

The Standard Bearer

A Reformed Semi-Monthly Magazine • February 15, 2014

CONTENTS

<i>Meditation</i>	Accepted in the Beloved REV. RON VAN OVERLOOP	218
<i>Editorial</i>	Pray For Us (3) PROF. RUSSELL DYKSTRA	220
<i>Taking Heed to the Doctrine</i>	Revelation, Inspiration, and Infallibility (6) PROF. RONALD CAMMENG	222
<i>All Around Us</i>	Remembering the Persecuted REV. MARTYN MCGEOWN	224
<i>Search the Scriptures</i>	Robbing Christ of His Honor (9) MR. DON DOEZEMA	226
<i>Biographies of Missionaries</i>	John Eliot (1604-1690): Missionary to the American Indians REV. ALLEN BRUMMEL	229
<i>Pertaining to the Churches...in Common</i>	News from the Seminary PROF. RONALD CAMMENG	231
<i>When Thou Sittest in Thine House</i>	Giving Our Sons and Daughters in Marriage (1) REV. ARIE DEN HARTOG	234
<i>Bring the Books...</i>	Book Reviews REV. DOUG KUIPER	236
<i>Reports</i>	Classis East Report MR. JON HUISKEN	237
<i>News From Our Churches</i>	Activities MR. BENJAMIN WIGGER	238

Accepted in the Beloved

To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.

Ephesians 1:6

The devil loves to separate. He worked hard in the old dispensation to separate God from His people, accusing them of being unworthy of any blessing (Rev. 12:10b). He delights to separate believer from believer. He loves to destroy the unity of the body of Christ with all sorts of schismatic activity. The devil delights to separate believers from the assurance of their salvation.

There are times when the consciences of believers accuse them that they have grossly transgressed all the commandments of God, kept none of them, and are still inclined to all evil. At such times we fear that we might not be saved. Nevertheless God, merely of grace, shows us what He has done in Christ.

Earlier in this chapter (Eph. 1) Paul declares that the

Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (3) predestinated the elect to the position of being adopted children of God (5), so He is their Father too. God has done this "according to the good pleasure of His will" (5), not because of anything in us. It is all entirely of His good pleasure! And now the apostle gives the ultimate purpose for doing this work in Jesus Christ: to the praise of the glory of His grace!

The Wonder

This text declares the wonder accomplished by divine grace. God's grace makes us "accepted in the beloved." The word that is translated "made accepted" means to be made graceful or lovely. The only other time it appears in the New Testament is in Luke 1:28, where the angel Gabriel addressed Mary as "highly favored." Mary is made to be accepted of God; she is made lovely and graceful.

Listen in the preceding verses in Ephesians 1 as the apostle describes God's work of salvation. God blesses us with all spiritual blessings; He chooses us in Christ so we are holy and without blame before God; He predestinates us unto adoption of children. And now Paul adds that God's grace makes us highly graced and beautiful.

Every blessing given to the elect is in and through the

The Standard Bearer (ISSN 0362-4692) is a semi-monthly periodical, except monthly during June, July, and August, published by the Reformed Free Publishing Association, Inc.: 1894 Georgetown Center Dr., Jenison, MI 49428-7137.

Postmaster: Send address changes to the *Standard Bearer*, 1894 Georgetown Center Dr., Jenison, MI 49428-7137.

Reprint Policy

Permission is hereby granted for the reprinting of articles in our magazine by other publications, provided a) that such reprinted articles are reproduced in full; b) that proper acknowledgment is made; c) that a copy of the periodical in which such reprint appears is sent to our editorial office.

Editorial Policy

Every editor is solely responsible for the contents of his own articles. Contributions of general interest from our readers and questions for the Reader Asks department are welcome. Contributions will be limited to approximately 300 words and must be signed. All communications relative to the contents should be sent to the editorial office.

Editorial Office

Prof. Russell J. Dykstra
4949 Ivanrest Ave. SW
Wyoming, MI 49418
dykstra@prca.org

Business Office

Standard Bearer
Mr. Timothy Pipe
1894 Georgetown Center Dr.
Jenison, MI 49428-7137
PH: 616-457-5970
tim@rfpa.org

Church News Editor

Mr. Ben Wigger
6597 40th Ave
Hudsonville, MI 49426
benjwig@juno.com

United Kingdom Office

c/o Mrs. Alison Graham
27 Woodside Road
Ballymena, BT42 4HX
Northern Ireland
alisongraham2006@
hotmail.co.uk

Rep. of Ireland Office

c/o Rev. Martyn McGeown
Apartment 10, Block D
Ballycummin Village
Limerick, Ireland

Subscription Price

\$21.00 per year in the US, \$35.00 elsewhere
New eSubscription: \$21
eSubscription for current hardcopy subscribers: \$10.50.

Advertising Policy

The *Standard Bearer* does not accept commercial advertising of any kind. Announcements of church and school events, anniversaries, obituaries, and sympathy resolutions will be placed for a \$10.00 fee. Announcements should be sent, with the \$10.00 fee, to: SB Announcements, 1894 Georgetown Center Dr., Jenison, MI 49428-7137 (e-mail: mail@rfpa.org). Deadline for announcements is one month prior to publication date.

Website for RFPA: www.rfpa.org
Website for PRC: www.prca.org

Lord Jesus Christ. Paul made that abundantly clear also in the preceding verses. Just count how many times he spoke of Jesus in the previous five verses: seven times! And now he declares that the blessing of being “made accepted” is also in Jesus, but he uses a different name for Him: “the Beloved.”

This is a very special name for Jesus. God used it every time He “opened” heaven and spoke about Jesus (or to Him). At His baptism God declared, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased” (Matt. 3:17). On the mount of transfiguration God stated, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him” (Matt. 17:5). In the parable of the wicked husbandmen the lord of the vineyard said, “I will send my beloved son” (Luke 20:13).

When the triune God identifies His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, as His “Beloved,” He is describing the relationship He has with Jesus, namely, that it is one of love. A son has the right to his father’s name and the right to an inheritance. But, in addition, God declares that His relationship to His Son is one of greatest intimacy. He who is love (I John 4:8) gives the whole of His love to His Son. The Father has loved Him from all eternity, and the Son has always enjoyed the whole of God’s love! The whole of the Father’s affection is centered in Jesus. We must say then that no term expresses so perfectly and so completely the relationship between God and Jesus as “Beloved.”

Then the fact that we are made accepted in the Beloved expresses the measure of the Father’s love toward us. To know correctly God’s love for us, we must grasp the truth about the Beloved Son of God. We accurately measure the love of God for us when we consider the suffering God put on His Beloved for us. God spared not His Beloved, but delivered Him up for us all. Strive to grasp something of this fact to know the love that passes knowledge. And even more is the Beloved’s love for us, that He would willingly leave His Father and take upon Himself our nature, our suffering, and our death—because He loved us.

When we put this together, then we can learn that the Father’s relationship to us can be described as Jesus put it in His last prayer: “Thou hast loved them, as thou hast loved me” (John 17:23b)! If Jesus did not say it, I would not believe it, or dare to say it. God loves me as He

loved His Son! No wonder we are “accepted” and “highly favored.”

That God’s relationship to every one of the elect is one of love, which is centered in and begins with His Beloved Son, is made clear when God gives to the elect this same name: “beloved.” Paul urges “the saints and faithful brethren in Christ which are at Colosse” (Col. 1:2) to “put on...bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering, forbearing one another, and forgiving one another,... And above all these things put on charity” (Col. 3:12-14). Now notice that the powerful motivation the apostle gives to these believers is found in his identification of them: “the elect of God, holy and *beloved*!” God loves them—the God who elected them and who makes them holy. The same identification is found in II Thessalonians 2:13: “brethren, *beloved* of the Lord.” The ultimate height of salvation and redemption is that we are elevated to the position of being loved as God’s only begotten Son is loved. It is because we are “in the Beloved” that we are “the beloved” of God.

Whenever you are inclined to think that God is unloving toward you, then direct your thoughts to this passage. Whenever you fear that God has forgotten to be kind and that His mercy is gone forever, then correct your thinking by considering the truth of this passage. Realize that you might not understand what is happening to you, but understand clearly the truth concerning yourself and all the elect, that you are beloved of God in the Beloved One.

The Praise

God’s work of making us highly favored. Lovely, graceful—because of His glorious grace. The divine power that takes wretched, filthy, putrid, and ugly sinners and makes them lovely and beautiful is the power of God’s undeserved love.

In the preceding verses Paul has declared that it was God’s choosing of us in Christ that makes us holy and without blame (4). It was because of His love that God predestinated us unto the adoption of children (5a). It was all “according to the good pleasure of His will” (5b). It was not because of anything in the elect. It was entirely of Him. And now that thought is repeated: it is God’s grace that makes anyone accepted in the Beloved Son. Divine, undeserved love is the only power that can make beautiful and favored those who have daily sins of


infirmity and spots adhering to their best works. What power! What love!

Those who receive this undeserved love of God praise Him. We have been chosen to be holy and to have spiritual adoption into God's family and to be made accepted in the Beloved, so that we might praise the glory of God's grace. There is no better test of our profession of the faith than whether our attitude and conduct praise God's grace. This is what makes Christianity and the salvation it proclaims so unique among the religions found in this world. Christianity is not a record of man and what man has done, but of God and what He has done. It declares God's glory. It is not about the benefits of salvation we enjoy, but rather about our giving all the glory and praise to God. May all men see and hear us declaring and magnifying the glory of God.

It is true that human minds and human language are greatly handicapped when having to convey the true sense of God's glory. His glory is the resplendent radiance and splendor that shine forth from the majesty and beauty and greatness of God and His grace. God's glory

is God Himself, which glory filled the tabernacle and temple and is seen in Jesus (Heb. 1:3). And the gospel is the proclamation of the glory of God (II Cor. 4:6).

How are we to think of our salvation? It is to fill us with wonder, amazement, and praise of God. This is the chief end of man: to glorify God. The chief end of man's salvation is not that we are delivered from hell and are given many benefits, but that we give God the glory. God's work of redemption reveals the riches of the glory of God's grace and of His wisdom (8). By making us holy, God reveals the glory of Him who is holy, holy, holy. In redeeming us from all of our sin and sinfulness we see the abundant greatness of God's love, and we see the glory of Him who loves.

It is and always will be about God and His glory. We are going to do that forever in heaven. So let us praise Him now. Let us declare His worthiness to receive all our worship. It is His grace that is the only power that can and has made us to be accepted in His Beloved. Let us cease not to praise the glory of that grace. 

EDITORIAL

PROF. RUSSELL DYKSTRA

Pray For Us (3)

Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, even as it is with you: and that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men: for all men have not faith.

II Thessalonians 3:1, 2

[Note: This editorial is the third part of the convocation speech given publicly for the current school year, held in September of 2013. The

Previous article in this series: February 1, 2014, p. 197.

first installment demonstrated the biblical basis for requesting fellow saints to "pray for us." The reasons for praying for the seminary are the three parts of the speech. The first is the spiritual nature of the work. The second is the difficulties faced. And the third is the importance of the work.

In the first section, we pointed out that the work of seminary training is an aspect of the work of the ministry of the gospel. The instruction is authoritative instruction from ordained ministers that

God uses to qualify men for the work of the gospel ministry. Thus prayer is necessary for the professors, that God will maintain them as faithful teachers and preachers of His Word. The students need our prayers that God will give them receptive hearts and minds, apply the Word to their souls, and thus prepare them for the work.

The second installment set forth the need for prayer in light of the difficulties to be faced. The main struggle is the battle against sin, even as professors and seminarians.

The men will face more difficulties in the ministry. And we must be especially aware that these young men will be ministers in a very evil age, the end of the ages.

We turn now to the final part, namely, the importance of the work. As with all good speeches, the last part is the briefest. It should also be the climax. We will let the reader judge that.]

Finally, pray for us because of the importance of the seminary's work, that is, equipping men to be faithful, Reformed ministers of the gospel. The work of the minister is indispensable for the church.

In the wisdom and providence of God, the church of Jesus Christ depends on preaching, and therefore on qualified, Reformed preachers. Preaching is the power of God unto salvation. Preaching is the means God uses to work and confirm faith. The sheep hear the voice of the good Shepherd through faithful preaching, spoken by faithful ministers, and they follow Him. As believers, our spiritual life depends on preaching, and thus on Spirit-equipped, Christ-ordained preachers!

The importance of the seminary is obvious. If the seminary fails, so that either the professors do not fulfill the duties God has given, or the young men do not heed the instruction given, the churches will not have qualified, Reformed—Protestant Reformed—preachers. Young men will graduate who lack the ability to exegete the Scriptures. Men will accept calls to pastorates who do not know how to make two

good, logical sermons or to communicate (deliver) them in such a way that the people can understand the Word. They will not have the ability or the inclination to teach the youth in catechism. They will not know, or will not care, what the church has faced in the past or how the church dealt with issues, and thus be incapable of guiding aright the church of the present.

Or, worse yet, young men will enter the ministry who do not know the truth. The churches will have ministers who are not convicted of the truth. The students never received the love of the truth. The confessions will be unknown to them and the language of the Reformed faith unfamiliar.

That is the beginning of the end for churches supplied with such seminary graduates, and the decline (swifter than we might think) will soon result in unbelievers in the pulpit. And decimated churches. For the preaching will no longer edify, exhort, or comfort God's people. It will cease to possess the power of the keys—able to open the kingdom of heaven to believers, and shut it against unbelievers. A generation will pass that knew the truth, and then another generation will arise after them that knows not the LORD, nor His saving works (Judges 2:10). Worst of all, the preaching will cease “to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (II Cor. 4:6).

Understanding that importance, that indispensability, of faithful preaching, people of God, pray for us.

Pray for us because God gathers His church in all the world out of all the nations, through preaching. According to Revelation 6, Christ sends the white horse and thus directs the course of the gospel. The Heidelberg Catechism rightly confesses that “the Son of God... gathers, defends, and preserves to Himself by His Spirit and Word, a church chosen to everlasting life” (Lord's Day 21). As that elect church is gathered out of the nations, through preaching, Christ comes ever closer, and more swiftly.


For the work of missions, for the gathering of the church out of the nations, for the swift coming of the Lord, pray for us, that we may have faithful missionaries.

Finally, know that, through faithful preaching, God's truth is defended and maintained in the world. Good and faithful preaching develops doctrines ever more clearly and sharply. It condemns the lie. It defends the truth, which truth enters into the hearts and minds of the believing hearers. The faithful ministers wield the sword of the Spirit. The light of the knowledge of the glory of God shines forth from clay vessels—the preachers.

The significance is obvious. If professors do what God calls them to do—preach/teach the Word to the students faithfully—and the Spirit applies the Word to the hearts of the students who earnestly love and embrace the truth, the blessing will be that seminarians are equipped to do the work of Reformed preachers. And the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ will continue to shine in our pulpits.

But if the seminary is not faithful, and the students are not equipped spiritually, intellectually, and morally, then the light will be extinguished. Then close the doors of

the seminary, and write over them: Ichabod—*the glory has departed*. And the Protestant Reformed Churches will have no reason to exist.

So vital is this work. So crucial it is, then, that you pray for us. 

TAKING HEED TO THE DOCTRINE

PROF. RONALD CAMMENGA

Revelation, Inspiration, and Infallibility (6)

What the Bible Says About the Bible: The Significance of Scripture as “The Oracles of God”

Introduction

Scripture is “the oracles of God.” This is the apostle Paul’s description of Scripture in Romans 3:2. What this means is that Scripture is the Word of God. Scripture is not the word of man *and* the Word of God. Scripture is rather the Word of God and the Word of God alone. As the oracles of God, Scripture is infallible, inerrant, and authoritative over the individual believer and over the church as a whole.

That Scripture is the oracles of God has important implication for translations of Scripture. What the apostle teaches has a unique application to the original writings of the prophets and the apostles, what we refer to as the autographs. But what he teaches here also applies to faithful copies of the Scriptures and to faithful translations of the Scriptures into the languages spoken and understood by God’s people. The apostle was himself using a translation at the time that he penned Romans 3:2, the earliest of all Bible translations, the Septuagint. The Septuagint was the translation of the Hebrew Old Testament into Greek, the language that was spoken the

world over in the days of Jesus and the apostles. About that translation, as he quotes from that translation repeatedly in Romans 3 and throughout the Epistle to the Romans, Paul says that it is the oracles of God. Believers may say that about faithful translations into their own language—English-speaking Christians about the translation of Scripture into their own language. This may certainly be said about the King James Version, or the Authorized Version, of the Bible. It is the oracles of God, the very Word of God Himself. Let there be absolutely no doubt about that.

The Implications of the Truth That Scripture Is the Oracles of God

There are three significant implications of the great truth that Scripture is the oracles of God. First, the truth that Scripture is the oracles of God has the most significant implication with respect to the men who wrote the Scriptures. If the Scriptures are the oracles of God, the very Word of God, the men who wrote down the Scriptures were merely God’s instruments to make known His Word. What they wrote was not their own word. The thoughts that they expressed by means of those words were not their own thoughts. The whole doctrine of the divine inspiration of the Scriptures is im-

Prof. Cammenga is professor of Dogmatics and Old Testament in the Protestant Reformed Seminary.

Previous article in this series: January 1, 2014, p. 151.

plied in the truth that Scripture is the oracles of God. To be sure, the human writers of the Bible were not merely machines, robots, or computer keyboards on which God typed out His Word. Rather, the Holy Spirit used them so that they were active and conscious in the work of writing the Bible. And certainly the Holy Spirit used them as the men that they were, with all their own unique backgrounds, personalities, education, life experiences, and writing styles. Nevertheless, God used the human writers in such a way that what they wrote down was not their own word, but His Word and His Word alone—the oracles of God.

This is the miracle of Scripture! This explains the miracle! How is it possible that many different men, no fewer than forty different men, all of them weak, fallible, sinful human beings just like ourselves, could write down in many different books, chapters, and verses a writing that is not the word of man, but the Word of God—the oracles of God? How is it that so many different books, written by these different men, some of them kings and scholars, others of them lowly fishermen and shepherds, could contain not one contradiction among them, but all alike proclaim fundamentally the same message of God's great salvation in Jesus Christ? How is it that men could write that book over a period of some 1,500 years and that book be one harmonious whole? How is it that that book could contain no errors or contradictions? The only answer is that this is a miracle, a stupendous miracle! This is a miracle as great as the miracle of the creation of the world in the beginning, or the miracle of the incarnation, the virgin birth, and the resurrection of Jesus, or the miracle of the resurrection of our dead bodies at the end of time when Jesus comes again. This is a work of God! That is clearly implied. That is clearly implied inasmuch as these oracles are the oracles "of God."

In the second place, that the Scriptures are the oracles of God implies the authority, the absolute authority, of Scripture. Because Scripture is the oracles of God, the very Word of God, Scripture is authoritative. Its authority is the sovereign authority of God Himself. Its authority is the highest, the ultimate authority. Its authority is really the *only* authority that there is. The authority of Scripture is its authority over the faith, what we believe, and over all our behavior, how we are to live. The apostle recognizes the absolute authority of Scripture in this

third chapter of his Epistle to the Romans. He appeals to Scripture over and over again in order to prove the truthfulness of his teachings. And he appeals to Scripture in order to demonstrate the error of those who oppose his teaching. Scripture settles every doctrinal dispute, distinguishes truth from error, and establishes that which is right, in distinction from that which is wrong. It does so because Scripture is the oracles of God.

In the third place, that Scripture is the oracles of God implies the trustworthiness of Scripture. What would it be like if Scripture was not the very Word of God, the oracles of God? Where then would we be left? We would be left wondering which parts of Scripture were true and which parts were not. We would be left wondering which parts are the word of men and which parts are the Word of God. That is destructive, utterly destructive, of the believer's confidence in the Scriptures. But since Scripture is the oracles of God, the very Word of God, they can be and they must be trusted. We must and we can believe Scripture's promises, receive its instruction, be comforted by its assurances, be corrected by its rebukes, and be motivated by its admonitions, warnings, and threatenings.

Honoring Scripture As the Oracles of God

Because the Scriptures are the oracles of God, we must honor them as the oracles of God. We honor them, first, by submitting ourselves to them. And then it does not matter who we are or what our social standing is, whether we are rich or poor, learned or unlearned, mighty or lowly, we are called to honor the Scriptures as the Word of God by submitting ourselves to the Scriptures. Since Scripture is the oracles of God, our attitude should be that of the child Samuel when God brought His word to him: "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth" (I Sam. 3:10). Do we submit to the Scriptures? Do we live antithetically over against the world, rather than as friends with the enemies of God? This is the life to which Scripture as the oracles of God calls us. Do we live for God and for the glory of His name, rather than for self, for riches, or for the abundance of the things of this earth? This is the calling that the Scriptures present to us as the oracles of God. Do we live peaceably in the church, loving and at all times seeking the good of the brother or the sister before self? This is the way in which Scripture as the oracles of God calls us to live. Do husbands love their wives, nourish, cherish, and provide for them, at the same

time surrounding them with the assurances of their love for them? This is the way godly husbands are called to behave according to the Scriptures, which are the oracles of God. Do wives honor and submit to their husbands, rejecting the godlessness of the feminist movement that rebels against the headship and authority of the husband in marriage? This is the way believing wives are called to behave in the Scriptures, which are the oracles of God. Do the children and young people honor and obey their parents, their Christian school teachers, and all who are in authority over them for Christ's sake? This is the will of God for the younger members of His covenant and church, as expressed in the Scriptures, which are the oracles of God.


Secondly, we honor the Scriptures as the oracles of God by diligently reading, studying, and discussing these Scriptures. If the Scriptures are the oracles of God, there are depths to the Scriptures that a lifetime of reading and studying will not exhaust. As the oracles of God, the Scriptures are set apart from every other book that has ever been written. It is the only book about which it can be said that it is the oracles of God. That ought to inspire in us a fervent desire to know its content, to become thoroughly acquainted with its content, and to understand its content. That ought to motivate us to study and discuss the Scriptures with fellow believers in a Bible study society in the church.

And third, we honor the Scriptures as the oracles of God, the very Word of God, by believing the message of the Scriptures and by believing on Jesus Christ, who is the Word of God. That is the heart of the oracles of

God—the Word of God concerning His Son, Jesus Christ. The apostle Paul makes that plain a bit later in the third chapter of the Romans. The central message of Scripture consists in this: “Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus” (Rom. 3:24-26).

It was in this respect that the unbelieving Jews of Paul's day refused to honor the Scriptures. They refused to believe in Jesus Christ promised and prophesied in the Scriptures. This is how many in our own day show their contempt for the Scriptures as the oracles of God. They reject Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior as He is revealed in the Scriptures.

We are called to honor the Scriptures as the oracles of God, the very Word of God. We are called to honor them by hearing them preached on the Lord's Day, twice each Lord's Day. We are called to teach them and to see that they are taught to our children in the catechism room. We are called to see to it that they are the basis for the instruction in our Christian day schools. We are called to study and discuss them in the Bible study societies. We are called to read them and meditate on them in our homes and families.

This is the honor that the Scriptures deserve because the Scriptures are the oracles of God, God's very Word. 

ALL AROUND US

REV. MARTYN MCGEOWN

Remembering the Persecuted

Remember the persecuted! Perhaps we think of the early Christian martyrs thrown to the lions. Perhaps we remember Stephen and others who were stoned to death by angry Jewish mobs. Perhaps we recall the heroic sufferings of the Reformation saints in the Netherlands. Martyrdom makes us think of the stake, the scaffold, and the dungeon.

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

Open Doors International, a Christian group supporting persecuted Christians, reports that Christian martyrdom doubled in 2013. The persecution of the church is a very serious reality for many of the saints today. They do not read about it in history books—they live it.

2,123 believers died for their faith in 2013 compared to 1,201 in 2012. Of course, those figures include only the ones whose deaths could be documented. Many other saints' deaths (precious in the sight of the Lord) are known only to God. Moreover, the figures are only for believers who *died* for their faith. They do not include the many more who were threatened, intimidated, dispos-

sessed, beaten, tortured, imprisoned, and enslaved. They do not include the number of church buildings destroyed, worship services broken up, women raped, children abused, and believers who have simply disappeared. It is tempting to view these numbers as mere statistics, but behind every statistic there is a widow mourning for her husband, there are parents weeping for their children, and there is unimaginable suffering endured *by our brothers and sisters*.

There are several organizations dedicated to providing information about the persecuted church: Open Doors International, Barnabas Fund, International Christian Concern, Release International, and Christians in Crisis are some of the best known.¹

Open Doors International measures persecution with its World Watch List (WWL). Every year, the WWL documents the fifty countries in which persecution is the worst. The statistics and stories make sobering reading. For the twelfth consecutive year, North Korea ranks first, followed by Somalia, Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia, the Maldives, Pakistan, Iran, Yemen, Sudan, Eritrea, and Libya. You can read the rest of the top fifty at the WWL website.²

North Korea is the most difficult country in which to be a Christian. Christianity is illegal. Being caught with a Bible, praying, using the name of Jesus or of God, or any other form of Christian activity is punishable with death or a lifelong prison-camp sentence, which is a living death. It is estimated that some 50,000 to 70,000 are suffering in North Korean prison camps. One such Christian prisoner, Hea Woo, tells her story:

I could not tell you what the worst thing was I experienced. Every day in the camp was like torture. I often had to think about God's plagues for Egypt. Being in this concentration camp felt like undergoing all those ten plagues at the same time. People were dying and their corpses were burnt. The guards scattered the ashes over the road. We walked that road every day and each time I thought: one day the other prisoners will walk over me.

¹ Their websites are: <http://www.opendoorsuk.org/persecution/>; <http://barnabasfund.org/UK/>; <http://www.persecution.org/>; <http://www.releaseinternational.org/>; <http://www.christiansincrisis.net/>

² <http://www.worldwatchlist.us/world-watch-list-countries/>

Despite everything, I remained faithful to God. I remained faithful and God helped me survive. Not only that, He gave me a heart to evangelise other prisoners. Frankly, I was too scared to do it. I wanted to live. How could God ask me to tell the other prisoners about Jesus? I would die if they caught me. God persisted. He showed me which prisoners I should approach....

It was an encouraging message for those prisoners who walked on the edge of death each day. They were easily converted. Not only because of what I said. They saw the Spirit's work in me. Sometimes I gave some of the little rice I got to others. When people were sick, I went to them and helped them with washing their clothes.³

Hea Woo is seventy years old. She was released and now enjoys freedom in South Korea. But such inconceivable suffering continues for some 70,000 of our brothers and sisters in North Korea, suppressed by the tyrannical regime of Kim Jong-Un. We who enjoy freedom to worship, to teach our children, to read the Bible, and even to evangelize, can hardly imagine the daily life of a North Korean Christian, who, if he is caught, can be sent to one of those labor camps.

Of the rest of the top fifty persecuting nations of the world the majority are Islamic. When nations such as Somalia, Syria, Iraq, Egypt, and Afghanistan descend into civil unrest, it is the Christian minorities who bear the brunt of the persecution. In some of these nations, a purging of the Christian population is underway—there are about 1.3 million Christians in Syria, targeted by the rebel forces in that nation; it is reported that every two or three days a Christian is killed, kidnapped, or abused in Iraq; in September 2013, a bomb exploded at a church in Peshawar, Pakistan, killing 89 people and injuring many others. In other Islamic nations all religions except Islam are forbidden. In 2013 many Christian fellowships were raided in the kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The fellowships were closed down and the members arrested. The Maldives, an island in the Indian ocean popular with tourists, is far from idyllic for Christians. Ranking seventh in the WWL, the Maldives forbids all Christian activity, except for ex-pats. In Eritrea, a north African country, Christians are subject to raids, arrest, systematic torture,

³ <http://www.persecution.org/2014/01/14/north-korean-christians-share-christ-at-risk-of-death-in-concentration-camps/>

and imprisonment—often in metal crates in unbearable heat. There are an estimated 2.7 million Christians in Eritrea. WWL reports of one such saint: “Gabriella is an influential Christian in the underground church who was interrogated, tortured and kept in solitary confinement—but she never denied Christ. She describes her time in prison as ‘a honeymoon with Jesus.’”⁴

A honeymoon with Jesus!

The letter to the Hebrews reminds us of these saints: “And others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection: and others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth” (Heb. 11:35b-38).

⁴ <http://www.worldwatchlist.us/world-watch-list-countries/eritrea/>

These all suffered “through faith” (v. 33). Faith is the reason for their suffering—they are united to Jesus Christ, and, because Satan and the world hate Christ, they hate Christ’s members also. Faith is the source of their strength in suffering—they are united to Jesus Christ and by His grace alone they endure.

We know that God gives His grace and Holy Spirit—also to suffer—only to those who pray (Heidelberg Catechism, LD 45, Q&A 116). As the sufferings of the saints increase, let our prayers for the suffering brethren increase, “until [our] fellowservants also and [our] brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be

*As the sufferings
of the saints increase,
let our prayers
for the suffering brethren
increase....*

fulfilled” (Rev. 6:11).

“Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body” (Heb. 13:3).

“Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me” (Matt. 25:40). ☞

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

MR. DON DOEZEMA

Upon This Rock (17)

Robbing Christ of His Honor (9)

You will remember our reference last time to Calvin’s observation that “there was a difference between the Law and Gospel, as if there were a *veil* between them so that they *might not* see more closely

the things that are now revealed to our eyes.” Luke 9:45 says the same concerning the disciples’ failure to grasp Jesus’ instruction about His impending death: “But they understood not this saying, and it was *hid* from them, that they perceived it not.”

A “veil.” A veil that “hides.” Not a difficult concept, surely, but one that can nevertheless be misunderstood.

What it emphatically does *not* mean is that, through-

Mr. Doezeema is a member of Southwest Protestant Reformed Church in Grandville, Michigan.

Previous article in this series: January 15, 2014, p. 186.

out the 4,000 years of Old Testament history, God concealed from His people what they otherwise *could* have, and therefore *should* have, understood.

Rev. Ophoff puts any question about that to rest when he states simply that the “elements constituting the counsel of redemption” belong to those things that “eye hath not seen, nor ear heard. Neither have these things entered into the heart of man (I Cor. 2).” That settles it, I say, because it puts Christ—who He is and what is His work—squarely in the realm of...*mystery*. Which means simply this, that man could, and can, *never* come to know it, and to believe it, apart from...*revelation*.

“For the gospel,” comments Calvin on that same verse in I Corinthians 2, “towers over the insight of the human mind so that those who are considered intellectually of the first rank may look as high as they like, but they never reach its eminence.”

Indeed, “towers over.”

Do you ever ponder that?

We live two millennia after the fact, so to speak. Two thousand years after *Pentecost*. And most of us who read these lines have been born and raised in the church and in a Christian home. So familiar have we become with the realities of the new dispensation that they seem almost elementary. We wonder how the disciples could have been so “slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken.” We have lost, then, some of the sense of awe for the mystery of the gospel that towers over human intellect.

Sometimes our young people, when they make confession of faith before the consistory, are asked, “Who is Jesus?” I’ve always been impressed by, and thankful for, the ready, almost matter-of-fact, answer: “the Son of God.” Simply confessed. Without question. By faith.

That’s no little thing. For the wonder of the Incarnation is in fact a towering mystery. I like the way J.I. Packer emphasizes that in his book *God’s Words*:

That men brought up in Jewish monotheism should ever affirm the deity of a fellow-man might seem incredible. To Judaism and Islam, Christian faith in Jesus as God seems a wild absurdity, a lapse into the paganism that deified Egyptian kings and Roman emperors. Theologically, it looks suicidal, for it involves three mind-blinding mysteries which when first stated sound quite fantastic: (i) that the one God consists of more than one Person;

(ii) that one of the divine Persons, without ceasing to be what he was, became human and remains so; (iii) that while this Person was sharing the limitations of human life on earth as a baby in Bethlehem and a boy in Nazareth, then teaching in Palestine, sweating in Gethsemane, dying on Calvary, lying dead in Joseph’s grave, he was also simultaneously keeping the universe together, ‘upholding all things by the word of his power’ (Col. 1:17; Heb. 1:3). Plainly, these were not beliefs to which Peter and Paul and John and the writer to the Hebrews could have come easily; equally plainly, they were driven to them by Jesus’ own words, and the events of the forty days from his resurrection to his ascension, and visions such as Paul’s on the Damascus road and John’s in Patmos (Acts ; Rev. 1), and the witness of Old Testament prophecy, and the light of the Holy Spirit convincing them that what they saw in Jesus’ face was indeed the image and glory of God (2 Cor. 4:4-6).

The truth to which they were thus led remains, however, stranger than fiction—much stranger: it is as much an inexplicable mystery to theological minds as it is an inescapable implication of historical events.

Mind-blinding mysteries.

Ophoff no doubt had that same thought in mind when he wrote that “the realities of the Gospel...would have dazzled and greatly perplexed the church had they suddenly been presented to it in all the fullness of their splendor, majesty, and power.”

Ophoff was referring of course to the church of the old dispensation, when the gospel was, as Matthew Henry put it, “wrapped up in dark types and distant prophecies.” While it is true that we can now read into those very prophecies all that Christ and the apostles later explained, yet the prophets “taught with so much obscurity, when compared with the shining clarity of the Gospel, that we need not be surprised if those things which are now revealed to us are said to have been hidden” (Calvin, on Romans 16:25-27). Mysteries they were.

Calvin adds that “only when God appeared to His ancient people face to face through His only begotten Son, were the shadows dispersed and the treasures of heavenly wisdom finally opened.”

“It is now made manifest,” writes Matthew Henry in his comments on those same verses in the epistle of Paul to the Romans. “The shadows of the evening are done away, and the Sun of righteousness has risen upon the

world. But how is it made manifest by the scriptures of the prophets? Surely, because now the event [the *fulfillment*] has given the best exposition to the prophecies of the Old Testament. Being *accomplished*, they are *explained*" (emphasis added).

Shadows dispersed. Heavenly treasures opened. By the event itself.

An analogy is sometimes made with another mystery—one that remains still to be made manifest. "Behold," wrote Paul to the Corinthians, "I show you a mystery." He was speaking of the *resurrection*, when what was sown in corruption will be raised in incorruption, when what was mortal will put on immortality. Without a doubt, mystery. As is also all that is of heaven. True, the book of Revelation gives 'detail' not only of the end times but also of heaven itself. But not such that we have any clear conception of the glory that awaits the people of God. That remains to be...*seen*. The *event* will be the best exposition of Revelation. Being accomplished, it will be explained. Not till then. We live in hope.

Just like the saints of old. And, notably, as *their* hope was 'wrapped up' in Christ, so is *ours*. "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive" (I Cor. 15:22). "For ye are dead," Paul wrote to the Colossians (3:3, 4), "and your life is *hid* with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory." And, from I John 3:2: "...it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is."

Once more, then, Calvin on Romans 16:25-27: "...only when God appeared to His ancient people face to face through His only begotten Son, were the shadows dispersed and the treasures of heaven finally opened."

"...Jesus Christ...the revelation of the mystery...kept secret since the world began...now is made manifest and...made known to all nations" (Rom. 16:25-26).

Or again Calvin, on Colossians 1:26: "...whereas God had, before the advent of Christ, governed His church under dark coverings, both of words and ceremonies, He has suddenly shone forth in full brightness by the teaching of the Gospel."

Inescapably clear is this truth, that "the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations" is now made manifest.

But did not Packer suggest that it was *not*—that the mystery that *was*, still *is*...as mind-boggling as ever?

The truth to which they were thus led remains, however, stranger than fiction—much stranger: it is as much an inexplicable mystery to theological minds as it is an inescapable implication of historical events.

Packer is correct. He does not contradict Calvin. Or Paul.

The solution is, of course, simple. It's in the very verse referred to above, Colossians 1:26: "Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest *to his saints*."

Not, you see, to 'theological minds,' but to *us*.

Which confirms what we said at the beginning of this article, that "mystery" is something that can be known only by *revelation*.

Think again of those verses in I Corinthians 2: "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things that God hath prepared for them that love him." And then this, in the very next verse: "But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit."

Can one ponder *that*, and not end in doxology? Rev. Schipper could not, in an *SB* article on those verses from I Corinthians:

Blessed eyes, which, though they cannot yet perceive all the beauty of the inheritance of God laid away for them, nevertheless by faith fix their beholding of Jesus who has promised!

Blessed ears, which, though they are not able as yet to catch the strains of heavenly music, are nevertheless able to discern the Word of God, the Holy Gospel of good news, that speaks to them in sweetest tones concerning the glory that is theirs in the day of Christ!

Blessed hearts, which are no longer dead in natural depravity, but made alive by the regenerating Spirit of grace, and so enabled to understand concerning the things which have abiding value—the things God has prepared for them, and unto which they are graciously preserved....

Blessed Spirit of Christ!...

Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift!

... to be continued. 

John Eliot (1604-1690): Missionary to the American Indians

The work of missions is difficult. There is opposition, hardship, disappointment, and tremendous sacrifices that are required of the missionaries and their families. Then there are times when before their own eyes they see everything for which they labored slip away.

John Eliot was a pioneer missionary to the American Indians. He learned firsthand the struggles of mission work. Three things served to strengthen and encourage him. First, his unbending optimism regarding God's counsel and plan. Second, his ability to delegate work. And, finally, his confession regarding God's sovereignty in all things, particularly the salvation of souls.

The story of missions to the American Indians is intriguing. The work was characterized by much zeal, dedication, and courage, but ultimately it came to include also extensive failure in terms of any lasting fruit. There are many political and religious reasons for the failures, but one of the most serious was the fact that the majority of the white men, sadly even the Christian white men and women, were not able to view the Indians as equal human beings. They considered them inferior, even after they became Christians. The image of Pilgrims and Indians sharing a meal at the first Thanksgiving is one of the most memorable images we have of American Indians, but that was not characteristic of most of the interaction between the colonists and the red man.

The native American Indians faced tremendous pressure as settlers arrived from Europe and began to push them out of the lands they and their ancestors had occupied in the Americas for years. Though they were feared and despised as poor savages from the beginning of the

civilization of the Americas, the Indians were a target of Christian evangelism. Strikingly, the evangelization of the Indians was incorporated into the original charters of the colonies. One example is the charter of the Massachusetts Bay colony, which pledged: "To win and incite the natives of the Country to the Knowledge and obedience of the only true God and Savior of mankind, and the Christian faith." The seal that the Massachusetts Bay colony embraced as its emblem was a picture of an Indian crying out: "Come over and help us."

As the settlers went about staking their land claims, however, the aforementioned charters were mostly hollow verbiage. The Indians were viewed as an annoying nuisance that slowed the progress of civilization. When some Indians contracted diseases brought from England, many of the colonists, and especially the pastors, looked at the growing death rate among the Indians as God's means of clearing the land for His people. Understandably, most of the energy and efforts of the early settlers were focused on their own survival. Massachusetts, however, stood out in their attempts to fulfill the obligations of their charter. Ministers of the gospel were highly respected throughout the colony and were charged with the responsibility both to minister to the settlers and to seek the conversion of the Indians. Frequently, the ministers were so busy with the labors of their own local congregations that they did not have time to devote to the evangelization of the Indian tribes. John Eliot is one outstanding example of a pastor who gave himself to this mission work.

John Eliot is often called the "Apostle to the Indians," even though he was never formally called a missionary. As his congregation grew and expanded its witness, there was opportunity to minister to the native Americans who lived nearby. His primary calling was to the congregation that he served at Roxbury, Massachusetts, a small frontier settlement just two miles South of Boston. Early on in

Rev. Brummel is pastor of the Heritage Protestant Reformed Church in Sioux Falls, South Dakota.

his ministry at Roxbury, Eliot started studying the language of the Indians, with the help of a young native who spoke English. By 1646, Eliot started preaching to the Indians, first in English, and within a year he attempted to preach to them in their complicated native language of Algonquin. Making great strides in their language, he published a catechism for the Indians in 1654 and by 1658 translated the Bible into Algonquin, making it the first Bible to be printed in North America.

Initially there was not much interest in the gospel, but Eliot was not deterred. After a seventy-five minute sermon on Ezekiel 37:3 ("Can These [dry] Bones Live?"), in which he outlined the Ten Commandments, God's anger at those who broke those commandments, and Jesus Christ as the Redeemer, Eliot started receiving feedback. He decided to focus on the Ten Commandments and the work of Jesus Christ in fulfilling the law and forgiving sinners. That message began to strike home. There were tears, and some responded, "Why has no white man ever told us these things before?"

Eliot persisted with bi-weekly meetings, traveling to their wigwams and carefully preparing his lessons and sermons and practicing them in the Algonquin language. As the weeks and months passed, some Indians were converted. There became noticeable changes in their lives in terms of interest in spiritual things and a desire to live as Christians. Lengthy question and answer sessions followed the preaching, and Eliot and his fellow pastors heard questions like: "Were Englishmen ever so ignorant of God and Jesus Christ as we were?" "How could there be an image of God when the making of images was forbidden by the 2nd commandment?" "How did the world get so full of people if all were drowned in the great flood?" "Why did God not kill the devil who made all men to be bad, seeing as God had the power to do so?" "How can we know when our faith and prayers are good?"

Eliot gave the children apples and the men tobacco, which was criticized by some as encouraging a sort of "rice Christian" mentality. But Eliot resisted such suggestions, claiming they were simple expressions of Christian friendship, which he considered necessary to show to these simple people. Eliot published regular reports, noting in one: "The Indians have utterly forsaken their powwows. They have set up morning and evening prayers

in their wigwams. They not only keep the Sabbath themselves, but have made a law to punish those who do not. Whoever profanes must pay twenty shillings. They begin to grow industrious and are making articles to sell all the year long."

To his credit, Eliot never rushed the process of their discipleship. He purposefully delayed baptism and church membership until he was convinced the converts were committed to their new faith. The first baptisms did not take place until 1651, which was five years after the first conversions. Eliot did not establish churches until he was confident that there were well-prepared officebearers. He wanted to see spiritual maturity in that they were reading and studying the Bible themselves on their own. This required of them having spiritual literature to read in their own language, so Eliot poured himself into that work despite the criticism of many that he should have been spending his time teaching the Indians English instead.

Eliot desired to keep the Christians separate from the heathens. He did much work with the government getting approval for land and attaining funding for various programs that allowed the establishment of 14 distinct cities in which 1,100 Christian Indians established their residence. These towns were called "praying towns." He established a biblical form of government based on Exodus 18:21, with mature men set over groups of ten, fifty, and hundreds in each city.


From the beginning, Eliot started training pastors from among the Indians, so that by 1660 twenty-four Indians were trained as pastors to minister to their own people. Schools were established for the children in all the towns, and the future looked bright. His attempt to Christianize the Indians by forcing them into a biblical form of civil government and a European-type culture became a pattern for future missions.

Although the future looked bright, the bloody war that broke out in the summer of 1675, called King Philip's War, named after the Wampanoag chief who initiated the fighting, ravaged the work. The war was so intense between the Indians and the settlers that thirteen European towns and many settlements were entirely wiped out by the Indians. Entire families were killed and their names removed from the register of the colonial record books. Even though the Christian Indians stood loyal with the settlers, aiding and assisting them, all Indians

became suspect, and hundreds of Christian Indians were exiled. Others were murdered by settlers who were seeking vengeance on anyone who fit the description of a redskin.

Although so much of Eliot's work seemed destroyed, Eliot pressed on, believing that God was perfectly executing His counsel. The Christian Indians who died did so embracing the comfort of the gospel. Seventy years after his death, there was only one Indian family left in the area. In 1846, the two hundredth anniversary of Eliot's first service to the Indians, there was in that town only one girl as the surviving Indian representative.

Taking into account the nature of Eliot's life, his lit-

erary activity was remarkable. He was instrumental in the publishing of *The Bay Psalm Book*, translating the Hebrew Psalms into singable English. He daily read the Old and New Testaments in their original languages. He translated the entire Bible from the original languages into the Algonquin language. In 1688 the Dutch scholar Leusden dedicated his Hebrew-English Psalter to John Eliot, speaking of the man's piety and learning, his love of the Bible, and his zeal for languages. John Eliot remained faithful in the work until his death in 1690 at the age of 85 years. His example and methods not only were but continue to be an inspiration to many in the work of missions. 

PERTAINING TO THE CHURCHES...IN COMMON

PROF. RON CAMMENGA

News from the Seminary

Our Student Body

It has been an exciting and profitable first semester of the 2013-14 school year at the Protestant Reformed Theological Seminary. Nine first-year students and one third-year student, plus a number of auditors, made for some unusually large classes. What a joy to teach classes with twelve, fifteen, or more students in them. This is a rare treat that faculty and students alike are enjoying.

The first semester has concluded. Class work, reports and research papers, as well as exams are behind us. We are presently making preparations for the beginning of the second semester, which begins officially on Tuesday, January 21, 2014.

Due to unforeseen circumstances this year's scheduled interim course on "The Theology of John Calvin," which was to have been taught by the undersigned, was cancelled. The "unforeseen circumstance" was that my wife, Rhonda, was diagnosed with uterine cancer. She has undergone surgery for the removal of the cancer and is presently receiving both chemotherapy and radiation therapy. Although there was no indication that the can-

cer had spread elsewhere, the treatments were advised in the hope that they will prevent any recurrence of the cancer. We have been overwhelmed with the outpouring of love and support by the members of our denomination and by many beyond our denomination. We express our thanks to so many of you for cards, e-mails, letters, and other expressions of concern. Our prayer is that God will use the means that are being utilized to bring about a complete cure. But our prayer is especially that God will give the grace to bear up under this trial, as He has promised in His Word.

The beginning of the second semester means also that our fourth-year student, Mr. Joshua Engelsma, is back in the classroom. For the past six months, Mr. Engelsma fulfilled his internship requirement, laboring in the Peace Protestant Reformed Church in Lansing, Illinois, under the mentoring of Rev. Clayton Spronk and the supervision of Peace's consistory. The internship is intended to provide students who are nearing graduation with "hands-on" experience in the work of the ministry. Back in the 1970s, when I went through the seminary, there was no internship program. The first consistory meeting that I ever attended was the one I chaired in Hull, Iowa. Now our students have the advantage of experience at attending council and consistory meetings, leading Bible

Prof. Cammenga is professor of Dogmatics and Old Testament in the Protestant Reformed Seminary.

study societies, teaching catechism, conducting family visitation, making pastoral calls, attending the sessions of the meetings of classis, as well as preparing and preaching a dozen or so sermons. The internship has proved to be a very valuable tool for preparing our students for the various aspects of the work of the ministry. All who have gone through this program testify to its usefulness.

Completion of the internship means that Mr. Engelsma will be finishing his seminary education and will be making preparations for his oral (*praeparatoir*) examination before the 2014 Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches in June. The calling (convening) church of synod this year is the Hope Protestant Reformed Church of Walker, Michigan, which happens to be Mr. Engelsma's home church. The sessions begin on Tuesday, June 10. The examination of seminarian Engelsma will likely take up most of Wednesday and Thursday, June 11-12. The examination will be open to the public. All are cordially invited to witness either the whole or part of the examination. It may be that the examination will be live-streamed. If you are unable to attend, stay tuned for further information regarding this possibility.

Noteworthy Faculty Activities

Prof. Gritters will still be on partial sabbatical the second semester. He spent more than two weeks of the break between semesters laboring in India on behalf of the Georgetown Protestant Reformed Church. Prof. Gritters and his wife, Lori, and elder Deane Wassink and his wife, Donna, are the fourth delegation sent to Vellore since Georgetown PRC, at the request of the synod of our churches, took oversight of this developing work. Vellore is located in the southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu. The labors of the delegation are especially with the Reformed Christian Church of Vellore (RCCV) and its pastor, Rev. Paulraj. This congregation is a Tamil-speaking congregation. Closely associated with the congregation, and an outreach work of the congregation, is an English-speaking group that is made up of doctors and medical students from the Christian Medical College (CMC). Every other Sunday morning, Pastor Paulraj preaches for them. On this visit Prof. Gritters presented a number of lectures on two main doctrines of the Reformed faith. The first week he lectured on the doctrine of the church (ecclesiology), addressing such topics as: the identity and

marks of the true church; the church's calling in the world; the office of believer and the calling of believers as church members. The second week he lectured on the doctrine of the covenant and its applications to church life. He spoke on such subjects as the doctrine of the covenant itself; the unity of the covenants; and infant baptism as demanded by the covenant. In all, Prof. Gritters gave some twenty lectures—a rigorous schedule by anyone's standards.

Connected to Pastor Paulraj's congregation is an orphanage, the Grace Foster Home. The doctors and medical students from the Christian Medical College also provide assistance in meeting the needs of the orphanage. Prof. Gritters assisted elder Wassink in meeting with the RCCV church council, reviewing building needs and plans, and exploring possibilities in regard to establishing micro businesses. Elder Wassink also assisted in assessing the needs of the Grace Foster Home. It is plain that our Georgetown congregation is expending a great deal of effort in promoting the work in India and assisting Pastor Paulraj. This is a work for which we all ought to be praying, a work worthy of the support of our people. We are indebted in many ways to Georgetown PRC, especially its pastor and council, for developing this work. The faculty counts it a privilege to be able to be of service to our churches in assisting in such a promising work as is the work in India.

Because he will also be on partial sabbatical the second semester, courses that otherwise would be taught by Prof. Gritters are being taught by his colleagues. In addition, the faculty and the Theological School Committee (TSC) are grateful that Rev. Kenneth Koole has consented to teach Old Testament Isagogics during the second semester. Rev. Koole has actually taught this course before. As is usual for many of the courses in the seminary, this class will meet for an hour twice weekly. "Isagogics" is derived from two Greek words, which together mean "to lead into." The course will introduce the students to the Old Testament generally and to each of the books specifically. The date of the writing of each book where this is possible to be determined, the identity of the human writer, the "target audience," the theme, key passages, and the canonical significance of each book will be treated. We look for-

ward to having Rev. Koole on staff and in our fellowship during the second semester. No doubt the students who will be taking his course will profit from his course and the years of practical experience in the ministry that he brings into the classroom.

Prof. Dykstra is planning to be in Singapore during Rev. Andrew Lanning's furlough later this summer. He has agreed to be in Singapore for seven weeks. During this time he will not only occupy Covenant Evangelical Reformed Church's pulpit, but will also be giving the speeches at the annual church camp (June 23-27) of Covenant ERCS. We are thankful as seminary professors that we are able to be of service beyond our work in the classrooms of our theological school to our denomination and our sister churches. Such activities provide the opportunity for God's people to have real contact with the seminary and provide the opportunity for the faculty to promote the seminary among our people, the members of our sister churches, and our contacts throughout the world.

Besides the "out of the ordinary" activities of the faculty, we remain busy preparing teaching materials, developing our courses, delivering classroom lectures, writing articles for publication in various magazines, preaching regularly in the churches, lecturing within and outside of our denomination, serving on denominational committees, and assisting the annual synod of our churches. We count it a privilege and esteem it a high honor to be the servants of Christ and of His church.

Writing is an important part of the calling of every minister of the gospel. Just as there is a dearth of good theological reading in our day, so is there a dearth of good theological writing. It is especially seminary professors who are called to write, in line with what Article 18 of our Church Order describes as their office "to expound the Holy Scripture and to vindicate sound doctrine against heresies and error." Writing for all different sorts of purposes: classroom lectures and public lectures; writing for the *Beacon Lights*, *Standard Bearer*, and *Protestant Reformed Theological Journal*. From time to time, professors take on special writing projects. At present, Prof. Dykstra is involved in writing a syllabus on the history and foundation of Reformed Christian Schools, which is the fruit of the sabbatical he took last school-year. I am working on expanding my recently

completed Th.M. thesis, *God of Friendship: Herman Hoeksema's Unconditional Covenant Conception*, with a view to its publication.

Seminary Field Trip


From time to time the seminary (faculty and students) has the opportunity to be involved in "extra-curricular activities." Generally in the spring of every year we attend the Philadelphia Conference on Reformed Theology that is held locally. This year's conference is scheduled for March 28-29, 2014 and the theme is: "Profaning the Sacred: The Beauty and Holiness of the Bride of Christ." The conference ought to be worthwhile and we are once again planning to attend.

On Thursday, January 16, 2014, Professors Cammen-ga and Dykstra, our librarian Mr. Charles Terpstra, and nearly all of our students spent the day in the Chicago area. Our first stop was the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago and the Gruber Rare Books Collection. There are more than 300 books and manuscripts from the fifteenth to the eighteenth centuries in this collection. The majority of the holdings belonged originally to L. Franklin Gruber, a former president of the Lutheran seminary. The books include works written by Martin Luther himself, including original copies of several of his letters; copies of Luther's Bible translations; works by Phillip Melancthon, Luther's colleague and successor; pre-Reformation and Reformation Bibles; a portion of an original Gutenberg Bible; a 1517 copy of Luther's 95 Theses; Erasmus's 2nd edition of the Greek New Testament from 1519, which was the basis for Luther's Bible translations; Luther's three great treatises written in 1520 entitled *On the Freedom of the Christian*, *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, and *An Address to the Christian Nobility of the German Nation*; original editions of a number of the Reformation creeds and confessions; a 1611 King James Bible; the Saur Bible, the first Bible ever published on American soil, in 1743; and other books. Our guide was Dr. Ralph Klein, an emeritus professor and the curator of the Gruber Rare Books Collection. Dr. Klein was a delightful host and gave our group the often fascinating accounts of the history and background of selected materials in the collection, frequently accompanied by his own very interesting anecdotes.

After lunch our afternoon was taken up with a tour of the Museum of the Oriental Institute, which is a part of the University of Chicago. This museum is world-renowned on account of its collection of antiquities from ancient Egypt, Mesopotamia (present-day Iraq), Assyria (present-day Iran), Israel, Nubia, Syria, and Turkey. All of these countries had some connection to the people of God in the Old Testament, a number of their rulers fighting against the kings of Israel and Judah. There are display-cases filled with artifacts, all kinds of pottery, sculptures, clay tablets, monuments, mummies, carved reliefs, metalwork, weapons, ancient board games and dice, and much more besides. This, too, was a very worthwhile stop and educational experience.

More information about the Gruber Rare Books Collection and the Museum of the Oriental Institute can be found on the Internet. You may want to visit these places

yourself sometime in the future, or take your whole family for an excursion this summer.

It is encouraging to the faculty that we continue to hear of young men who are considering the call to the ministry or who have announced their intentions to pursue studies in college with a view to coming to the seminary. There are several men of whom we are aware. If there are others of whom we are not yet aware, we encourage you to contact one of the professors or our registrar, Mr. Charles Terpstra. Most days they can all be reached at the seminary building on Ivanrest Avenue in Grandville, Michigan. May we continue to pray earnestly that the Lord will be pleased to raise up men of God to bring the Word to His people “in season, out of season” (II Tim. 4:2), for the gathering, building up, defense, and preservation of His elect church, in order to present her to Christ at His coming. 

WHEN THOU SITTEST IN THINE HOUSE

REV. ARIE DEN HARTOG

Giving Our Sons and Daughters in Marriage—

Our Covenental Responsibility (1)

In both the Old and New Testaments strong warnings are given regarding mixed marriages. In the earliest history of the world, one of the chief ways in which the covenant of God was corrupted was that “the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair, and they took them wives of all which they chose” (Gen. 6:2). This led to amalgamation of the seed of the covenant and the seed of the ungodly, the world. In Deuteronomy 7:3, God commanded Israel through Moses concerning the nations of the land of Canaan, whose inhabitants they were to destroy utterly, that they were to make no covenant with them. “Neither shalt thou make marriages with them; thy daughter shalt thou not give unto his son,

nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son.” In Ezra’s day, complaint was brought against the returned exiles because they had not separated themselves from the people of the heathen land. “For they have taken of their daughters for themselves, and for their sons: so that the holy seed have mingled themselves with the people of those lands” (Ezra 9:2). Later, Malachi admonished the Jews with these very serious words: “Judah hath dealt treacherously, and an abomination is committed in Israel and in Jerusalem; for Judah hath profaned the holiness of the Lord which he loved, and hath married the daughter of a strange god” (Mal. 2: 11).

In the New Testament the inspired apostle Paul warned the members of the church of Corinth not to be “unequally yoked with unbelievers.” The church has rightly applied the warnings of this passage to the sin of mixed marriage. In I Corinthians 7 Paul positively

Rev. denHartog is pastor of Southwest Protestant Reformed Church in Grandville, Michigan.

exhorts all who marry that they must marry only in the Lord.

In Bible times many marriages were arranged by the parents of covenant children. We do not advocate that we return to those ancient traditions. The times we are living in are different, though there were some distinct advantages when parents who were wiser and more careful than their young sons and daughters made the choice of whom their children should marry.

Whom our covenant children marry should be of great concern for parents. The prevailing opinion of the age in which we live is that young people should be given total freedom to choose their own marriage partners. Some even maintain that parents are wrong when they interfere in this matter, which is considered some sort of inalienable right of young people themselves. Young people become angry when any advice is given.

God's sovereign, gracious purpose is to continue His covenant with His people in the line of their generations. How important faithful, strong, godly marriages are in the realization of this purpose. Our concern is not only the future of strong Christian families, homes blessed of the Lord, but also for the kind of church members that come from such homes.

The church has lost many of her young people to the world because of foolish marriages. Marriages that were unwise from their beginning went terribly wrong and ended in the misery of divorce. I will not claim to have made scientific study of the matter, but this is certainly something I have seen with great sorrow of heart, having been a pastor for almost forty years. This, sadly, has taken place sometimes also in our Protestant Reformed churches.

There are exceptions. Sometimes spouses who were brought out of the world are today outstanding members of the church. We are thankful for the wonderful grace of God revealed in these exceptional cases and attribute them with praise only to God's sovereign grace to His people. This is not, however, to say that we can be careless about the whole serious matter being discussed in this article. The exceptions are not the rule. Let none of our covenant young people simply assume that the Lord will be merciful in his or her case to bring a foolishly chosen marriage partner into His covenant and church. In too many cases the result is a life of misery and strife

in marriages so begun, even when they do not end in the tragedy of divorce. Relationships were rushed into, and hearts were given to those to whom they should never have been given.

What can we do for our beloved children before it is too late? We certainly must not despair or neglect our covenantal calling in this area. Few things will more seriously affect the future for them than their choice of a marriage partner.

Our concern must begin in the early years of our covenant children with faithful, godly instruction on what marriage is and God's purpose for it. We must teach them of the great blessing of marriages in which both husband and wife fear the Lord. This blessing will be great also for the children of these marriages.

Our concern must not only be that our children not marry those who are obviously ungodly. Not all who are members of the church will make suitable marriage partners either. There are those in the church who are weak and worldly in their life. Careful spiritual discernment is needful in the choice of a marriage partner.

Our covenant children must also be taught that not all churches are faithful to the Lord. There are great and serious differences between denominations of churches, differences that have developed over the years and have usually grown worse and worse. This is true even of those who fly the banner of being Reformed. We must teach our children that unity in the faith and in the truth of God is of utmost importance for strong Christian marriages. Disunity will affect many, really all, of the great issues of life that a married couple will face down the road.

It must be clearly established in the minds and hearts of our children as they grow up in our covenant homes that parents have a covenant responsibility in this area in the lives of their children. Our young people should want parental approval for every special friendship they have in their lives, and especially friendship with a member of the opposite sex. Our young people must not become angry when judgments are made by their parents. Young people must not insist that they are sufficiently mature and wise in themselves to make all of their own decisions. They should not rush into serious relationships without a great deal of parental guidance. Young people who refuse to listen to their parents are in danger of reaping serious

consequences for themselves in their lives. Listening to the wise counsel of their parents could spare them much sorrow and grief.


There are things we can and must do by the grace of God as our covenant children are growing up in our homes and in the church of which we are part. There must be on-going instruction in our home on the biblical teaching of marriage. And the instruction we give must be supported by our own godly example in how we conduct ourselves in our own marriages. We as their parents must not ourselves have as our closest friends those who are of the world. Our conversation and behavior must be truly antithetical, demonstrating that we are not drawn to such friendships and we do not really enjoy such friendship. The interest we have in life and the conversations we have together must be different from the world. We must show that we love the fellowship of God's people and that we take a lively and active part in the communion of saints in our churches. Most good marriages arise in the sphere of the covenant, where there is close, intimate, godly friendship. It will be good for us to cultivate such friendship continually ourselves as adults. This will include close friendship among the families of the church we belong to and meaningful fellowship together, especially among those who are strong in the truth they confess and whose homes are patterned after the standards of Scripture.

Our own covenant home must be characterized by godly friendship among the members of the family. The

covenant home must have the godly atmosphere of love for God and for one another and joy that comes from fearing Him and living by His commandments. The members of the covenant home have the calling to encourage and support one another. It sometimes happens that when covenant young people do not experience the reality of this in their own homes they will seek friendship and appreciation and approval on their lives in the world. When these young people carelessly forsake God's covenant blessing, they will also afterwards sometimes reap the bitter fruit of it in later life.

There are other sins that lead our children to seek worldly partners, sins in their own lives. We do not want to leave the impression that when our children make foolish and sinful choices this is all to be ascribed to poor parenting. Such uncharitable judgments will only add to the grief godly parents have when their children do not continue in the truth they have been taught in their homes.

Our hope for our covenant home and family is only in the Lord. We must seek Him prayerfully as we raise our children in the fear of the Lord. How great is our need for wisdom and grace from the Lord. As our children grow up in our covenant homes, they present challenges, sometimes sorrows, as well as joys and blessings. Teenage and young adulthood is one of the most difficult stages and most challenging to covenant parents.

We want to continue our discussion on this topic in the next *Standard Bearer* article. 

BRING THE BOOKS...

MR. CHARLES TERPSTRA, review editor

The Heroic Boldness of Martin Luther, by Steven J. Lawson. Orlando, FL: Reformation Trust Publishing, 2013. Pp xxii + 145. \$16.00. Hardcover. [Reviewed by Douglas J. Kuiper.]

This book is the latest in the series of short books under the series "A Long Line of Godly Men Profile." So far in the series, Steven Lawson has written *The Expository Genius of John Calvin*, *The Unwavering Resolve of Jonathan Edwards*, and *The Gospel Focus of Charles Spurgeon*. In addition, Douglas Bond wrote

Rev. Kuiper is pastor of the First Protestant Reformed Church of Edgerton, Minnesota.

The Mighty Weakness of John Knox. While I have read only the books on Calvin, and now Luther, I suspect a reader would find any of them profitable.

And, let me add, these books are relatively short, and written in such a style that a young person of high school age, and some even in junior high, could read them with profit.

Lawson opens by noting that the Reformation was a revival of preaching—biblical preaching on the doctrines of grace. Martin Luther was not merely a great preacher; his preaching was the means God used to work reformation. So, "the focus of this book is on Luther's bold biblical preaching" (xxi).

Chapter one is a biographical survey of Luther. Did you know that his last will and testament began with the words, “I am well known in heaven, on earth, and in hell” (23)? This was true, by virtue of “his bold stance throughout his life” (23).

Chapter two sets forth five aspects of Luther’s view of Scripture: He viewed Scripture as divinely inspired, inerrant, supremely authoritative, clear, and completely sufficient. This is why he stood firm on God’s Word at the Diet of Worms and throughout his whole life.

In chapter three, Lawson explores Luther’s approach to the Scriptures when he was in his study preparing to preach. Humbly and submissively Luther sought to read and understand the whole of Scripture, to understand it literally (as opposed to allegorically), and to study it in its original languages—all in dependence on the Spirit to give him understanding.

Luther’s sermon structure is the topic of chapter four. After a concise introduction, Luther expounded the text systematically, verse by verse. In his preaching, Luther reflected the Reformed emphasis on the necessity of God’s law; he exalted Christ, and magnified His atoning death; and he applied the text to the people, with the call to repent and believe.


The manner of his delivery was passionate, fervent, clear to the people (Luther preached in the language of the people), and colorful (chapter five). Anyone who knows a bit about Luther knows that he was always colorful in his speech, whether in the pulpit or out of it.

Above all, Luther was committed to the truth (chapter 6). In asserting the truth from Scripture over against error, Luther was confident. He was determined to serve

his God by speaking truth, even though it cost him—and cost him it did. “The problem with bold preachers, Luther argued, is not that they are often misunderstood. To the contrary, they find themselves embroiled in controversy because they are distinctly clear” (108).

At one point, the discerning reader senses that Lawson gets Luther wrong. In treating Luther’s “gospel invitations” (79-81), Lawson says that Luther “pleaded with his listeners” with “gospel appeals,” calling them to “respond with personal faith in Jesus Christ,” and “make the decisive choice to turn to Christ.” Plead? Appeal? Wasn’t Luther bold? Did he have to cajole? No question that Luther called his listeners to faith and repentance—as any preacher must do. But, as the very quotations that Lawson supplies indicate, Luther did not plead and appeal—he boldly commanded his listeners to believe!

At the end of every chapter, and in the concluding section of the book, Lawson appeals to men today to be such preachers, and stresses the need of the church to have men like Luther.

Of course, there was only one Martin Luther. No man will ever be exactly like him. But he did set an example for all Christians, and specifically all true pastors, to follow. So a preacher or seminary student might profitably read this book as a means to renew his resolve to be like Luther, while a layperson in the congregation might be spurred on by reading this book to pray for his pastor. This, after all, is what Paul asked the church to do—to pray “that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel” (Eph. 6:19). 

CLASSIS EAST REPORT

MR. JON HUISKEN

January 8, 2014
Southeast Protestant Reformed Church

Classis East met in regular session on Wednesday, January 8, 2014 at the Southeast PRC. The churches, with the exception of Wingham, were represented by two delegates. The Wingham delegation was unable to attend because of the weather.

Classis did the usual January duty of elections. The following were elected to serve as delegates to Synod

2014: Ministers: *Primi*: G. Eriks, C. Haak, K. Koole, W. Langerak, R. VanOverloop; *Secundi*: N. Decker, A. den Hartog, M. DeVries, J. Slopsema, A. Spriensma. Elders: *Primi*: J. Decker, N. Kleyn, H. Langerak, G. VanBaren, P. VanDerSchaaf; *Secundi*: D. DeMeester, R. Drnek, R. Faber, M. Ophoff, D. Rau.

In other voting, Rev. R. VanOverloop and Rev. D. Holstege were elected as delegates *ad examina* to three-year terms as *primus* and *secundus* delegates respectively. Revs. K. Koole and A. Spriensma were elected as church

visitors, with Revs. Haak and VanOverloop as alternates. Rev. H. Bleyenbergh was elected to serve a three-year term on the Classical Committee. The Stated Clerk and Assistant Stated Clerk were appointed to another three-year term.

Classis heard an appeal from a brother about the change of date of the Prayer Day Service by a consistory. Classis referred this matter back to the committee of pre-advice with the instruction to do further research on and to establish relevancy for the past rulings of broader assemblies on this issue.

In other business, classis heard the report of the church visitors. The visitors reported that the consistories were doing diligent work and that there was peace and unity among the churches. Classis granted classical appoint-

ments to Faith PRC. The 2015 subsidy requests from Wingham PRC and Kalamazoo PRC were approved and will be forwarded to Synod 2014 for approval there.

Classis received a request from Rev. James Slopsema for his emeritation effective July 1, 2014. First PRC concurred with this request. Classis expressed its heartfelt thanks for Rev. Slopsema, who has served as a capable and dedicated undershepherd in our churches for 39 years, 27 of which have been in Classis East.

The expenses of classis amounted to \$147.49. Classis will meet next on Wednesday, May 14, 2014 at the Trinity PRC.

Respectfully submitted,
Jon J. Huisken
Stated Clerk

NEWS FROM OUR CHURCHES

MR. BENJAMIN WIGGER

Denomination Activities

Every year members of our denomination's Contact Committee make an annual visit to our sister church in Northern Ireland, the Covenant PRC in Ballymena. This year Rev. Garrett Eriks, from the Hudsonville, MI PRC, along with Mr. Sid Miedema, from the Byron Center, MI PRC, made the trip. Plans called for the men to be in Northern Ireland from January 23 to February 4, visiting first our sister church and then their mission in Limerick, Republic of Ireland. In addition to conducting church visitation, Rev. Eriks was also scheduled to preach four times the two Sundays they were there and lecture twice, once in Ballymena, January 29, on "Knowing the Truth in an Age of Uncertainty," and then in Limerick on February 3, on "Heaven." By God's grace this trip was used

for the furtherance of the truth that unites our denominations.

Before we leave Northern Ireland, we should also add here that a recent bulletin of theirs included the news that they recently made some translation additions to their website. One of these additions caught our eye. Three translations were added in Russian. Now all of Rev. Ron Hanko's book *Doctrine According to Godliness* is on line in Russian. Certainly a welcome addition to their website and Covenant's on-going international witness.

Mission Activities

On Wednesday, January 15, a delegation from the Doon, IA PRC (the calling church for our denomination's mission work in the Philippines), consisting of Elder Eugene Van Den Top and his wife, Karen, along with Ron and Sandy Brands from the Edgerton, MN PRC, representing the Foreign Mission Committee, traveled to the Philippines for nearly two weeks to

encourage our missionaries, Rev. Daniel Kleyn and Rev. Richard Smit and their families, and to evaluate the work there. They were scheduled to return home on January 28. We would add a reminder to all our readers that we do well to continue to pray for God's blessing on the labors of these men, from both our denomination's Contact Committee and Foreign Mission Committee, that God bless their labors and fellowship among the saints there.

Doon's bulletin included this note from Rev. Kleyn: "We recently added a new page to our audio and literature website (called Current News)." Here is the address that should take you to the website where you will be able to click on (Current News) tab near the top: <http://prcphilippinesaudio.wordpress.com/>.

Sister-Church Activities

We take the following from the "Stories from Singapore" blog written by Stephanie Lanning: "The Cov-

Mr. Wigger is an elder in the Protestant Reformed Church of Hudsonville, Michigan.

enant Evangelical Reformed Church (CERC) begins each year with a gathering at church. The church theme for the year is presented. A speech is given. We eat lunch together, and this year there were also discussion groups. The speech by my husband [Rev. Andrew Lanning] was on II Thessalonians 1:10—‘When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe....’ When we reach the end of this year and others look at us, what do we want them to say about us? Our desire should be that they see Christ in us in the way we have lived, and then glorify and admire Him. Good words for all of us to live by.”

Congregation Activities

The Audio/Visual Committee of the Trinity PRC in Hudsonville, MI informed their congregation recently that live-streaming of their worship service is now up and running. There is a link to the video feed on the homepage of their website, trinityprc.org.

Along those same lines, we add the following, taken from a bulletin of the Georgetown PRC in Hudsonville, MI. “It was my privilege this morning to join you in worship around the preaching of Psalm 46 via the live web cast your church

provides. I feel wonderfully prepared spiritually for the uncertainties ahead in 2014, and likewise for the certainties of the increasing intensity of the signs of our Lord’s coming again. I feel blessed to have experienced with you a holy beginning of the new year” (a listener in Maine).

The Children’s Activity Group of the Byron Center, MI PRC scheduled an activity January 10 at nearby Pando Ski Resort for some downhill skiing and sledding.

The BUILD group of boys from kindergarten through 8th grade of the Hudsonville, MI PRC were invited to spend part of their Saturday, January 18, at the Soccer Bowl, or what is often referred to by older members as Charlie’s Dump, for some sledding, snowboarding, hot chocolate, and devotions.


School Activities

Supporters of Hope Christian School in Redlands, CA were invited to a Midnight Madness Craft Night on Friday evening, January 17, from 6 P.M. to midnight at Hope PRC. Dinner and dessert were served. If there were some who wanted to come but did not have a craft to work on, they were encouraged to come and offer their help to the Convention Banquet Committee, who wanted help in making flower clips for the girls’ hair at the banquet.

Eastside Christian School in Grand Rapids, MI scheduled a chapel service for January 13. Rev. C. Haak spoke on “Fearfully and Wonderfully Made.” The 4th and 5th grade choir of Heritage Christian School in Hudsonville also provided a few special songs for this occasion.

Minister Activities

Seminarian Ryan Barnhill learned recently from the faculty of our Seminary that he will be taking his internship the second half of this year (July 1-Dec. 31, 2014) in the Edgerton, MN PRC, under her pastor, Rev. Doug Kuiper. Edgerton’s Council approved this proposal and over the next few months will be making preparations with her pastor for the coming of Ryan, his wife, Miranda, and daughter, Mya. Besides involvement in all the aspects of the life of the Edgerton congregation, the internship will allow Ryan the opportunity to be part of the work of the Foreign Mission Committee and the Reformed Witness Committee.

Rev. W. Bruinsma declined the call he was considering to become the next pastor of the Doon, IA PRC. From a trio of the Revs. Key, Koole, and Van Overloop, the Doon, IA PRC extended a call to Rev. Rev. VanOverloop to “come over and help us.” 

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Resolution of Sympathy

■ The Men’s Society of Hope PRC, Walker, MI, express Christian sympathy to members Mike and Jon Engelsma in the death of their mother,

DENA ENGELSMA.

May they have the comfort of Holy Scripture: “Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you” (John 14:1, 2).

Neil Meyer, Secretary

Resolution of Sympathy

■ The Council and congregation of Grandville PRC express their Christian sympathy to Mrs. Betty Bylsma and her family in the loss of her sister-in-law

MRS. RUTH SWART.

Psalm 73:26: “My flesh and my heart faileth, but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion forever.”

Rev. Kenneth Koole, Pres.
Tom Bodbyl, Asst. Clerk

Classis West

■ Classis West of the Protestant Reformed Churches will meet at Heritage PRC in Sioux Falls, SD on Wednesday, March 5, 2014, at 8:30 A.M. the Lord willing. All delegates in need of lodging or transportation from the airport should notify the Rev. Brummel, a.brummel@prca.org.

Rev. D. Kuiper, Stated Clerk

Teacher Needed

■ The Protestant Reformed Christian School of Dyer, Indiana is accepting applications for a full time Discovery Center (Resource Room) teacher for the 2014-2015 school year. Interested applicants or inquiries are urged to contact our administrator, Ryan Van Overloop, at (219)558-2660 or ryan.vanoverloop@dyerprcs.org, or our Education Committee chairman, Matt Bennett, at (219)558-0861 or matthew.bennett@ggp.com.

Resolution of Sympathy

■ The Council and congregation of Southeast PRC express their Christian sympathy to John and Ruthanne Flikkema, Ed and Libby Ophoff, and Tim and Lois Pipe and their families in the death of their mother and grandmother,

MRS. DENA ENGELSMA.

Our sympathy as well to Mrs. Kaye Moelker and her family in the death of their father and grandfather,

MR. FRED ONDERSMA.

May they find comfort in God's Holy Word from Revelation 21:4. "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away."

Rev. William Langerak, Pres.
Mark Ophoff, Asst. Clerk

Call to Aspirants to the Ministry

■ All young men desiring to begin studies in the Theological School of the Protestant Reformed Churches in the 2014-2015 academic year should make application at the March 20, 2014 meeting of the Theological School Committee.

A testimonial from the prospective student's consistory that he is a member in full communion, sound in faith and upright in walk, and exhibits the qualities and personality necessary for a gospel minister; a certificate of health from a reputable physician; and a college transcript must accompany the application. Before entering the seminary, all students must have earned a bachelor's degree and met all of the course requirements for entrance to the seminary. These entrance requirements are listed in the seminary catalog available from the school.

All applicants must appear before the Theological School Committee for interview before admission is granted. In the event that a student cannot appear at the March 20 meeting, notification of this fact, along with a suggested interview date, must be given to the secretary of the Theological School Committee before this meeting.

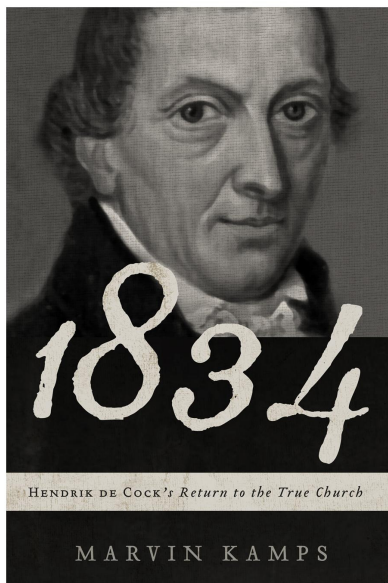
All correspondence should be directed to the Theological School Committee,

4949 Ivanrest Avenue SW
Grandville, MI 49418.

Jon Huiskens, Secretary

* * * * *

The Protestant Reformed Seminary admits students of any race, color, and national or ethnic origin.



COMING SOON!

New author: **MARVIN KAMPS**

A gripping account of one man's struggle against a spiritually desolate state church, this book witnesses to the sole authority of sacred scripture and the binding authority of the Reformed creeds.

Learn how, by God's grace, Hendrik de Cock led his congregation out of the perverse wilderness of the state Reformed Church of the Netherlands, returning to the biblical worship of God as set forth in the Reformed creeds.

www.rfpa.org