation the Lord has given, our place and function in the midst of the church.

And what a course had been the apostle's! He speaks of it in his farewell to the elders of Ephesus in Acts 20, verse 24: “But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.” As we have noted, his calling to witness of the gospel of Christ led the apostle to face grievous sufferings for Christ's sake. But now his course was nearing its end! Again, listen to his words, “...neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy.” Don't you feel it? The apostle is *straining*, as it were, anticipating the goal! He is eager to finish and complete his course. He could complete it with *joy*! And now he is about to be offered, and the end is in sight. The apostle throbs with intense excitement—the excitement of victory! For as he writes the Philippians: “For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain!”

Having finished his course, Paul could also declare: “I have kept the faith.” The word “kept” here means “to guard.” And “faith” here must be understood in the objective sense—that which we believe. Paul refers here to the *truth*, the truth of God's Word, the truth as it is in Christ Jesus, God's revelation of Himself as the Sovereign God of our salvation. And to keep the faith means two things. First of all, it means to preserve and diligently to safeguard its purity; it means to defend the truth from all opposition. And secondly, to keep the faith means that we strive to *live* it, testify of it, not only in word, but in deed. We must love the truth of Scripture, which is to say, the truth of the Reformed faith. And that implies too that we have a love for the church, and a willingness to serve in the church, and an abiding concern that the church remain

faithful unto that truth. Even more, it means that we have a concern that our children and grandchildren in our generations, keep the faith. We must say, with the apostle John, "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth" (III John 4).

Certainly the apostle would have us face the question: Are you keeping the faith, the faith as it is in Christ? None of us knows the length of his course in this earthly life—it may be long. It may be short. It can be finished very suddenly! The question is: Is this triumphal testimony yours?

### The Crown:

For it is in this way that we receive the crown! We read, "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness." This is not a royal crown, but the victor's crown! It is the wreath of victory that shall be bestowed upon all God's people. It is the crown of everlasting life! To receive that crown means that we will enter fully into the liberty of the children of God. We shall be free from sin and death and never again bound by it. We shall be free in our service of the living God. We shall be clothed with the life and glory of the heavenly renewal of all things. Think of the anticipation of the apostle as he utters these words from the prison in Rome! He is thrilled with knowledge that his struggles would soon be over. Presently he would exchange his sword for a crown!

But that is not all! Paul is assured of the crown of *righteousness*! And righteousness implies perfect harmony and conformity to the will of God. How could he be confident of receiving a crown of righteousness? How can we? We are not always diligent in fighting the good fight. We are yet so weak! What does Scripture say? "All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags" (Is. 64:6)! And further notice that our text speaks of the "righteous judge," the Lord! He will not deviate from the justice of the living God! He will render a just verdict! And we stand before Him as an open book! He is aware of all our sins and shortcomings!

Where did the apostle's assurance come from? How can we have this assurance of receiving the crown? Understand, the assurance is *not* conditioned by our fighting, our finishing the course, or our keeping the faith. The crown is not something we earn or merit; it is a *gift*. Paul says, "which the Lord, the righteous Judge shall give

me at that day...." It is given—salvation is of grace from beginning to end!

Above all, remember, it is not a crown of *my* righteousness or of *your* righteousness! The only ground of our assurance is the perfect righteousness of Christ Jesus. He has suffered and died for His own! He lives and works within us by His irresistible Spirit and grace! I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me! I fight, yet not I, but Christ fights in me and through me! I keep the faith, yet not I, but Christ in me and through me! It is all of Christ—for Paul, but also for us, as soldiers of the cross! So the fact that we fight the good fight, and keep the faith, is simply the fruit of Christ's work for us and in us, and therefore the proof that *His* righteousness is *ours*! By grace, by grace alone, we receive that crown!

Let us understand that this assurance of the victory and of the crown of righteousness is not just for Paul. It is for all the faithful soldiers of the cross. As this verse puts it: "...not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing." It is for all who have as the object of their hope the return of Christ upon the clouds of heaven. Is your hope fixed upon the Lord of lords and the King of kings, Jesus Christ, our crucified, risen, and glorified Lord? Do you watch for His return? Then this assurance is yours!

And with that assurance we too can fight the battle of faith even unto the end. We must endeavor always to be prepared for that end. We do not know when our battle may be over and our course finished. But until then we fight! We have Christ Jesus the Captain of our salvation leading us in the fight. We have the incentive of the crown of righteousness that is laid up for us. From the arsenal of God we receive the armor. Equipped with the armor of God, we stand throughout the evil day confident of victory. We need no artificial morale booster, based on human strength or war-like boasts. It is not a false optimism. We are not deceiving ourselves. We know that we are weak, that very easily we succumb to the wiles of Satan. Daily we must repent, confessing our sins in shame and sorrow of heart!

No, this is the confidence of faith! By grace, we have the conviction of the truth as a girdle about our loins. We wear the breastplate of the righteousness of Christ, the assurance that we belong to Him, that we are righteous in Him. The shoes of the preparation of the gospel



of peace lead us on our way. The helmet of salvation gives us undaunted hope of life everlasting. The shield of faith wards off every dart of the enemy. The sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, carries us on through suffering and death unto the victory with Jesus Christ our Lord.

What a blessed assurance is ours! Let no one deprive you of that! In that conviction Paul could say in Romans 8: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall

tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?.... Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us!" One day, perhaps soon, we shall exchange our sword for that imperishable crown that is laid away in the heavens! But for now we go forward! Fight the good fight! Keep the faith! Look with uplifted heads for Christ's appearing!



## EDITOR'S NOTE

Welcome to volume 91 of the *Standard Bearer*! The new volume year brings some significant changes to the magazine.

First, not so significant, there will be a small increase in our subscription price. The last increase was seven years ago, so we are not surprised or disappointed that this is necessary. We hope you agree that the magazine is worth the \$2 increase to \$23 per year. Thank you for your subscription and support of the *Standard Bearer*.

As reported last issue, Mr. Ben Wigger will no longer be our news editor. Again, and from all of us, Thank you Ben. Welcome to Mr. Perry VanEgdom, our new editor! Mr. VanEgdom's presence is significant not only because we have a new editor after 28 years, but because in Perry the SB has its first news editor who does not hail from West Michigan. Mr. VanEgdom is long-time member of our Doon, Iowa congregation, lifelong member of the PRC, a father and grandfather, officebearer in the church, deeply involved in our foreign mission work—that is, a man whose life centers in the church and covenant community. The staff is convinced that we have asked the right man to report to you the significant news of the PRC. Welcome, brother VanEgdom!

Besides brother Wigger, two other writers will not be contributing this year. Mr. Calvin Kalsbeek and Rev. Nathan Langerak, thank you for your contributions to the magazine. And two new writers. We welcome back Rev. Mike DeVries who will contribute to the meditations. Rev. Daniel Holstege will begin writing in "All Around Us."

What most readers will not notice, but is another significant change for our magazine, is that Mr. Charles

Terpstra in this issue becomes the new managing editor in the place of Mr. Don Doezema. The SB's managing editor is somewhat like the "Chief Operating Officer" in a business. And this paragraph, small or large, cannot do justice to the work this brother (with his wife, Judi) has done to produce the *Standard Bearer*. But let me try. For almost 40 years the brother has served as managing editor. (He was also *business* manager for a significant period of time, and news editor, but those are different stories). The first issue Mr. Doezema put together as managing editor was in 1975. He took up the work when Prof. H. C. Hoeksema was editor, worked through the 16-year editorship of Prof. D. J. Engelsma, and continued for the past 11 years through the (current) shared editorship. On my shelves, that makes up almost 5 linear feet of SB issues. Twenty-one issues per year; twenty-four pages of print (no white space!), and about nine articles per issue, as well as news. Mr. Doezema read every word; and not once or twice, but often more, just to make sure it was right. No one but the brother himself (and his wife) can grasp the magnitude of the work he did for our magazine. Of course, with the gracious personality God gave him, Mr. Doezema will demur and give credit to the writers...to whom credit is due. But Mr. Doezema made the magazine better by his editing. He helped plenty of writers im-



Don and Judi Doezema

prove their articles. In a kind and modest way he made suggestions that writers were very thankful to hear. The writers will *miss* the brother's help. In addition, the daunting responsibility of seeing to it that the magazine was produced, week after week, month after month, and year after year, fell to him. Little wonder it was hard to convince the brother to take a vacation: we did not offer to do his work of producing the *SB*. Don always notified us of our writing responsibilities, patiently waited for articles, and managed not only to get the magazine printed but also to have it mailed on time. And all with-

out a wage. Why? Because of his love for the cause of God and His truth. By his own admission, Don will miss this work. The magazine is being put together this week. Don is only watching. After forty years! Brother Doezema, we will miss you. We cannot thank you enough. But be assured that God is not unrighteous to forget what you have done for His cause in these printed pages.

Welcome to the position, brother Terpstra!

—BLG 

EDITORIAL

REV. KENNETH KOOLE

## Hoeksema and 1924 Reappraised (3)

**W**e continue our response to Dr. John Bolt's essay entitled "Herman Hoeksema Was Right (On the Three Points That Really Matter)"—referring of course to what became known as the common grace controversy, or just '1924.' And, by implication, Bolt means that the broader assemblies of the CRC—both the 1924 Synod and Classis Grand Rapids East in the year that followed—got it wrong.

The "Three Points That Really Matter" referred to by Bolt are the formulation of common grace as drawn up by the 1924 Synod first of all, and then the ecclesiastical procedures that ultimately led to

Classis GR East's decision to depose Hoeksema from office in 1925 and his consistory with him.

To state Bolt's 'charge' succinctly: the Rev. H. Hoeksema was wronged by his own denomination in the common grace controversy.

We say again, no little charge for a CRC professor to make, be it ninety years after the fact.

As we pointed out in an earlier article, Bolt seeks to demonstrate his proposition by stating three theses and then showing their validity.

The three theses are:

#1—that grace is particular.

#2—that the doctrine of common grace is an extra-confessional matter on which Reformed people can have different opinions.

#3—that Reformed church polity was violated in hierarchical actions.

We gave our assessment of Bolt's first thesis in our last editorial (Sept. 15).

We turn now to Bolt's second thesis: *the doctrine of common grace is an extra-confessional matter on which Reformed people can have different opinions*. This Bolt is persuaded was Hoeksema's perspective and that in this Hoeksema was correct.

As indicated in our first article (Sept. 1) we are not convinced that Bolt's statement is a completely accurate representation of Hoeksema's position on what he himself viewed as "the error of common grace."

We will explain why further down.

This is not to say that Bolt, in the second section of his case for Hoeksema, does not make some significant and telling points. He does.

Bolt makes clear that in several important decisions and items of advice Synod was, to use Bolt's

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*Previous article in this series: September 15, 2014, p. 484.*

own words, conflicted and/or confused.

Bolt points out that in response to an overture from Classis Muskegon, which called for a study committee “to formulate a dogma on common grace that could be incorporated into a confession,” Synod declined, noting:

...this is not the way confessional dogmas are formed. These arise over a longer period of controversy and flow from a growing consensus of the church. (cf. *Acta der Synode*, 192, 149-150)

And as Bolt points out, Synod “then called for church leaders, preachers as well as professors, to continue studying the matter and engaging the church [!] so that in good time a consensus could be achieved” (“Herman Hoeksema Was Right,” 306).

But, as Bolt points out, this is a most “conflicting” statement, bound to give rise to later confusion. He writes:

Note well, this conclusion came after synod had already adopted the three points. Furthermore, in each of the three points, *synod was led to insist that it had Reformed confessional and theological backing for its claim* (emphasis ours—kk). In each case, the positive statement is backed with the ground: “it is evident from the quoted declarations of the Reformed writers of the period of florescence of Reformed theology, that our Reformed fathers from of old have championed this view” (Ibid.).

There you have it.

On the one hand, Synod adopts three points of common grace and declares its teaching to be grounded in the Scriptures and the confessions (and even lists a couple of confessional references); but then, in a later statement, Synod rejects an overture to formulate just such a confessional statement, declaring that for such to occur there would have to be a longer period of controversy (in which its teachers are to engage the church [!]) before such a consensus could be reached (Ibid., 306).

A “conflicted” couple of declarations to say the least.

But what is most significant as far as Hoeksema’s case is concerned, is that the last judgment Synod made concerning the doctrine of common grace was its rejection of the Muskegon overture, Synod declaring that in its judgment the teaching of common grace was not yet ready to be declared a ‘confessional’ doctrine. And then it went on to urge the preachers and professors of the CRC to continue to study the matter and discuss on the issue with a view to arriving at a consensus in the future.

So, what exactly were Hoeksema and his consistory to conclude? That they were now confessionally bound (that common grace is taught by the confessions), and Hoeksema could not speak to the issue or explain his disagreements with it? Or could the consistory rightfully conclude that their preacher too had the right to participate in the ongoing “discussion”?

Having carefully studied the his-

tory Bolt is forthright in his conclusion:

When we combine all the evidence from the decisions of the 1924 Synod, it is only fair to conclude that on the question whether or not common grace was to be regarded as a confessional issue, a matter of dogma defining Reformed orthodoxy, Hoeksema appears to have right on his side (Ibid., 308-309).

We, of course, wholeheartedly concur with Bolt’s conclusion thus far. But the question about the accuracy of the wording of Bolt’s second thesis remains. His thesis reads: *that the doctrine of common grace is an extra-confessional matter on which Reformed people can have different opinions*.

Would Hoeksema have agreed with that?

We are not convinced he would have. Certainly not if Bolt means by this that common grace is a teaching that a denomination can allow her officebearers to hold and to teach alongside that of particular grace.

It is true, as Bolt points out, that historically there have been those doctrines about which there have been two different positions in the same denomination, doctrines about which theologians have disagreed and yet coexisted without either side charging the other with doctrinal error. One goes back to the Synod of Utrecht (1905) and what Bolt labels as its “pacification” formulas. Utrecht’s ruling allowed for the supra- as well as the infralapsarian view, for both the immediate and mediate regeneration views, and for

eternal justification as well as the temporal justification doctrine, to name three areas of disagreement between Reformed theologians. All were judged to be within the framework of orthodoxy and the officebearers required to live with these differences.

In 1908 the CRC adopted Utrecht's pacification formulas for herself. Every evidence is that Hoeksema was willing to live with these differences and to carry on discussion over these doctrines in a brotherly manner.

But that Hoeksema put the teaching of common grace into that category, or was ready to allow his CRC to put it into that category, is another matter.

It is true, as Bolt points out, that early in the controversy, as Hoeksema objected to Kuyper's common grace teaching, and as others objected to his objections, Hoeksema insisted that it was a non-confessional matter. After all, there was no "dogma of common grace" to be found in the confessions. And he had not been required to subscribe to such a doctrine at his ordination into the ministry of the CRC.

From that point of view, Hoeksema was willing to speak of common grace as being extra-confessional. But that is different from saying that to Hoeksema it was a doctrine on which Reformed people could have and should allow each other to have a difference of opinion. All his writings, so vigorously opposed to Kuyper's common grace theory already *prior to 1924*, militate against such a conclusion. To Hoeksema, common grace was not

a matter of opinion, a difference of perspective on the doctrine of God's grace, but a significant departure and doctrinal error.

Which leads us to this conclusion: when Hoeksema, as Bolt reminds us, early on in the controversy informed the CRC that he could live in the denomination with this theory as long as it was not elevated to a status of dogma (and hence made binding upon himself), and as long as allowance was made to have free discussion on it, Hoeksema was *not* suggesting that the CRC declare that it was one of those perspectives that fit within the framework of orthodoxy, and leave it there; nor that should they do so, he would be willing to live with that, just as long as he did not have to subscribe to common grace himself. There is no evidence that Hoeksema was willing to let common grace remain a permissible view of orthodoxy.

Rather, what Hoeksema was saying, we are convinced, was that he was willing to live within the denomination as long as *as much freedom was given to those who opposed the doctrine to speak their mind* as to those who promoted it. In other words, he could live within the denomination as long as common grace remained in the arena as an item of frank, open discussion, an issue not yet settled by the broader assemblies. In other words, an issue that could be freely addressed from the pulpit for the people's consideration, not only by those in favor of the doctrine, but by those critical of it as well.

Whether this was realistic and something a denomination would

want to be carried on within itself for any period of time, especially when it involves an issue that causes emotions to run at high tide, is another matter. As the saying goes, "A house divided cannot stand" (a saying originating not with Abraham Lincoln, remember, but lifted from Scripture itself—cf. Mark 3:25).

But there is little doubt that this was what Hoeksema had in mind.

And one can understand his rationale.

After all, the issue stirring up the controversy was not the result of some new teaching that he and his colleagues had introduced into the churches, something for which they rightfully could be taken to task and on account of which they could be charged with trying to change a standing teaching of the churches. Rather, the issue was the common grace notion that was just recently developed by Kuyper, giving rise to a new sound and emphasis that was beginning to dominate instruction and preaching in the CRC, that was giving rise to a new world and life view.

In light of that, should not he and others have the freedom to examine this newly introduced doctrine, show its flaws and dangers, and demonstrate how they were convinced it was contrary to Scripture and the Reformed faith? After all, it being a non-confessional teaching, Hoeksema was not by his oath of subscription forbidden to militate against or publicly disagree with this doctrine now coming to the fore. Why should he not have as much freedom to oppose it



as others to promote it? Theirs was the new emphasis, not his.

We say once again, for Dr. Bolt, on the basis of Hoeksema's reported willingness to live in the CRC as long as she did not elevate common grace to a confessional level, to conclude that Hoeksema was willing to view common grace as a matter on which Reformed people can have different opinions, is a mistake.

What Hoeksema was willing to do was to live in the denomination where men taught this doctrine, as long as he was permitted publicly to state his opposition and the reasons for it. But if this right was denied him by some synodical decision, he knew he would have to make his testimony and go elsewhere. As long as the doctrine remained non-confessional and he was not bound to be silent about it, he could live in the CRC.

And that is where the question arises: Did the Synod of Kalamazoo consign Hoeksema and his colleagues to silence or not? Was Hoeksema, post-Synod 1924, required to consider the synodical formulations of common grace as settled and binding, against which no public criticism could be brought (per Art. 31 of the Church Order)?

As Bolt himself notes, that issue was further complicated by Synod's rejection of a recommendation by its advisory committee urging that Synod

...seriously admonish the brethren with a view to their deviations and...urge [them]...in all seriousness to refrain from all attempts to propagate in the church their

deviating views regarding the three points...(Ibid., 307).

Synod did not adopt this advice. Evidently they thought this too strong an admonition, and undoubtedly the delegates recalled that they themselves had said the doctrine required more discussion in the churches. And not just by those in favor of it. Otherwise, what need was there for further discussion?

Instead, they adopted a more ambiguous statement about Hoeksema and his colleagues, the essence of which was:

...synod admonishes both brothers [Danhof and Hoeksema] to hold themselves in their preaching and in their writings to the standpoint of our confessions with reference to the three points, and at the same time admonishes the brothers... to guard against all one-sidedness in the presentation of the truth... (Ibid., 308).

And then, adding more confusion to what status common grace really had in the churches, synod immediately followed the above statement with an "on the other hand" in which (in Bolt's words) "the two brothers were praised for reminding the church that abuses of the doctrine of common grace would lead to worldliness" (Ibid.).

Conflicted and confusing to say the least.

Not only was it plain from Synod's conflicting statements that it was not ready to grant common grace confessional status, which would have made it binding on its officebearers, but the last statement

in the paragraph above indicates that, as far as they were concerned, those critical of the doctrine had something to contribute to the church as well.

In light of all the above, the question arises, where does that leave Bolt's second thesis?

From our perspective, mistaken; not a statement to which Hoeksema would have subscribed. There is no evidence in Hoeksema's writings that he ever considered common grace as anything else than an error, and a deadly one at that. As far as he was concerned, it was a doctrine that was in conflict with what was truly, consistently Reformed.

At the same time Bolt is correct in pointing out that, when Hoeksema and his colleagues began sounding the alarm against common grace, it was a doctrine without confessional status. About this Hoeksema was right. And then the manner in which the Synod of 1924 went about settling the issue within the CRC was convoluted and filled with conflicting statements from beginning to end. The doctrine's confessional status in the CRC was still up in the air.

Who, then, is to blame for the confusion that followed when Hoeksema and his colleagues continued to address the issue following the Synod of Kalamazoo? Hoeksema or Synod?

In our judgment, Bolt's overall proposition is still therefore correct. Hoeksema was right and the Synod of the CRC was wrong.

We will conclude our assessment of Bolt's essay in our next article.



Revelation, Inspiration, and Infallibility (11):

# What Jesus Says About the Bible

## Introduction

Over the last century or so, there have been scholars who argued that Scripture is “inspired” in the sense that it contains an inspiring message and is a book that can inspire us. But this is a fundamental shift from what the church historically has taught about Scripture. This is in fact a denial of the historic teaching of the Christian church regarding Scripture’s inspiration. The Greek word *theopneustos* is the word used by the apostle Paul in II Timothy 3:16, where he says that all Scripture is given “by inspiration of God.” Here the word “inspiration” has to do with the *origin* of Scripture, not its effect. Its concern is with the *nature* of Scripture, not with those who might read the Scripture. The inspiration of Scripture is a past and accomplished fact, not a desirable present or future possibility. Scripture is not just an *inspiring* book—although it is that. But more than that, Scripture is an *inspired* book.

We are considering the Bible’s own teaching concerning itself. Thus far, we have focused on the Old Testament. We have seen that it cannot be denied that the Old Testament teaches about itself that it is the inspired, infallible, and authoritative word of God. It *can* be denied that the Old Testament *is* the word of God. But it cannot be denied that the Old Testament claims to be the word of God.

Beginning with this article we shift our attention from the Old Testament to the New Testament. What is the New Testament’s teaching about itself? What claims does it make concerning itself? We will see that, like the Old Testament, the New Testament claims to be the word of God. No less than the Old Testament, the

New Testament views itself as the inspired, infallible, and authoritative word of God—the word of life and salvation. We will begin with the Lord Jesus. What was Jesus’ attitude towards the Scripture? How did Jesus view the Bible of His day, which was the Old Testament Scriptures? What does Jesus’ use of Scripture reveal about the regard that He had for Scripture?

## Jesus’ Regard for Scripture’s Authority

Without question Jesus regarded Scripture as the word of God. Regarding Scripture as the word of God, He regarded Scripture as the rule (authoritative) for the faith and the life of those whom He taught the word of God. Regarding Scripture as the word of God, He taught the necessity of Scripture—that Scripture is necessary for salvation: “for in them ye think ye have eternal life,” (John 5:39). Regarding Scripture as the word of God, He taught authoritatively out of the Scriptures, as even His enemies noted: “For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes” (Matt. 7:29). Regarding Scripture as the word of God, Jesus was concerned to fulfill the Scriptures, particularly those Old Testament Scripture passages that spoke prophetically of His suffering and death. Time and time again we read that He did or said something “that the Scripture might be fulfilled.” At the time when Peter rose to Jesus’ defense in the Garden of Gethsemane, drew his sword, and smote the servant of the high priest, Jesus rebuked his well-intentioned disciple. He added to His words of rebuke these words: “Thinkest thou not that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?” (Matt. 26:53, 54).

Jesus’ regard for the Old Testament comes out in the oft-quoted passage, John 10:34, 35: “Jesus answered

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them, Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods? If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken....” Significantly, Jesus refers to the Old Testament Scriptures that he is quoting as “law.” He is quoting, not from the Pentateuch—that part of the Old Testament generally regarded as “law.” He is in fact quoting from the book of Psalms, Psalm 82:6. But no less than the Pentateuch, is the book of Psalms “law.” It is “law” inasmuch as the book of Psalms, no less than the Pentateuch, is the authoritative word of God. But more significantly still, the Scriptures cannot be broken. Jesus does not say that Scripture *may not* be broken—which, of course, is true. But what He says is that Scripture “cannot” be broken. And it cannot be broken because it is from beginning to end the authoritative word of God.

### The Scriptures in Translation

Jesus’ regard for the authority of Scripture extends to faithful translations of the Bible. Not only the autographs—the original manuscripts of the Bible—but also subsequent copies of Scripture and translations of Scripture are to be regarded as the word of God. As the word of God, faithful translations of Scripture are to be honored as authoritative by Christians. God intends His word to be translated into the language of the people, all the peoples to whom the gospel is brought. The Reformers recognized this and therefore supported the work of the translation of the Scriptures. Luther himself translated the Bible into the German so that the German people might have the word of God in their own language. By doing so, Luther was instrumental in shaping the modern German language.

That Jesus supported translation of the word of God into the language of the people is seen in the fact that Jesus’ quotation of Scripture is most often from the Septuagint Bible. The Septuagint was the very first translation of the Bible. It was the translation of the Hebrew Old Testament into the Greek language, the language that would become the language of the New Testament. That was necessary because after the captivity the Jews had been scattered all over the then-known world. Soon they lost the Hebrew language in their generations. Their children and grandchildren grew up learning the language of the day, the Greek language. Greek was the language

of Alexander the Great and became the language of all the peoples that he conquered. Everywhere the Greek language was spoken. It was the language of politics, the language of commerce, the language of education, and the language of the marketplace. Because they lost the Hebrew language and because everyone spoke the Greek language, it became necessary for the Jews to have a Bible in the Greek language. It fell to a group of Jewish rabbis (seventy according to tradition) in Alexandria, Egypt, where there was a large Jewish population, to do the work of translation. All this took place during the intertestamental period, after Malachi and before the gospel narratives.

It is from this translation that Jesus and the apostles generally quote. This was the Bible of the Jews of Jesus’ day. That Jesus quoted from the Septuagint is due to the fact that He regarded it as a *faithful* Bible translation. Not every translation is to be regarded as the word of God. Not every translation is to be regarded as authoritative. Not translations that play fast and loose with the text. Not translations that are unconcerned to be literal translations, translations that are produced by translators who hold to the “dynamic equivalence” theory of translation. But translations that strive to convey the very words of the text into the language of the people, these are translations that are of use to the people of God and to the church.

### Jesus’ Appeal to Scripture

Jesus’ regard for Scripture is plain from His appeal Scripture. Over and over again, Jesus appeals to Scripture. He knows the Holy Scriptures, knows them thoroughly. He knows the Holy Scriptures so that He can reference them with ease, quote them accurately, and apply them forcefully. In support of His own teaching, as well as in contradiction of the assertions of His enemies, Jesus freely quotes the Old Testament Scriptures. “Have ye not read this scripture,” He says to the unbelieving Jews in Mark 12:10. After He has risen from the dead, Jesus rebuked the two travelers to Emmaus:

O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.

The very fact that Jesus appealed to the Scriptures is striking. As the authority for His teaching, Jesus does not appeal to Himself as the Son of God. He could have done so. He could have said something like, “Believe what I have said because I who teach you this am the Son of God, essentially one with God, very God Himself.” But Jesus does not do this. Rather, for support for what He has been teaching, Jesus invariably appeals to Holy Scripture. When He was tempted by the devil in the wilderness, immediately following His baptism, Jesus appealed to Holy Scripture. With His “It is written” (Luke 4:4, 8, 12), He chased the devil away. In His teaching concerning the Sabbath and proper Sabbath observance, Jesus appealed to Scripture (Luke 6 and 13). In support of His teaching concerning marriage and divorce, Jesus appealed to Scripture, prefacing His response to the tempting question of the Pharisees, “Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?” by saying, “Have ye not read...” (Matt. 19:4).


Jesus’ appeal to Scripture indicates that He did not question its historicity, did not dispute its chronology, did not cast doubt on the accuracy of the facts reported in it. He viewed the creation account recorded in Genesis as accurate and regarded Adam and Eve as real people, indeed as the first human beings miraculously created by God: “But from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female” (Mark 10:6; cf. also 13:19). He did not dismiss as laughable the idea of a uni-

versal flood in the days of Noah, but instead appealed to the flood as recorded in the book of Genesis in support of His teaching concerning the end times:

But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be (Matt. 24:37-39).

Sodom and Gomorrah were real cities that one time existed, but were overthrown by God because of their violence and immorality (homosexuality): Matthew 10:15; 11:23, 24; Mark 6:11; Luke 10:12; 17:28, 29.

There can be no doubt what Jesus’ attitude was towards Scripture. All His preaching and teaching demonstrate clearly that He regarded Scripture as the word of God. He showed what His attitude was by submitting to Scripture, even when that submission was painful and meant for Him suffering, loss, and ultimately death. Even then He did not waver from His regard for Scripture as God’s own word—inspired, infallible, and authoritative.

If this is the regard that Jesus had for Holy Scripture, ought this not also to be the attitude toward Scripture of those who call Him their Lord? 

## MINISTERING TO THE SAINTS

## REV. DOUGLAS KUIPER

### The Qualifications of the Office of Elder (7)

# His Relationship to Others

**S**tudying the qualifications of elders in Christ’s church, we have already examined those qualifications regarding his gender (he must be male), his blamelessness (the fundamental spiritual qualification), and his relationship to his wife and children.

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Several of the qualifications mentioned in I Timothy 3 and Titus 1 regard the elder’s relationship to others, both within and outside of the church. Both passages emphasize that he must be a hospitable man: I Timothy 3:2 says he must be “given to hospitality,” and Titus 1:8 says he must be “a lover of hospitality”—which terms are slightly different translations of the same Greek word. Titus 1:8 further requires that he be “a lover of good men....” And verse 7 reads: “Moreover he must have a



good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.”

### His Personality

The presence of these qualifications raises the broader question: must the elder have an outgoing and engaging personality? He must be given to hospitality; but must he be the sort of person always ready to host a gathering? He must be a lover of good men; but must he be the kind of man who forms relationships quickly and easily? He must have a good report of them that are without; but must he be the sort of person that his neighbors like because of his personality?

The fact is that the man’s *personality* is not the issue. None should think that a man will be a good elder merely because he is very sociable, because you can warm up to him quickly; nor should we suppose that a quiet, reserved man will not make a good elder.

At issue is not the man’s *personality*, but his *character*. Scripture underscores this point by the way in which the qualifications are stated: the man must not only be hospitable and keep good company, but he must be a *lover* of hospitality, and a *lover* of good. It is possible to be very sociable, but not to love hospitality; and possible to be very sociable, but keep bad company.

For the most part, faithful churches understand this point. When councils nominate men for the special offices, they nominate only those men whom they consider biblically qualified—and yet, each man has a different personality. What makes these men with different personalities all fit for office is that they are basically of the same character.

I make this point because, even if faithful churches understand it, not every member of such churches understands it. Suppose a certain man gets into office repeatedly, and suppose someone does not care much for that certain man. Forgetting that God called that man to office through the vote of the congregation, it then becomes easy for a person to conclude that the man got voted in just because of who he is, or who his friends are.

In this way—perhaps without realizing it—he justifies his dishonor of an elder in the congregation.

### “A Lover of Hospitality”

About this term, we must note three things.

First, the Greek word for “hospitality” indicates that such is shown toward *strangers*. The root form of the Greek word refers to strangers or foreigners, and the term is translated in Hebrews 13:2 “entertain strangers.” The hospitality of which the text speaks is not one shown toward friends and fellow church members, whom one knows well, but toward those whom one does not know.

Second, while showing hospitality to strangers might include visiting with them around an evening meal, the idea is even more that one *lodges* those strangers. This, again, is the idea of “entertain” in Hebrews 13:2.

Third, the term requires the elder to be a *lover* of lodging strangers; one who is quick to show strangers such care.

Why must the elder be such a man?

First, because any church of faithful believers should be a welcoming church. Our joy that God has welcomed us into His family, and our appreciation of the communion of saints, should make us ready and willing to share that love and joy with others who are not part of our fellowship. This will, by God’s grace, make them all the more interested in the gospel!

Not *only* the elders, but the *church*, must be a lover of hospitality! Romans 12:13 and Hebrews 13:2 underscore this, being addressed to the church as a whole: “given to hospitality,” and “be not forgetful to entertain strangers.” But if the church will be a welcoming church, its elders must lead the way in welcoming strangers.

Second, the elder must be this because the sinful nature of mankind is such that we are not lovers of hospitality. Two biblical admonitions underscore this: “be not forgetful” (Heb. 13:2), and “Use hospitality one to another without grudging” (I Pet. 4:9). By nature we are selfish. To lodge strangers requires us to spend money, time, and resources on them and it inconveniences us.

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So the elder, by being such a lover, displays the power of God's grace in him.

In our day and society, elders are seldom called on to lodge strangers. But if an elder stands ready to do so much as lodge a stranger, he will certainly show his love for hospitality in other ways as well. He will be ready to welcome visitors that come to church, and to have them for a meal if they stand in need. He will not limit himself to speaking to the same group of men after church, but will speak to others as well. He will have fellow church members over for visits, especially to get to know them better and show love for them. His house will be open to all, and he will be a man whom people know will receive them readily and host them graciously. And he will be a man who stands ready to help any child of God in any need he may have—whether that need is for a meal, lodging, or anything else.

I leave this qualification by mentioning that Calvin's commentary regarding this qualification is too long to quote, but worth reading.<sup>1</sup>

### **“A Lover of Good Men”**

The Greek word so translated in Titus 1:7 need not be restricted to “men.” The translation could be simply and literally, “A lover of good.” Aiming to get the sense of the term, Calvin translates it more freely, “devoted to kindness,” and gives his reason: “this virtue, accompanied by hospitality, appears to be contrasted by Paul with covetousness and niggardliness.”<sup>2</sup>

The Greek word translated “good” (*agathos*) refers to moral good. The elder is to be one who loves that which pleases God and which accords with God's law. He must be one who recognizes that God, the only good, has determined what good is. The elder then will show his love for good by loving God, God's church, God's people, good preaching, godly living, good conduct, and more.

By contrast, he will hate evil and sin. That which detracts from God's glory, he will oppose.

When the elder is a lover of good, and a hater of evil, he will also be a lover of good men. Loving good men, he will keep good company, and avoid friendships with the

ungodly. Loving good men, he will seek to edify the saints.

Loving good, and loving good men, the elder lives the antithetical life, and so sets an example to all of God's people.

### **“A Good Report of Them Which are Without”**

Finally, we note that the elder must be one regarding whom even those outside the church give a good testimony. This testimony will regard his business practices and work ethic, his personal conduct, and his devotion to the Christian faith.


Of course, some so hate the Christian faith that they would speak evil of any Christian. To hear that sort of person speak evil of an elder does not disqualify the elder for office. Rather, when those outside the church—whether they are Christians of another denomination or not Christians at all—view a man's conduct as a blot on the name “Christian,” the church must consider that man not qualified for office.

This requirement must not be overlooked or ignored. It is a “must,” according to I Timothy 3:7; it is necessary.

It is necessary for the man himself, as the verse goes on to explain: “lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.” Should he be put in office, but then be reproached—at first by outsiders, but later by members of his own congregation if they see that his conduct is not blameless—he will suffer disgrace, and bring shame on himself. This, in turn, the devil can use to bring him further into the snare of sin.

It is necessary for the congregation, too. The church must shine as a light in the world of darkness. By the church and through the church, the name of God must be honored. To honor God's name requires the church to hate sin, and to deal rightly with sin and sinners. To put in office those who are known to be inconsistent in their Christian faith and walk is to dishonor His name!

To sum up, the elder must be one who has a good relationship with others both within the church and without. This good relationship must be the fruit of his love for good, must show itself in his readiness to care for the needs of fellow saints, and must be testified even by those who are not members of the church.

Next time, God willing, we will return to the last few qualifications for the elder, which we have not yet treated. 

<sup>1</sup> John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistles to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon*, translated by Rev. William Pringle (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1989 reprint), 79.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, 295.

# Blessed-Happy


Some might frown upon associating blessed with happy. To speak of a happy birthday or new year, much less a happy Christian might seem sensual and common, perhaps even profane, since happy is derived from the word hap, meaning fortune or chance. Besides, happy may not seem to describe accurately our life of continual death in this valley of tears. Therefore, if we are to speak of happiness in this life, isn't the word blessed more spiritual and appropriate?

Happy is a perfectly good, biblical word. Scripture declares happy the man who fears the Lord (Ps. 128:1), who has mercy on the poor and keeps God's law (Prov. 14:21; 29:18). Happy are we when we suffer for righteousness' sake (I Pet. 3:14) or are reproached for Christ (I Pet. 4:14). To be a Christian person, therefore, is to be a happy person. Besides, the same Hebrew and Greek words translated "happy," are elsewhere translated "blessed." To be blessed is to be happy; to be happy, one must be blessed. And so our confessions also promote happiness. Most know Q&A 1 of the Heidelberg Catechism (...thy only comfort in life and in death). But we may forget Q&A 2 teaches that this comfort is so "we may live and die happily." Lord's Day 3 reminds us God created man to live with Him in eternal happiness. And the Belgic Confession says the happiness of man is that God imputes righteousness to sinners without works (Art. 23; Rom. 4:6).

Scripture presents a radically different notion of happiness than that of our depraved, carnal natures. Therefore, happy he who reads the Word and hears it (Rev. 1:3; Luke 11:28). Happy basically refers to a state of joy or gladness, but emphasizes its connection to particular circumstances. This is the Lord's own meaning when, in the Beatitudes, He pronounces His citizens blessed and then adds—rejoice and be exceeding glad (Matt. 5:12). But what great difference in the circumstances of their happiness! Happy are the poor in spirit, the crying, the meek, hungry and thirsty for righteousness, merciful,

pure in heart, peacemakers, and those persecuted for righteousness' sake. The problem is not with happiness, but supposing it happens without God's blessing, is due to earthly circumstances, or comes by fortune or chance.

Significantly, Scripture never associates being blessed or happy with earthly things—especially money, food, houses, clothing, or good health. Rather, it locates happiness exclusively in God. Scripture claims God to be the happy God (I Tim. 1:11). Therefore, happy are the people whose God is the Lord and whom He chooses for His inheritance (Ps. 144:15; 33:12). Happy are they who have God for their help (Ps. 146:5), trust in the Lord (Ps. 34:8), and whose strength is God (Ps. 84:4-5). Happiness is the goodness of God's house (Ps. 65:4), enjoying the light of God's countenance (Ps. 89:15), and that God preserves, keeps, and delivers us (Ps. 41:1-2). Jesus is also declared God's happy Son (I Tim. 6:15). Happy, therefore, are they who kiss the Son (Ps. 2:12). Happy are they who know Jesus as Christ, have eyes to see and ears to hear, and are not offended by Christ (Matt. 11:6; 13:6; 21:9). Happy, because in Jesus, they have their transgressions forgiven and sin covered, and the Lord imputes to them no iniquity (Ps. 32:1-2).

The Christian's happiness is expressed by living thankfully in holiness before God. The person to whom God imputes His own righteousness, lives happily before God in righteousness—the theme of the Psalms (Ps. 1:1). The happy man delights in God's commandments, endures temptation, continues in God's law (Jam. 1:12; 25), and keeps his garments of righteousness (Ps. 40:5; Rev. 16:15). The righteous Christian is also happy in every circumstance of life, even death. Happy are they who die in the Lord (Rev. 14:13). Called to the marriage supper of the Lamb, we happily wait the return of Christ (Rev. 19:9; Tit. 2:13). We are happy, because we partake in the first resurrection (Rev. 20:6); happy, because great is our reward in heaven (Matt. 5:12); happy, because we receive the crown of life (Jam. 1:12); and happy, because we may eat of the tree of life and live in the holy city with God in Jesus Christ (Rev. 22:14). Aren't you happy? 

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# The Supreme Court Says Corporations Can Exercise Religion

The Supreme Court recently handed down its decision in the case of *Burwell v. Hobby Lobby Stores, Inc.*, which involved a challenge to certain provisions of the Affordable Care Act based on religious grounds. This case provides insights into the future of religious freedom jurisprudence, as well as a look at the factors that aid in establishing a claim of impingement on religious freedom.

## Background

To understand fully the implications of the Supreme Court's decision in the *Hobby Lobby* case, one must look first at the history leading up to the decision. The First Amendment to the Constitution provides that the government cannot impede the Free Exercise of Religion. Over the years, the Supreme Court has decided many religious freedom cases that interpret precisely what that clause means as it relates to a particular case. These were cases such as those that determined that an employee who was fired for refusing to work on the Sabbath could not be denied unemployment benefits,<sup>1</sup> and that the Amish could not be required to comply with a state law requiring children to remain in school until age sixteen.<sup>2</sup> As the law developed in these cases, a balancing test was applied by the Court to determine if the government was unduly impeding religion. The test was whether the challenged action placed a "substantial burden" on the practice of religion, and if so, if it was needed to serve a "compelling government interest." The Court sought to balance the burden on religion with the government's interest.

<sup>1</sup> *Sherbert v. Verner*, 374 U.S. 398 (1963).

<sup>2</sup> *Wisconsin v. Yoder*, 406 U.S. 205 (1972).

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Then in the 1990 *Smith* case, the Supreme Court eliminated the balancing test in a case involving members of a Native American Church who were denied unemployment benefits after they were fired for ingesting peyote for sacramental purposes.<sup>3</sup> The Court established a new rule that "neutral, generally applicable laws may be applied to religious practices even if they are not supported by a compelling government interest."<sup>4</sup>

In response to the Court's decision in *Smith*, Congress enacted the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA), which specifically provides that "Government shall not substantially burden a person's exercise of religion even if the burden results from a rule of general applicability."<sup>5</sup> If the government does burden someone's religion, the government is required to prove that the burden on the person furthers a compelling government interest, and that the means used is the least restrictive means of furthering the government's interest.<sup>6</sup> The previous status of the law was restored, not by changing the First Amendment jurisprudence, but by the federal law enacted outside the bounds of the Constitution. The RFRA was later challenged as it was applied to state government action, and the Supreme Court held Congress had overstepped its power in applying the law to the states.<sup>7</sup> However, RFRA was still valid as it applied to actions of the federal government.

## The Hobby Lobby Case

When the Affordable Care Act (ACA) was passed in 2010, it included the requirement that those who

<sup>3</sup> *Employment Div., Dept. Of Human Resources of Ore. v. Smith*, 494 U.S. 872 (1990).

<sup>4</sup> *City of Boerne v. Flores*, 521 U.S. 507, 514 (1997).

<sup>5</sup> 42 U.S.C §2000bb-1(a).

<sup>6</sup> 42 U.S.C §2000bb-1(b).

<sup>7</sup> *City of Boerne v. Flores*, 521 U.S. 507, 514 (1997).



employed more than fifty full-time employees provide a group health insurance plan with certain minimum requirements. These minimums include preventative care and screenings, without “any cost sharing requirements.”<sup>8</sup> Companies that fail to provide such coverage face penalties. Congress did not specify what care met the minimum standards, but instead left that determination for the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to establish through regulations.

Hobby Lobby, Conestoga Wood Products, and Mardel challenged the HHS regulations because among the medications for which employers were required to provide coverage were four contraceptives that are abortive in nature.<sup>9</sup> The three companies that brought the challenge are for-profit corporations owned by families who are Christian. The owners of the companies objected to having to provide coverage for abortive medications, which they considered wrong because of their religious beliefs. The companies pointed to the provisions of the RFRA for protection from the ACA mandate.

HHS argued that the challengers did not have standing to claim the protection of RFRA because they are corporations, not individual people. HHS reasoned that a corporation cannot have religious beliefs and cannot “exercise religion.” HHS argued that, since a corporation is made up of a group of people, it would be impossible to determine what the religious beliefs of a corporation are.

The Supreme Court, in a 5-4 decision, held that the companies did have standing to challenge the mandate, that the mandate did impose a substantial burden on the exercise of religion, and that the regulations were not the least restrictive means to achieve the government’s goal. The Court addressed HHS’s argument that a corporation could not claim protection under RFRA by noting that non-profit corporations could claim RFRA protection, and profit motive alone would not negate exercise of religion. The Court noted that the position taken by HHS would put merchants “to a difficult choice: either give up the right to seek judicial protection of their religious liberty, or forgo the benefits, available to their competitors, of operating as corporations.”<sup>10</sup>

The Court stated that a corporation is simply a form

of organization used by human beings to achieve desired ends. The Court then noted that RFRA was designed to give very broad protection for religious liberty, and that by enacting the statute, Congress went far beyond what the Court had held as constitutionally required. The Court noted that, in this case, the corporations were closely-held companies, so that the views of the “companies” and the families that owned them were inseparable.

We should take note of the fact that, in finding the “sincerely held” religious beliefs of the companies, the Court looked to the companies’ documentation. Both companies had formal statements asserting their religious beliefs, which the Court quoted in reaching its decision. Conestoga’s board had adopted a “Statement on the Sanctity of Human Life,” in which the company declared its belief that “human life begins at conception.”<sup>11</sup> Hobby Lobby’s statement of purpose commits the owners to “honoring the Lord in all [they] do by operating the company in a manner consistent with Biblical principles.”<sup>12</sup> Incorporating references to our religious beliefs is important, not only when clarifying our religious positions in relation to businesses we may operate, but also for our churches and schools.

As Reformed believers, we often take for granted the concept that our faith influences everything we do, and that we do all things, including operating businesses, to the glory of God our Father. Writing about the *Hobby Lobby* case even before it was decided, Harvard Law professor Noah Feldman wrote concerning the separation of business and religion:

Classical Protestantism of the type associated with John Locke, the English father of modern American religious liberty, recognized a difference between actions that are inherently religious and those that are “indifferent” to salvation. I am confident that the founding fathers would have agreed with Locke and therefore with the distinction between doing business and doing religion. But times have changed. Many Catholics and Jews, not to mention some contemporary Protestants, may not recognize this distinction as meaningful, preferring every sphere of life to be treated as pervasively religious.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>8</sup> 42 U.S.C. 300gg-13(a)(4).

<sup>9</sup> *Burwell v. Hobby Lobby Stores, Inc.*, 573 U.S. (2014).

<sup>10</sup> *Burwell*, 17.

<sup>11</sup> *Burwell v. Hobby Lobby Stores, Inc.*, 573 U.S. (2014), 12.

<sup>12</sup> *Burwell*, 14.

<sup>13</sup> Noah Feldman, “Hobby Lobby Verdict May Be a Surprise,” *The Salt Lake Tribune*, March 27, 2014.

The primary dissenting opinion in the *Hobby Lobby* opinion tried to draw the same distinction between for-profit corporations and religious non-profits. However, the majority opinion again referred to the written statements of the companies that demonstrated that the owners' religious beliefs were not separate from the operation of their business.

### Implications of the decision

The majority opinion in the *Hobby Lobby* case downplayed its significance and impact. Justice Alito pointed repeatedly to the fact that the case was decided based solely on the facts before the Court, with the corporations in question being closely-held, family corporations. However, Justice Ginsberg, writing for the dissent, began her opinion by saying, "In a decision of startling breadth, the Court holds that commercial enterprises, including corporations, along with partnerships and sole proprietorships, can opt out of any law (saving only tax laws) that they judge incompatible with their sincerely held religious beliefs."<sup>14</sup>


The decision does have far reaching implications because of two components of the Court's ruling. First, the notion that corporations and other entities can seek protection under RFRA is noteworthy, because of the large percentage of businesses that do operate as some sort of legal entity. Second, the Court's broad definition of what constitutes the "exercise of religion" gives the ruling a much broader potential impact. The Court recognized

<sup>14</sup> *Burwell v. Hobby Lobby Stores, Inc.*, 573 U.S. (2014). Dissenting opinion at 1.

that the exercise of religion can be incorporated into virtually any aspect of life. In a recent issue, we had looked at cases under state law in which businesses were sued for refusing to provide services at homosexual weddings.<sup>15</sup> Under the *Hobby Lobby* ruling, one could easily argue that they are protected under federal law from such suits.

As stated previously, a prior Supreme Court case had found that the federal RFRA did not apply to the laws of the states, so the *Hobby Lobby* ruling does not directly protect an individual who is being sued under state law, as opposed to federal law. However, many state RFRA statutes are nearly identical to the federal RFRA, so state courts may tend to defer to the Supreme Court ruling in *Hobby Lobby* in interpreting the state RFRA's.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, the *Hobby Lobby* decision does take a step in the right direction towards restoring religious freedom. However, as the government's role in private citizens' lives grows larger and larger, we can anticipate that the encroachments on religious liberties will also increase, as will the need to rely on the courts to determine whether the encroachment is permissible under the laws of the land. Our continued development of clear statements of our religious positions, and incorporating those statements in our businesses, schools, and churches, will enable us to demonstrate when the government is impeding the exercise of our religion. 

<sup>15</sup> Brian Van Engen, "Can Religious Freedom Be Restored?" *Standard Bearer*, vol. 90, p. 325 (2014).

STRENGTH OF YOUTH

REV. BRIAN HUIZINGA

"To Teach Them War"

## An Introduction: Our Holy War (3)

Rev. Huizinga is pastor of Hope Protestant Reformed Church in Redlands, California.

Previous article in this series: August 2014, p. 443.

We have acknowledged that we are called to warfare and that we must be conscious of this warfare. We have demonstrated this calling from Scripture, and therefore find it in our Psalter, Three Forms of Unity, and doctrinal terminology.

By “war” in this series we are referring to our ongoing spiritual hostility towards all that is opposed to God and His kingdom. There is war between God and Satan—the kingdom of light and the kingdom of darkness—and by virtue of our union with Christ the head of God’s covenant and King of God’s kingdom we are participants in this war. By the power of the Spirit of Christ within us, we are determined to fight all unrighteousness in the confidence that God’s kingdom of righteousness realized in Jesus Christ shall triumph gloriously in the full subduing of all opposition and the establishment of perfect peace in the new heavens and new earth for the glory of His great name into all eternity. We could call this “our holy war.”

### Not Jihad

By referring to this war as “*our* holy war,” we distinguish ourselves from the false, idolatrous religion of Islam, which is known worldwide for its jihad or holy war. Let no man mistake or misrepresent our instruction as Islamic indoctrination. There is nothing holy but everything profane about Islam’s jihad, whether that war refers to an inner spiritual struggle or a physical war waged with the flesh-piercing, blood-shedding, and head-decapitating swords for the purpose of destroying infidels or the conversion of them by force. Muslims have their so-called holy war. We are referring to *our* holy war, and it is radically different. Holiness is separation from that which Jehovah the triune God abhors and is consecration of heart in love to Jehovah as God alone. Any religious war that is not conducted according to Jehovah God’s will and for His glory is not holy but profane, and to be repudiated.

### Not Physical

By referring to this war as “our *holy* war,” we make plain our war is not physical. What has already been stated specifically with respect to Islamic jihad must now be expressed more generally. War is holy if it is done in devotion to God and His will. Old Testament Israel’s holy war had a physical aspect to it and was pleasing to God. However, God does not call the church of the new dispensation to physical war in which we wield steel swords, slaughter human beings, go on crusades for some piece of soil, forcefully capture political seats, and amass as spoils physical property. Our weapons are *not* carnal (II Cor. 10:3-5), and we wrestle *not* against flesh and blood (Eph.

6:12), for Jesus’ kingdom is *not* of this world, else would His servants draw swords and staves (John 18:36).

The proponents of the contemporary neo-Calvinist doctrine of the redemptive transformation of culture that may be pressed upon some of you in Christian colleges seek to develop an earthly kingdom for God. It will not be surprising if this doctrine eventually leads to “crusades” with blood-shedding swords. If the kingdom to be established is earthly, must not the warfare be also? Then one has to wonder who might be the object of those assaults? The true church looking heavenward?

Our *holy* war is war God requires, and God, the God of the heavenly kingdom of Jesus Christ, requires *spiritual* warfare against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places (Eph. 6:12). Behind warring covenant young people there ought not be a trail of blood and physical corpses, but in you a wounded old man—crushed pride, quenched lusts, controlled anger. In the name of our *holy* war we will not kill human beings, Muslims or other, who refuse to submit to King Jesus, but we will expose and refute false religions, false doctrines, and wicked lives and call sinners to repentance and faith in the acknowledging of the truth of Jesus.

### Not In-fighting

By referring to this as “our *holy* war,” we separate ourselves from all unholy, God-dishonoring wars and contentions that, regrettably, may arise among us (James 4:1; I Cor. 1:11). Contentious spirits are not for war for peace’s sake, but for war for war’s sake. Our call to warfare is not a call to fight each other as joint-heirs of the grace of life, to make every single issue a matter of principle and orthodoxy, to strive as members of our congregations over petty personal preferences, to pit one Young People’s Society against another in unholy jealousy, to form rival groups in the hallways or lunch rooms, and cold-shoulder those who don’t meet the requirements of the “club.” Lamentably, some unholy wars begin already on the playground in kindergarten. How good and pleasant is the sight when children and young people of the church make it their delight to dwell in blessed accord. Our *holy* war is not sinfully striving and contending with brethren but a war against the sin that causes contention, division, and schism.

## Not Individualism

By referring to this war as “*our* holy war,” we emphasize our opposition to individualism or an independent spirit that tends to overemphasize the soldier while minimizing the army. It is not “*my* holy war,” or “*his/her* holy war,” or even “*the* holy war.” Certainly our primary focus is upon the battle with sin within us, but not to the exclusion of responsibilities we have in and to, as well as our need for, the whole body of believers with whom we march against all the forces of evil. To be pitied is the spiritual lone ranger, especially he who willingly marches apart from the body of believers, for he lacks accountability, loving admonishment, and comrades to sharpen him in knowledge and discernment. Savage enemies lurk around him, and not only does he not see them all, he has no one to point them out to him. Woe to him that is alone when he falleth in battle, spiritually fatigued, discouraged, and even depressed, for he hath not another to help him up. You need them. They need you. This is “*our* holy war.”

## Covenantal

To emphasize the positive of the foregoing assertion, our warfare is *covenantal*. “*Our* holy war” is the war we wage as members of God’s covenant joined together in the Spirit (I Cor. 12). In catechism class one is not taught to identify himself as the *individual* militant, but part of the *church* militant. We war as those eternally chosen and made members of the one body that from the beginning to the end of the world is gathered, defended, and preserved by Christ’s Word and Spirit. To fight in this war against every appearance of the kingdom of darkness led by Satan is to join with the church of all ages from Adam and Abel to you and me.

A necessary and significant implication of this covenantal aspect of our warfare is the necessity of membership in the church institute, the visible manifestation of that universal, invisible body. A soldier might claim he has enlisted in and fights on behalf of his national army. He may even wear a uniform. But if he has never joined the visible manifestation of that army at camp and on the battlefield, his speech betrays him. In *our* holy war, young people make church membership a priority in their life, joining the covenantal assembly.

## Difficult

By referring to our life as “our holy *war*” we are emphasizing that the Christian life is not easy but difficult. It is strenuous and painful. War is not nice. It kills. It leaves wounds and scars. Combat is ugly. Fighting elicits eerie cries. Sanctification hurts. Our enemies cease not to assault us. Think it not strange if you young people sigh often, for we grow weary warring against the corruption within us and often “sigh, desiring to be delivered from this body of death” (Belgic Confession, Art. 15). Do think it strange if your spirit never groans.

Every day is filled with so many circumstances and encounters and experiences and conversations and assignments and discoveries and setbacks and distractions and unexpected incidents that will all be used by the devil in alliance with our old man to tempt us to sin. If we are not ready to fight the old man, resist the devil, and avoid temptation, we will erupt in anger when we should have remained still; be filled with envy and resentment when we should have encouraged another; lie to cover up when we should have gone to the cross—and our brother—confessing; complain in bitterness and sink into morbid self-pity when we should have said in sincerity, “Blessed be the Lord”; laugh with him when we should have admonished him; say nothing when we should have defended the doctrine we confess and regulated the worship we practice; say yes and go when we should have said no and stayed home to finish studying our catechism; enter that website that leads to hell when we should have protected our eyes as the possession of our Lord.

The same applies to the true church of Christ in the world wherever she is manifested, standing fast in the truth, rejecting error, walking a narrow path of uprightness, and declining offers to false ecumenicity while being despised by the world and reproached and slandered by the false church.

Living out of the new man, we know the approval of our God and Father, and that is more than life to us. But that blessing comes only through daily, painful, self-denying warfare against the principle of sin within.

## For God

By referring to this war as “our *holy* war,” we keep in view the goal and purpose of the war. Holiness is conse-



cration to the Holy One. Holiness is doing all for God, His glory, His honor, His name, and the exaltation of His incarnate Son our Lord Jesus Christ, crucified and risen from the dead. We do not do battle against sin in our lives merely because getting caught in sin can be embarrassing, or because sinning brings consequences that will hurt and hinder. Zealously defending, for example, the use of Psalms in worship over against another who is defending the use of contemporary hymns is unholy if the goal is merely to be right, or to show him he is wrong, or to stand proudly for a heritage. Opposing sodomy and lesbianism in a world and church-world gone mad with unfurled lusts of enmity against God merely because we consider it perverse, distinguishes us not one whit from many of the ungodly.

God! Holy God! Jehovah's name! The honor of Jesus

the Lord of heaven and earth! The goal of our warfare in every aspect is Jehovah God in Jesus Christ, whose glory we seek, whose praise is primary to us, and whose approval is worth dying for.

When soldiers and citizens lose a sense of purpose, enthusiasm wanes. When soldiers and citizens lose a sense of *the* purpose, wicked motives mar outwardly good deeds. We must be taught as young people that if our warring does not permanently keep in view the goal or purpose, we will dishonor God. He is not only the holy God but our Savior who in Jesus Christ has translated us out of the kingdom of darkness and into the kingdom of His marvelous light wherein is everlasting righteousness. For *His* sake, war.

The war of which we speak in this series is "Our Holy War." ☞

## BRING THE BOOKS...

## MR. CHARLES TERPSTRA, review editor

*Broken Minds: Hope for Healing When You Feel Like You're Losing It*, Steve and Robyn Bloem. Kregel Publications: Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2005. Paperback, pp. 301. [Reviewed by Rev. Martyn McGeown.]

How do people—especially church people—react to depression? The Bloems, both of whom have suffered from clinical depression, argue that the church has failed to minister properly to the mentally ill. One of the main reasons for this is the church's refusal to view depression and other mental illnesses as anything other than a disease of the soul, a spiritual disorder, which modern medicine cannot help. Thus a stigma has developed around the mentally ill, such that physical disorders (kidney stones, arthritis, heart disease, cancer) are categorized in an altogether different manner from mental disorders (depression, anxiety disorders, bipolar disease, schizophrenia, post traumatic stress, postnatal depression, etc.). The Bloems have suffered at the hands

of—often well-meaning—Christians, who have stigmatized mental illness, and thus added to the burden of the depressed saint in the church. The attitude of many is that Christians are not *supposed* to get depressed, and if they do, there must be some sin, some hidden bitterness, in their life. Often Christians, argue the Bloems, are like Job's comforters, who added to, rather than helped, his depression. For example, in a chapter entitled, "Depression and the Ekklesia of God," Robyn Bloem writes:

Fellow Christians have ministered to us in a multitude of ways by both words and deeds. Some also have intensified our grief and frustration by thoughtless words that either came from attitudes of prejudice or the need to fill dead air when the person didn't know what else to say. The general rule for approaching a friend or relative who is touched by mental illness is to listen much and speak little (233).

Earlier Steve writes,

To show Christ's love, it is sometimes needful simply to weep with those who are weeping, rather than to give superficial advice or try to be cheery. Job's friends were good comforters as long as they sat in silence. It was when they opened their mouths to preach long, superficial sermons

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

that they were used of Satan to drive Job into deeper despair (206).

The Bloems speak from personal experience. Steve, a pastor, who is now the director of Heartfelt Counseling Ministries, Inc., has suffered from clinical depression for years, and his wife, Robyn, is no stranger to depression herself—both her own, and her husband’s. The Bloems describe (especially Steve’s) experiences—from indefinable feeling of unease, the persistent darkness, the sleeplessness, the crippling incapacitation, the different diagnoses and treatments, the (often unhelpful and even prejudiced) responses of family, friends, and church, and even the alluring song of suicide. Steve devotes a whole chapter to the subject of suicidal ideation and suicide.

The Bloems contend strongly that depression is an illness that can be treated (although not cured) with medical intervention, as well as by the comfort of the gospel. Why are Christians reluctant, they ask, to treat depression as a disease, and seek medical help, while they would frown upon someone who did not seek medical help for a physical disease such as a fractured bone, a tumor, or a blood clot? Why do Christians reject the findings of psychiatry and psychology out of hand, while they embrace the findings of cardiology, oncology, etc.? Writes Steve, “Because we have distanced ourselves from scientific inquiry, we have tended to offer little to the mentally ill—except condemnation” (113).


Steve Bloem writes this to illustrate the inadequacy of the nouthetic, “Christian-counseling” approach to the depressed, which he says he has often found “degrading” (187):

A typical Christian counselor’s response to a depressed person might sound like this:

“Brother, you have suppressed a deep resentment toward another. You have bitterness in your life that you are not dealing with. When this happens, your body does not know what to do with it, and you turn the anger inward on yourself to avoid dealing with the true issues. This in turn will deplete your neurotransmitters in the brain.... So put off your anger and you will put off the depression....”

This fictional counselor finishes the day’s sessions and heads home with a splitting headache. Would he try to get to the spiritual root of his headache? Or would he pop a couple of aspirins into his mouth? (190-191).

Elsewhere, Steve Bloem describes the “stigma about treatments from the neck down,” by relating the difference between E.C.T. (electroconvulsive therapy) and lithotripsy treatment (the blasting of kidney stones with sonar waves)—one is acceptable (although lithotripsy sounds very strange); the other is (supposedly) the stuff of horror movies! (127). He also relates how he is embarrassed (because of his friends’ reaction) to take his antidepressant medication in public, while no one would question someone taking beta blockers or some other medication prescribed by a doctor. The reason for this attitude, contend the Bloems, is prejudice and stigma.

This book is very helpful in understanding the causes of depression, the treatments available, and the ways in which we might minister to the depressed saint, carrying his or her burdens. It would appear from the Bloems’ book that we have much to learn and many prejudices to put off before we can effectively do this. Believers who suffer from depression, or whose loved ones suffer from depression, as well as pastors who minister to the depressed, would do well to study this book. 

## NEWS FROM OUR CHURCHES

## MR. PERRY VAN EGDOM

### A Change....

A significant piece of current news is that the *Standard Bearer* News Editor, Mr. Ben Wigger, who

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*Mr. VanEdgom is a member of the Protestant Reformed Church of Doon, Iowa.*

has served for the last twenty-eight years, has stepped aside after his column in the September 15 issue. Twenty-eight years means a great number of deadlines met, and many, many dedicated readers. A sincere “Thank You” Ben, for all your work

and enjoyable articles! Any readers who have opportunity to thank Ben personally, please be sure to do that.

### Congregational Activities

The congregation of Heritage

PRC in Sioux Falls, SD invited the other four Siouxland area congregations (Calvary, Doon, Edgerton and Hull) to join them in a day of fun at Wild Water West, a water park on the west edge of Sioux Falls. A good turnout resulted, with activities such as water slides, wave pool, lazy river, and Pirate's Cove keeping the attendees cool. The nearby go-carts, mini golf, and batting cages were also great fun for the young and young at heart.

### **Sister Church Activities**

In early August seven young people from the Covenant Evangelical Reformed Church in Singapore made the trip to metro Manila in the Philippines to visit some of the young people there. They attended the Thursday evening Essentials class in the Provident Christian Church in Marikina and a time of games and fellowship transpired on Saturday. The visitors worshiped the morning of Sunday, August 3 in the Protestant Reformed Church in Bulacan. After a time of visiting and refreshments they braved the Manila traffic to worship later that day in the Berean PRC, concluding the day with supper at the Smit residence. During their stay in the Philippines the seven stayed with Rev. Daniel and Sharon Kleyn in their home. You might wonder if the guests tried to converse in Tagalog or if the youth of the Manila area tried to learn a Singaporean dialect? No sir, they all resorted to English and did just fine! That works for the youth in Manila but not so well for many of the adults.

### **Minister and Candidate Activities**

The lone 2014 graduate of the Theological School of the PRCA, Joshua Engelsma, sustained his Synodical examination in June and became a candidate for the ministry in our churches and eligible to receive calls on July 12. On July 13 he received three calls from PRCA churches to be their pastor; Doon PRC in Doon, IA, Faith PRC in Jenison, MI, and First PRC in Grand Rapids, MI. After considering these calls for approximately six weeks, the Lord led Candidate Engelsma to accept the call of the Protestant Reformed Church of Doon, IA. By the time you read this, Classis West of the PRCA will have convened September 24 in Peace PRC, Lansing, IL, D.V. Pastor-elect Engelsma will have preached his examination sermon and submitted to the peremptor or "decisive" oral examination according to Article 4 of the Church Order. Upon successful completion of this examination his ordination will take place in Doon. The anticipated date for this service, to be led by Prof. David Engelsma, is October 3. Pastor-elect Engelsma and his wife, Courtney, along with their children Calvin, Charlotte, and Noah planned to move to Doon sometime in September.

A retirement program for Rev. James Slopsema was held the evening of August 24 after the worship service of First PRC, Grand Rapids, MI. Later the same evening an open house for the other area congregations took place, so that many could express appreciation to Rev. Slopsema and thanksgiving to

God for his many years of faithful service.

### **Mission Activities**

On Thursday, August 21 Rev. Daniel and Sharon Kleyn invited the members of the Provident Christian Church in Marikina to their home in the subdivision of Antipolo for a day outing. About twenty-five people joined the Smits and Kleyns in Psalter singing, indoor and outdoor games, a hike to "Second Floor" (the hill that overlooks Manila) and a delicious meal. They were also treated to some tunes on the saw by Rev. Kleyn. In addition, many books were sold from the PRCA bookstore in the Kleyns' home. A delightful occasion of the communion of the saints was enjoyed!

### **School Activities**

Families and supporters of the Northwest Iowa Protestant Reformed School in Doon enjoyed the school "Kick-off Campout" at Newton Hills State Park, just over the South Dakota border to the west. This activity has been an annual event for decades and is enjoyed by many. On Thursday evening the pot provision supper for the whole congregation took place under the big white tent, followed by the traditional Psalter sing around the campfire. Other activities included climbing the lookout tower, bicycling, hiking, geocaching, visiting, and many spirited games of Kubb (a lawn game combination of bowling and horseshoes). An enjoyable time was had as always, with the young children sad to see the time end, al-

## Standard Bearer

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ready looking forward to next year's camp-out.


All thirteen Protestant Reformed grade schools and four Protestant Reformed high schools, as well as our own seminary (beginning its 90<sup>th</sup> year), are off and running into the 2014-2015 school year. We thank God for these schools and those who teach, imparting not only

knowledge, but also wisdom to our youth.

A new and interesting undertaking at Trinity Christian High School in Hull, IA is the one-to-one computer arrangement, supplying each of the sixty-nine students in the school with their own laptop computer.

## Classis

Classis East (sixteen congregations) was scheduled to meet September 10 in the Grandville, MI PRC while Classis West (fifteen congregations) planned to convene September 24 in Peace PRC, Lansing, IL.

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

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### Resolution of Sympathy

■ The Council of the Hope PRC of Walker, Michigan extends its Christian sympathy to its fellow officebearers, Elder David Kamps and Deacon Jonathan Kamps, in the loss of their mother,

#### **ARLENE KAMPS,**

whom the Lord took home to glory on August 16, 2014.

"Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fullness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures forever more" (Psalm 16: 11).

Rev. David Overway, President  
David Moelker, Clerk

### Resolution of Sympathy

■ The Council and congregation of the Kalamazoo PRC express their Christian sympathy to Doug and Sarah Bishop and their family in the death of Sara's brother,

#### **MR. GEORGE YFF.**

May they be comforted by God's Word. "Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness" (Isaiah 41:10).

Rev. Michael DeVries, President  
Dan Kiel, Clerk

### Reformation Lecture

Saturday, October 25, 2014  
2:00 P.M.

#### **Professor Russell Dykstra**

"The Reformation's Zeal  
for Christian Education"  
Hope PRC,  
1307 E. Brockton Ave.,  
Redlands, CA.

## Bound Volumes

■ With the September 15th issue of the *Standard Bearer*, volume 90 was finished. If you would like your own issues bound, please deliver them to the **RFPA office** before the end of October. For additional orders, call Paula at (616) 457-5970.

## Reformed Witness Hour October 2014

### Date

October 5  
October 12  
October 19  
October 26

### Topic

"The Church: The Body of Christ"  
"The Church Institute"  
"The Marks of the Church"  
"The Communion of Saints"

### Text

Ephesians 1:3-6  
Titus 1:5  
Romans 10:13-15  
Ephesians 4:1-6