

The Standard Bearer

A Reformed Semi-Monthly Magazine • April 1, 2013

CONTENTS

<i>Meditation</i>	Disciples on the Road to Emmaus REV. JOHN MARCUS	290
<i>Editorial</i>	Bavinck? Yes. Hoeksema? No. (3) REV. KENNETH KOOLE	292
<i>All Thy Works Shall Praise Thee</i>	Consider the Heavens MR. JOEL MINDERHOUD	295
<i>Go Ye Into All the World</i>	A Goal in the Philippines: Self-supporting Churches (2) REV. DANIEL KLEYN	298
<i>A Word Fitly Spoken</i>	Corruption REV. BILL LANGERAK	301
<i>Search the Scriptures</i>	Robbing Christ of His Honor (1) MR. DON DOEZEMA	302
<i>All Around Us</i>	The White House's Aggressively "Evolving" Homosexual Marriage Agenda Will Quebec Legalize Murder? REV. CLAY SPRONK	304 305
<i>Convocation Address</i>	The Protestant Reformed Seminary and the "Good Christian Schools" (3) PROF. RONALD CAMMENGA	306
<i>Bring the Books...</i>	Book Reviews MR. MATT KORTUS/MISS ELIZABETH ENSINK	308
<i>Reports</i>	Classis West Report REV. DOUG KUIPER	310
<i>News From Our Churches</i>	Activities MR. BENJAMIN WIGGER	310

Disciples on the Road to Emmaus

Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?

Luke 24:25-26

Jesus Christ rose from the dead, just as He said. It is remarkable that although the truth of the resurrection was plain to see, all of the disciples doubted it. Mary Magdalene, to whom Jesus first appeared, thought in her grief that someone had stolen her Master's body. The apostles, including Peter and John, thinking the women were speaking idle tales, did not believe them at first. Thomas refused to believe unless he could see the nail prints in Jesus' hands. They were "fools and slow of heart to believe." Not fools in the sense of someone who rejects God (cf. Ps. 14:1), but fools in the sense of being dull-witted and lacking understanding.

Such was the case also for the disciples on the road to Emmaus. Nor can we blame them, since, having the

same weakness of the flesh, we would have doubted too.

By God's grace, however, the disciples came to believe, including the two disciples on the road to Emmaus. So too, by God's grace, we believe the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.



The day being far spent, Cleopas and another disciple, probably his wife, were on the road home to Emmaus, some seven miles from Jerusalem. On the way, they had plenty of time to talk about everything that had transpired that day and the previous days. No doubt the only topic of conversation was Jesus Christ. However, they were not talking about His resurrection; rather, they spoke of His death and their own disappointment.

Their sad words corresponded to the dark and sullen look on their faces. When Jesus approached them, He asked them about their words as well as their looks: "What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk and are sad?" (Luke 24:17).

They were sad because they were talking about the

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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.

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Subscription Price

\$21.00 per year in the US, \$30.00 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 PRCA: www.prca.org

events of the past few days, including that resurrection morn. Rumors about the resurrection had already spread. They had learned about the women finding the tomb empty. They had heard about the angel's announcement that Jesus was alive. They had received news that others who visited the tomb found it was empty. The disciples on the road to Emmaus should have rejoiced in the wonderful truth of the resurrection. If only they had understood all the events of that day, they would have been ecstatic.

But now they were sad. Perhaps they had also heard that the soldiers who guarded the tomb were reporting that Jesus' body was stolen while they slept.

As they made their way home, the disciples tried to make sense out of everything that had happened. It's not as if they rejected Jesus; they simply could not grasp the significance of everything that had occurred and of the reports they were hearing. Often we are like these disciples: without all the pieces to the puzzle, we fail to understand important doctrines; or we do not understand why God would send this or that trial in our lives. No matter how much we talk, we do not see the big picture. We too are "fools and slow of heart to believe."

As the disciples tried to make sense of all the events, Jesus approached them and asked about their perplexity. He did this, even though He knew exactly what they were talking about. Surprised that someone might not know about the earthshaking events of the last few days, Cleopas responds, "Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days?" (Luke 24:18). To which Jesus replies, "What things?"

What is it that made these disciples so sad on this resurrection day, the most glorious day in earth's history?

The chief priests and rulers of the Jews had delivered Jesus of Nazareth to be condemned and crucified. As a result of this great injustice, their hopes had been dashed. They had "trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel..." (Luke 24:21). The fact that Jesus had been killed—by the most horrible death of the cross, of all things—made it appear that their future King had been defeated.

But the real problem was their lack of understanding

of the Scriptures. They were reasoning and communing, trying to make sense of all the events; but they were not using (or they were lacking) key truths of Scripture. They did not understand that Christ would come into His kingdom through suffering. Nor did they appreciate the spiritual nature of Christ's kingdom. As long as they did not consider the truth of Scripture, their thoughts were a jumbled mess.

Does that not describe us when we fail to frame our circumstances according to the truth of Scripture? Instead of rejoicing in the great truth that we belong to our faithful Savior, our thoughts become jumbled. Instead of seeing every circumstance as part of God's glorious plan to save His church, we become perplexed, missing the forest for all of the trees. Like the disciples on the Emmaus road, we need to be instructed from Scripture.



Having heard the disciples' story, Jesus took aim at the heart of the problem, i.e., the problem of their hearts: "O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken" (Luke 24:25).

The problem was that they were dull-witted as regards the truth of Scripture. Although the truth was there, they did not understand it properly. They believed some of what the prophets had spoken; but they were slow to believe all of it. They believed that the Messiah would come; but they did not understand that He must enter His kingdom by way of humiliation. Like these disciples, it's easy for us to form wrong views when we pick and choose particular passages of Scripture to the exclusion of others. The solution is to study, humbly listen to, and then submit to the whole of God's Word.

In the face of their misunderstanding, Jesus asks, "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?" (Luke 24:26). Notice, when He answers the question, Jesus does not use mere human reasoning; rather, He argues out of the Scriptures. Jesus well understood the power of God's Word to convince, when that Word is applied by the Holy Spirit.

Thus, beginning at Moses and all the prophets, Jesus taught the disciples about Himself. Beginning at the mother promise in Genesis 3:15, Jesus could have

shown that crushing the serpent's head involved the bruising of the Messiah's heel. Likely He pointed to the typical sacrifices in the book of Leviticus. Maybe He made explicit reference to the suffering servant of Jehovah in Isaiah 53. Perhaps He referred to the suffering expressed in Psalm 22 and 69. These are explicit references pointing to Jesus' suffering. But Jesus understood that every page of Scripture has meaning only as it relates to Him.

The disciples had assumed that Jesus of Nazareth could not be the Messiah because He had suffered and died. But the overwhelming testimony of Scripture is that the Messiah must suffer: "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things?" Was it not in this way that our sins would be atoned for? Was it not in this way that He would enter into His glory?



Jesus' words certainly did not fall on deaf ears. As the disciples listened intently and were instructed, their hearts burned within them. Things were beginning to make sense. When they arrived home, in what must have seemed like a very short time, Jesus "made as though he would have gone further. But, they constrained him, saying, Abide with us..." (Luke 24:28, 29).

When Jesus sat down to eat with them, He took the bread and brake it and gave it to them. Just then their eyes were opened so that they recognized Jesus. But as soon as they recognized Him, Jesus disappeared from their midst.

Jesus graciously revealed the truth and Himself to


His disciples. Once they recognized Him, the puzzle pieces fell into place. Finally they believed His words concerning His suffering and glorification. Yes, Jesus must suffer; but now He is risen!

Such wonderful news the disciples could not keep to themselves: "And they rose up the same hour and returned to Jerusalem..." (Luke 24:33). They urgently want to share the good news with the disciples back in Jerusalem. Even before they arrive, the disciples there had become convinced of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Hearing the testimony, "The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon," the two Emmaus disciples added their own words to the growing chorus of eyewitness accounts.

Is that the case with us? By grace the gospel of Jesus' death and resurrection has been revealed to us. Do our hearts burn as we rehearse this glorious truth? Do we desire to confess the truth together as the body of Christ? Knowing and understanding the truth of the gospel, do we desire to share it with others?

Christ had to suffer and die. But, wonderfully, He is risen and has entered His glory. From there He graciously reveals Himself to us, who by nature are fools and slow of heart to believe.

The Savior did not leave us in our ignorance. Nor will He leave us to ourselves in the byways of this world. Rather, by His Holy Spirit, He will instruct us along the way and convince us of that which we need to know. And, finally, He will bring us into His glory.

Blessed be His glorious name as we confess the glorious news of Christ's resurrection! 

Bavinck? Yes. Hoeksema? No! (3)

As we noted in our last article, there is evidence of a concerted effort on the part of some to distance Bavinck's doctrine of the covenant as far as possible from Hoeksema's, driving a wedge between the two. Dr. L. R. O'Donnell III's

article in the *Mid-America Journal of Theology* (MJT 22, 2011) was one instance. And an article by Dr. C. Venema entitled "Covenant and Election in the Theology of Herman Bavinck" (MJT 19, 2008, pp. 69-115) is another.

Previous article in this series: March 15, 2013, p. 268.

As previously stated, it is not our purpose to go into an extensive critique of Venema's article on Bavinck's views.

If we did so, our critique of Dr. Venema's article would not be all criticism. There are things to commend about Venema's article.

He demonstrates, for instance, that Bavinck maintained that, in accordance with Scripture, believing parents are to view and treat their children as regenerate and having spiritual life, cautioning "...against the 'pietistic' tendency to separate baptism and regeneration in such a way that the non-regeneration [!] of baptized children is virtually assumed until evidence to the contrary is forthcoming" (p. 109).

At the same time the article makes plain where Venema's sympathies lie, namely, with the conditional-covenant view. In his concluding observations Venema would have the reader believe that Bavinck was a conditional-covenant theologian (cf. pp. 113-4). Not that this is easy. True, Bavinck does use the word "conditional" as applied to man's part in the covenant, but he carefully defines his use of the word, making plain he is not using it as a condition *unto* the covenant with its promises (per conditional-covenant theologians) but a condition *within* the covenant and a fruit of the very grace God's covenant brings (as set forth in a quote below).

If ever there was a legitimate reason to take note of Bavinck's carefully 'nuanced' language, one might think it would be here. But it is ignored.

For a defense of Bavinck's *uncon-*

ditional-covenant view we refer the interested reader to Prof. D. J. Engelsma's book *Covenant and Election in the Reformed Tradition*, chapter 11 (an RFPA publication).

At least Venema makes plain that Bavinck is not to be numbered with those who seek to separate election from the covenant, as if the two have little to do with each other. The article makes plain that Bavinck viewed the two as inseparably related (as a quote below will make plain).

Still, even here Venema appears to equivocate when he states in his concluding observations that Bavinck demurred "...from an exaggerated [!] emphasis upon the close connection, even identification, between election and covenant (presumed regeneration)...." The distinct impression left by the statement is that Venema is saying that Bavinck viewed a "close connection" between election and covenant as an "exaggerated connection" (leading inevitably to a presumed-regeneration doctrine).

What Venema grants in the article with the one hand, he seems to try to take away with the other.

If that is what Venema is saying in the above quote (and that is the impression left), he could not be more mistaken. No one can credibly argue that for Bavinck there was not the closest connection between election and covenant. We state this because this is the direction we fear the promoters of Bavinck are going these days—so adverse to 'election theology' are so many Reformed theologians that Bavinck is not allowed to be 'Bavinck' even on this

doctrine so clearly set forth in his *Reformed Dogmatics*.

To be sure, as far as Bavinck was concerned, a connection between the two, election and covenant, but not *too* close a connection, lest Bavinck be identified with the perspective of....

Yes, of whom?

Bavinck in his *Dogmatics* (in the section "Covenant and Election"), having stated, "Thus in a marvelous way the doctrine of the covenant maintains God's sovereignty in the entire work of salvation" (p. 228), goes on to write:

But the two [election and covenant of grace] do differ in that in election humans are strictly passive but in the covenant of grace they also play an active role. Election only and without qualification states who are elect and will infallibly obtain salvation; the covenant of grace describes the road by which these elect people will attain their destiny. The covenant of grace is the channel by which the stream of election flows toward eternity (*Reformed Dogmatics*, pp. 229).

To his credit Venema does point out,

According to Bavinck, we must recognize that God's purpose of election is realized by means of the administration of the covenant, and that the purpose is inseparably joined to the covenantal means that God has appointed. Though not all who are placed under the administration of the covenant of grace are ultimately saved, God does grant his grace in the way of the covenant (p. 104).

And then Venema quotes Bavinck:

Faith is not a condition *unto* the covenant, but a condition *within* the covenant, the route to be followed in order to become partaker and to enjoy all the commodities of that covenant. Yet faith itself is already a fruit, a benefit of the covenant, a gift of God's grace... (*Saved By Grace*, pp. 76-7).

A fair presentation. Sounds a lot like Hoeksema and the proper use of the word "condition" when applied to the covenant of grace.

But for all that, Venema cannot refrain from declaring that Bavinck, for all his language that ties election and covenant inseparably together, does not really teach the same thing as Hoeksema on this issue.

To those familiar with Hoeksema, it may *sound* as if they do. But, no, never the twain shall meet.

Knowing full well that in the current controversy swirling around the issue of election and covenant the name of Hoeksema looms large with his election emphasis over against a conditional-covenant view with its conditional promise, Venema seeks to drive a wedge between Bavinck's and Hoeksema's covenant/election views.

Not that reference to Hoeksema looms so large in Venema's article. Hoeksema's name appears in a footnote.

But it is a most telling footnote!

In a paragraph in which he speaks of certain "...theologians [who], proceeding from the standpoint of election, maintained that [baptized] children should be assumed [!] to possess the fullness

of God's grace in Christ" (p. 100), Venema then goes on to say,

In its most rigorous form, theologians who *virtually identified* [emphasis ours—kk] the covenant with election sometimes expressed themselves in such a way as to suggest that the ground or reason for the baptism of such children is their assumed [!] election and regeneration.

And then Venema adds,

This tendency to proceed from the standpoint of election in the understanding of the administration of the covenant (identifying [!] covenant with election) was associated with the theological views and formulations of Abraham Kuyper, Bavinck's contemporary and predecessor as professor of dogmatics of the Free University of Amsterdam, and those who were influenced by him (pp. 100-1).

And it is to this paragraph Venema adds a footnote in which is found reference to the PRC and Hoeksema.

In North American Reformed church history, this approach with its tendency to view the covenant strictly [!] in terms of the doctrine of election, is represented by the Protestant Reformed churches. For a theological defense of this approach, see Herman Hoeksema... (p. 101).

As they say, context is everything. Hoeksema is identified with those who "virtually identified" the covenant with election.

And as such he is placed in the

category of Kuyper and Kuyper's disreputable, much maligned, covenant view (as assessed by present-day Reformed theologians).

But Bavinck is not.

And herein lies our conundrum: *why* not?

Our point here is *not* that Hoeksema is charged once again with equating the covenant with election (a canard that is going to persist until the last syllable of recorded time, it seems), but our point is this: while Hoeksema's view is virtually identified with that of Kuyper, Bavinck and his view escapes this tainted association.

And how exactly is this managed?

Venema shows how: Hoeksema is to be cast into the bed of those holding a *presumptive regeneration* view, but not Bavinck.

Why not Bavinck?

Because, as Venema states:

Second, Bavinck argues against the tendency of some...to suggest that the ground for the baptism of such children is their "presumed regeneration"... And third, Bavinck mildly criticizes Abraham Kuyper's emphasis upon the "assumed regeneration" of such children (pp. 106-7).

There you have it. Because Bavinck criticizes Kuyper's presumed-regeneration view (though mildly at that), he is considered to have adequately distanced himself from Kuyper's view and is to be numbered with the 'nuanced' and not with the extremists.

But not Hoeksema—even though his criticism of Kuyper's view is

basically the same as Bavinck's, and in far stronger language than Bavinck's. Read his *Believers and Their Seed*.

No matter, Hoeksema is not accorded the same courtesy as Bavinck. He is not to be permitted to distance himself from Kuyper and Kuyper's admittedly errant baptismal view.

When Bavinck says, "I do not share Kuyper's covenant view," and offers 'mild' criticism of it, he is taken at his word. "Hear ye! Hear ye! Let all understand there is a great chasm between Bavinck and Kuyper's covenantal view." Every effort is put forth to justify his claim.

We must not be so careless as to put Bavinck in the same boat as his mentor Kuyper. My no!

But when Hoeksema protests and says forcefully, "I do not share Kuyper's covenantal view of presupposed regeneration," and demonstrates why not, he is not to be taken at his word. His protest is disallowed.

And so the question: why?

Why is it these days that Reformed men make such a concerted effort to give Bavinck and his covenant view the best reading they can, doing all they can to 'save' Bavinck from harsh assessment and to distinguish his view from Kuyper's? But, when it comes to Hoeksema, no such courtesy or recognition of the differences is allowed.

We realize what their response will be; it is because Bavinck and Hoeksema have such different covenant views (at least to the 'nuanced').

But the reality is, no honest reading of Bavinck's and Hoeksema's covenantal views, so strikingly similar in so many ways, can justify this treatment.

Either both are essentially Kuyperian, or neither is.

But such a pronouncement has become the shibboleth of our day.

Why?

We are convinced this concerted

effort to establish significant differences between Bavinck's and Hoeksema's covenantal views does not have to do primarily with an attraction to Bavinck's covenant view, or Hoeksema's view would have more to commend itself to them.

No, something else is afoot here, something subtle.

What it is that, we are convinced, is really behind this concerted effort to put as much distance as possible between Bavinck and Hoeksema when it comes to God's covenant, keeping Bavinck unblemished and casting Hoeksema Kuyper's way, we will deal with in our next article.

Does it have to do with common-grace, you ask? You had better believe it does, even though Kuyper is the father of the inflated common-grace theory that rules Reformed and Presbyterian thinking today.

As we stated, something subtle is going on.

And, admittedly, for us there are nuances to that word 'subtle' that are not complimentary. ☺

ALL THY WORKS SHALL PRAISE THEE

MR. JOEL MINDERHOUD

Consider the Heavens

On February 15, a 130-foot wide asteroid, named DA14, raced through Earth's atmosphere at some 17,200 miles above its surface—a close shave in astronomical terms. Although first observed in 2012, the asteroid has been circling the sun with an orbit similar to that of Earth. Conse-

quently, its orbital path at times will intersect very close to Earth's orbital path around the sun—as it did earlier this year, resulting in the "close" encounter.

Coincidentally, earlier that same day a meteor crashed through the atmosphere and exploded approximately 12 miles above the Earth's surface (about 40 miles away from Chelyabinsk, Russia). These flying objects in space (asteroid DA14 and the destructive meteor) remind us again of the sovereign God who guides all things—according to His sovereign will by

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the greatness of His power. They remind us as well of His coming final judgment (Matt. 24:29).

Particularly interesting is how God guides by His hand all the heavenly bodies in a marvelously orderly way. Every planet, every star, every moon, and every asteroid moves through space in a specific path that God has ordained and continues to maintain by the word of His power. This morning, as I walked to school, I was greeted by a majestic and beautiful February full moon that was setting just above the tree-line in the western sky. By the time you read this article another fabulous full moon will likely have crossed the heavens. Every 29.5 days the moon runs through its cycle because God continues to work in the creation each day in the same orderly fashion. That is why we call the entire creation the “cosmos.” The Greek word “cosmos” carries the idea of an orderly and harmonious system. The entire cosmos is most certainly this—an interrelated and interdependent creation that operates in a consistent and orderly way. For this orderly creation we give praise to God! The recent events in the heavens pique our interest in the heavenly bodies, as they well should, for the “heavens declare the glory of God.” Many of us have very little knowledge of the heavens. For that reason alone, we do well to devote a few articles in this rubric to this handiwork of God.

Renaissance Discoveries

Man has studied the stars for thousands of years; however, much of our modern understanding of the movement of the planets and stars is based on observational data collected in the past 500 years. Copernicus (1473-1543) was the first “modern-day” scientist to suggest that the sun, rather than the Earth, is the center of our universe. A Greek astronomer by the name of Aristarchus had suggested the same some 1,700 years earlier, but it was the teachings of Aristotle and Ptolemy (that of an Earth-centered universe) that ruled the day, until the Renaissance era (1500s). Copernicus’ work that proposed his new theory of planets orbiting the sun in circular paths was published in the year of his death, despite his dissatisfaction with his model, as his observations did not match his model’s predictions very well. On the heels of Copernicus, Tycho Brahe (1546-1601) spent years taking copious and careful

measurements of the positions of the planets and stars. Because he did not fully accept Copernicus’ model, he proposed a “compromising” model—with the planets circling the sun (like Copernicus’ model) but with the Earth stationary. Brahe speculated that the Earth was orbited by the sun (and its planets) and the moon (like Aristotle’s model). When Brahe died, his assistant, Johannes Kepler (1571-1630), took over his collection of observations and worked feverishly to develop a better understanding of the movements of the heavenly bodies. He adopted Copernicus’ model of a sun-centered universe, with planets that travelled in circular paths around the sun, but he tweaked the model to have the planets’ paths be ovals (elliptical), rather than circles. This change, among others, became known as Kepler’s Laws, which form the basis of our understanding of the universe still today. As we hope to see in our next article, Isaac Newton later demonstrated that Kepler’s laws could be explained as the result of the gravitational attraction between the various planets and the sun. The work of Copernicus, Brahe, and Kepler was advanced and promoted by the work of Galileo (1564-1642)—a scientist whose name is probably more commonly known than the other three. His contributions centered on his own detailed observations obtained by the use of improved observational tools and a willingness to publish and promote his findings despite the opposition he received. In a relatively short two hundred years, God gave mankind a tremendous catalog of planetary data and a revised and accurate understanding of the orderly movements of the heavenly bodies.

What is noteworthy to us is that for centuries mankind has been able to make very detailed observations of the heavenly bodies. Over centuries these observations have continued to produce data that harmonizes with previous observations and indicates a regular pattern of movement of the planets, moons, asteroids, and the like. This is only because God continues to govern the cosmos in an orderly way. Every day, God moves the planets by His hand in the same way. He does so because in the beginning He created the sun, moon, and stars for a distinct purpose—“for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years” (Gen. 1:14). Every day, in His providence, He continues to direct the movements of the planets and their moons, in part so that we might

have seasons and years and that we might be reminded of His faithfulness.

For Keeping Seasons

For millennia man has made observations and notations regarding the orderly movements of the planets. Of course the most pertinent to us in our lives are the orderly orbit of Earth around the sun—making one complete revolution every 365.25 days; the orderly lunar cycle (29.5 days)—providing the basis for many of civilizations’ calendars; and the daily 24-hour rotation of the Earth on its own axis—giving us the “rising and setting” of the sun. These are all important to us because they are so vital in the identifying of seasons and the marking of time.

Because of the orderly movements of the Earth, we observe four significant dates each year. By the time this article goes to print, the Vernal (Spring) Equinox will have come and gone—the date in which the sun rises precisely in the east and sets exactly 12 hours later in the west (Equinox means literally “equal night”). This date has historically marked the beginning of Spring and a sign for the farmers to begin the preparation for planting. Several months later, the sun will have its highest path in the sky, providing the longest day of the year (Summer Solstice). Later in the year the sun will again rise and set exactly in the east and west respectively, providing 12 hours of sunlight. This date is called the Autumnal Equinox and marks the time in which farmers prepare to gather the crops and people begin to make preparations for winter. Finally, another Solstice occurs each year marking the beginning of winter—the winter Solstice—in which the sun has its lowest path in the sky, giving us the shortest day of the year.

Because of the constant and orderly movements of the moon around the Earth, we typically observe 12 full moons each year. The lunar cycles have been

used for millennia, as God intended, to determine the appropriate times to plant or to harvest crops (Ps. 104:19: “He appointed the moon for seasons”). Since a lunar cycle (the time from one full moon to the next full moon) is 29.5 days, there will be slightly more than 12 lunar cycles per year. Consequently, every few years there will be a calendar year in which there are 13 full moons. That extra full moon is called a “blue moon.” It doesn’t happen very often. (Thus the common saying: “once in a blue moon.”) This calendar year (2013) is a “blue moon” year. Between the summer solstice and the fall equinox, there are normally three full moons. This

year there will be four. The third full moon is designated the “blue moon.” On August 20, 2013, be sure to take a look at the full moon that evening. You will observe an orderly but relatively rare event—a “blue moon.”

Because of the consistent rotation of the Earth on its own axis we experience “day” and “night.” God has given us the day so that we can go about our

earthly labors, and the night so that we may rest and be refreshed for another day of labor (Ps. 104:19-23).

With the orderly movements of the Earth and the moon, we observe the Equinoxes and Solstices; we observe the various phases of the moon; and we observe the glory in the rising sun each morning and have time for work and rest. In all of these we are reminded of the faithfulness of our God, who promised that seasons and days shall not cease (Gen. 8:22), and every day keeps that promise. Our God is a faithful God!


The order and beauty of the heavens

If the rest of the world in the twenty-first century is anything like American society, there are very few people with an extensive knowledge of the heavens. The American Astronomical Society boasts only about 7,000 members. Of course, there are many more who likely have an interest in the planets and the stars but do

*“When I consider thy heavens,
the work of thy fingers,
the moon and the stars,
which thou hast ordained;
what is man, that thou art
mindful of him?”*

not have membership in a society. But beyond a basic knowledge of the universe, many people appear to have little time or interest in learning more. Because of the modern society in which we live, we are more and more removed from certain aspects of the creation. We live in areas that are so lit up with lights we can't see the stars as vividly as we once could; the past few generations have been an "instant gratification" era in which to sit and take the time and effort to find stars with a telescope is unheard of; we live in a society that busies itself with recreation of other sorts (computers, video games, television, etc.); we use satellite GPS rather than star GPS; we overload ourselves with work and the obtaining of earthly things. The fact is, that despite all the discoveries of man and the abundance of technology, today's average citizen may actually know less about the heavens than people did hundreds and thousands of years ago.

Have we, in our own day, lost the appreciation for the stars and the planets that David and other saints so often spoke of? Do we really appreciate what the

psalmist seeks to convey when he writes, "O Lord our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! Who hast set thy glory above the heavens.... When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; what is man, that thou art mindful of him?" (Ps. 8:1, 3, 4), or "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handiwork" (Ps. 19:1)? We live in a society so far removed from the use of the stars and an appreciation of the stars and planets that we must *make* extra effort to "consider the heavens" so that we might take the time for contemplative meditation on the greatness of God and the feebleness of man. Take the family outside tonight and look at the expanse of the heavens. Consider the works of God's hands. Be humbled. Be grateful. Remind yourself and your family of the goodness and of the faithfulness of God. For none can be compared to our God, who hath done such wondrous things. "O Lord our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! Who hast set thy glory above the heavens" (Ps. 8:1). 

GO YE INTO ALL THE WORLD

REV. DANIEL KLEYN

A Goal in the Philippines: Self-supporting Churches (2)

What is a self-supporting church? How is the goal of having such churches attained? Does this preclude all financial assistance? If not, how can we give money in such a way as to avoid dependence?

Obviously a "self-supporting" church supports itself. The church supports its own ministers and ministerial training. The church supports and does its

own benevolence work. The church supports its own building projects and mission work. In a nutshell, a self-supporting church does not depend upon financial support from others.

To accomplish this, we need first of all to teach (and allow) the local churches to support their own ministers and missionaries. This includes the task of training men to serve as ministers or missionaries. This is an important biblical requirement (Deut. 12:19; Matt. 10:7-10; I Tim. 5:17-18). It is also a confessional requirement (Lord's Day 38 of the Heidelberg Catechism).

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Previous article in this series: March 15, 2013, p. 282.*

As we do our mission work, therefore, we must not take over these tasks. Local ministers should not receive regular ministerial support from the mission church. If we provide this, we become guilty of taking away from the local congregation, not only the responsibility, but also the privilege of supporting the ministry of the gospel in its midst. And this amounts to infringing upon the office of believer in the church.

There are also problems that will arise if we take over these tasks. One problem is that of creating jealousy. This can arise between pastors, with all of them expecting the support that one or two may be receiving. Jealousy can also arise among the members of the church, for they too would like to receive a “free” income. Some of them may even be tempted to pursue the ministry simply because it appears to be an easy way to receive money.

Secondly, the local churches must be taught (and permitted) to do their own benevolence work.

Again, this is necessary in recognition of the office of believer in the church, specifically the calling and privilege of the members to “contribute to the relief of the poor, as becomes a Christian” (Heidelberg Catechism, Lord’s Day 38). It is also necessary in recognition of and respect for the office of Christ as Priest (Deacon) in the church.

We do well to recognize the fact that local deacons are much better equipped to do diaconal work in their churches than missionaries are. They live with the members of their churches every day. They understand the struggles and needs of their members, and are not only able to make better judgments concerning the genuineness of the needs, but also better able to apply the Word of God to their poor. It is wise and proper to let them do this work.

This does not preclude giving assistance to these local diaconates. This is something that is done between our own congregations, with diaconates who have a balance in their benevolence funds assisting other diaconates whose funds are low. The same can also be done, if necessary, in our mission work.

One instance in which this can occur is in a time of calamity. That was the case in the early New Testament church, with the churches taking collections for the saints in Jerusalem who were struggling on account of the famine (Acts 11:27-30). The same can (and

does) happen today. Sometimes local benevolence funds are unable to cover the needs that arise because of typhoons, floods, earthquakes, etc. Assistance is then needed from others.

However, what needs to be remembered and practiced at such times (perhaps especially because of how the media portrays [exaggerates] the devastation that has been caused) is that our giving must be strictly according to need. And regardless of the occasion, the approach must always be that the local church is left to be self-supporting in its benevolence work.

Thirdly, the local churches should be taught (and allowed) to support their own causes.

The members must not be deprived of the responsibility nor denied the privilege of contributing to their own work and projects. We ought not step in and take over the various causes of God’s kingdom within the congregations, such as regular running costs, building projects, evangelism expenses, mission work, etc. If we do, we will not only destroy their sense of ownership, but also likely create a situation where we have financed buildings or projects that are beyond their means, and also beyond their ability to maintain.

The following quote gives us an indication of what must be kept in mind as we seek to establish self-supporting churches:

...people are more likely to have a sense of enthusiasm for and ownership of a project if they have been full participants in it from the very beginning. When the project is ‘theirs,’ they are more likely to sacrifice to make it work well and to sustain it over the long haul.¹

Again, this does not preclude all financial giving from the churches who are doing the mission work. But our goal is to avoid creating dependency. To accomplish this, when help is needed we ought to provide it by means of one-time gifts, and not regular monthly contributions. And such gifts should simply be for the purpose of subsidizing expenses, and not in order to pay the full amount of a given project or cause. That is, give a portion of the cost—do not give it all.

¹ Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert, *When Helping Hurts: How to Alleviate Poverty Without Hurting the Poor...and Yourself* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2012), Kindle Edition, Loc. 2245/4541.

Regarding this, Rev. Joel Hogan makes the following observation.

Dependency occurs when too many outside resources are used too soon and are significantly greater than the local resources. Schwartz uses a simple formula to relate how unhealthy dependency begins to occur. Imagine that there is a box, which represents a ministry.... Now imagine that the box is supported by two legs, which are the resources it takes to make the ministry happen. One leg represents local resources, and the other represents outside resources. Schwartz contends that if the leg of local resources supporting the box is not at least 51%, unhealthy dependency will result. The issue is ownership. Not just legal ownership or administrative ownership, but psychological and emotional ownership. This happens when the local people believe that the ministry is theirs and that it can only fail if they fail. They welcome outside support, but are not overwhelmingly dependent on it. If outside resources stop, the ministry can and will continue.²

In their book *When Helping Hurts: How to Alleviate Poverty Without Hurting the Poor...and Yourself*, Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert also make some significant observations.

It is crucial that such outside resources do not undermine the willingness or the ability of the poor individual or community to be stewards of their own gifts and resources. When considering bringing in outside resources, we must always ask two questions: (1) Is it too much? (2) Is it too early? It would be far better to let a non-emergency need go unmet than to meet that need with outside resources and cripple local initiative in the process.... One of the most difficult dynamics in all of this is that even the belief that outside resources may soon be forthcoming can mask people's true motivations for their behaviors.³

Corbett and Fikkert also give this worthwhile advice.

² Joel Hogan, "Unhealthy Dependency vs. Sustainability." Hogan makes reference here to Glenn Schwartz, the author of *When Charity Destroys Dignity: Overcoming Unhealthy Dependency in the Christian Movement* (Bloomington: AuthorHouse, 2007).

³ Corbett and Fikkert, *When Helping Hurts*, Loc. 1993/4541.

Only bring in outside resources when local resources are insufficient to solve pressing needs. Be careful about bringing in resources that are too much or too early. Do this in a manner that does not undermine local capacity or initiative.⁴

[Only] respond when needs of the affected population are unmet by local people or organizations (or family members) due to their inability or unwillingness to help.⁵

The above authors point out that one of the problems with dependency is that it blinds the people of God to their God-given resources, and encourages them to seek outside resources before they have utilized what God has already given them. We need therefore to encourage God's people to make a thoughtful and serious assessment of their own resources. It is good for them to focus, not on what they do not have, but on what they do have, not on what God has given others, but on what God has given them. Then they can take the next step, and consider how best to use these things for God's glory and the extension of His kingdom.

Finally, we need to be aware of the danger of paternalism. A failure to work toward self-sufficient churches is that dependency usually results in paternalism. That is, it fosters the thinking in the minds of the churches established through our mission work that they are inferior, not equal, that they are lowly daughters, not sisters. This can do damage, therefore, to the character of a future sister-church relationship. This significant concern ought to encourage us to do all we can to avoid creating dependency.

In conclusion, we do well to keep in mind what proper mission work is. Mission work is not that of raising the economic level of those who are poorer than we. Proper mission work is to preach the gospel in faithfulness to the great commission of Christ.

As we strive to be faithful in this, may God be pleased to bless our wise use of money and earthly resources so that instead of being a hindrance to the spread of the gospel, these serve well the preaching of the Word and the gathering in of the elect in Christ.



⁴ Ibid, Loc. 2007/4541.

⁵ Ibid, Loc. 2035/4541.

Corruption

Our misery is that the whole of creation is held captive by a destructive, pervasive, and inexorable power. This power is the bondage of corruption (Rom. 8:21). Corruption is any degenerative process that mars, ruins, destroys, or renders something unfit or useless. And there are many kinds. The moth corrupts garments by eating (James 5:2). Rust corrupts riches by corrosion (Matt. 6:19). A corrupt tree corrupts its fruit by rot (Matt. 7:17). Disease corrupts the body (Ps. 38:5). Pride corrupts wisdom (Ezek. 28:17). Evil companions corrupt good behavior (I Cor. 15:33). Evil words corrupt good conversation (Eph. 4:29). Evil doctrines corrupt the Word, and evil teachers corrupt the church (II Cor. 2:17). But all corruption is one, for it proceeds according to a single fundamental law of nature, the law of sin and death (Rom. 8:2).

Although a law of nature, corruption is not natural but an alien force unleashed from the underworld by Satan and his two thugs, sin and death. Corruption was introduced into this good creation when Satan fell, corrupted the angels, and then employed a wicked stratagem to corrupt the whole world (B.C., Art. 12). As for man, the original sin was his original corruption. By guile, the serpent corrupted Eve (II Cor. 11:3). Eve then corrupted her husband, who by sin separated himself from God, his true life, and, corrupting his whole nature, became liable to corporal and spiritual death (B.C., Art. 14). And by propagation of this vicious nature, the original hereditary disease, the whole of mankind is now corrupted; a corrupt stock producing a corrupt offspring (Canons, 3-4.2). Thus, God looked upon the earth and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted His way upon the earth (Gen. 6:12).

This corruption of the whole nature theologians call depravity. Scripture calls it the old man of sin, corrupt by deceitful lusts (Eph. 4:22). This corruption makes the heart deceitful above all things (Jer. 17:9), makes man

destitute of the truth (I Tim. 6:5), renders him wicked, perverse, inclined to all evil, and incapable of doing any good (L.D. 3). And his essential sin is that he changes the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man and beasts (Rom 1:23). Being corrupted, man is become a fountain of corruption (Prov. 25:26), a slave of corruption (II Pet. 2:19), and one who shall utterly perish in corruption (II Pet. 2:12).

From all corruption Jesus has delivered us. Assuming our sin and entering our death, He subjected Himself to the full power of hell's corruption. But His life from heaven was incorruptible. Sin could tempt, but not defile Him. Death could kill, but not destroy Him. The grave could receive, but not decompose Him. Indeed, the bars of the earth imprisoned Him, but His soul could not be left in hell, nor His flesh see corruption (John 2:6; Acts 2:31). He is raised up from the dead, now no more to return to corruption (Acts 13:34).

The benefit for us is complete deliverance from corruption. First, we are made a new creature in Christ. Born again of His incorruptible seed by the Word of God, we are made partakers of the divine nature whereby we escape the corruption in the world (I Pet. 1:23; II Pet. 1:4). Secondly, our old man is crucified, dead, and buried with Him so that the corrupt inclinations of the flesh no more reign in us (L.D. 16). They remain powerful as ever, but cannot corrupt that hidden seed of the new man living by the Spirit through faith, hope, and love unto life everlasting (I Pet. 3:4; Gal. 6:8). Thirdly, our bodies sown in corruption will be raised in incorruption. This mortal, dishonorable, weak, and natural body will put on incorruption, immortality, power, and spirit; death will be swallowed up in victory (I Cor. 15:42; 53-54). Lastly, the whole creation will also be delivered from this bondage of corruption to share in our glorious liberty (Rom. 9:21).

Blessed be the Father of our Lord, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to this glorious inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fades not away, reserved in heaven for you (I Pet. 1:3).

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Upon This Rock (9)

Robbing Christ of His Honor (1)

The Adult Bible Study Society in Southwest Church is studying the book of Genesis. A few weeks ago we came to chapter 4, Cain and Abel. An interesting question was raised by one of the members. He prefaced the question by giving a brief statement of the distinction between Abel's offering of a bloody sacrifice, unto which the Lord had "respect" (v. 4), and Cain's offering of a bloodless sacrifice, unto which the Lord had *not* "respect" (v. 5). "We understand this well," he said. (That is, we who live in the clear light of the cross, and of Pentecost, and of the New Testament Scriptures.) "But," he asked, "what did *Cain and Abel* understand?"

Essentially, that was the question with which we concluded the previous article in this series. It was this: In John Calvin's characterizing much of the worship of the Jews in the old dispensation as a robbing Christ of His honor, was he, perhaps, attributing to them a level of comprehension that was actually *beyond* them? Applied to the discussion in the Adult Bible Study Society in Southwest, it is this: What exactly was the sin of Cain? That his bringing an offering of the fruit of the ground was a trifling with the divine prescription for the manner of worship can, I think, be taken for granted. As another member of the society put it, God would not have left our first parents in the dark with respect to a matter so important as the manner of *worship*. But is that *all* that can be said about Cain's offering? Or was Cain guilty also of *despising what was symbolized*?

Not an easy question to answer. Rev. Ophoff, in a

series of articles on the types of Scripture in volume 3 of this periodical, asks the question, "Were the devout [in the old dispensation], so it is asked, capable of looking beyond the lamb to behold Christ?" His answer: "This, we reply, is a matter of conjecture."

We will return, later, to Ophoff's "matter of conjecture." But first, just a little bit more to anchor the question in the context of the history with which we are dealing in this series of articles.

In an earlier article (see December 15, 2012) we noted that Israel, that is, the ten tribes, the Northern Kingdom, "in their rejection of the house of David and abandoning of the worship of God in Jerusalem's temple, had in effect rejected *Christ*, both with respect to His kingly and His priestly office." Indeed that was true... "in effect"—that is, with respect to the *end result*, the *outcome*, of their cutting themselves off from Judah, and David, and the worship of God in the temple. The question now is whether or not we can say *more*. Was it only a matter of "in effect," or can it be said that the people of Israel under Jeroboam I *actually* rejected not only the *types* but also what was *typified*? In other words, could the Jews *in the old dispensation* be charged with a rejection of *Christ*, or would that have been impossible in the day of *shadows*?

Then there were the Jews who did *not* reject the house of David, nor abandon the worship of God in the temple. These were the people of *Judah*, Israel's "treacherous sister" (Jer. 3:6-8). These were those who witnessed the demise of the ten tribes and were not afraid, "but went and played the harlot also." How did they do that? By idolatry, surely. But also by their worship of God in the temple—a worship that, for many, was but a vain show and hence, according to Calvin, a robbing Christ of His honor.

Thus the question: Was their sin "aggravated by an

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Previous article in this series: January 15, 2013, p. 182.

awareness of the symbolism involved in it, and a despising of it”?



That Christ was casting His shadow in the old dispensation is beyond question. We need think only of I Corinthians 10:1-4:

Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and did all eat the same spiritual meat; and did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ.

Paul (post-Pentecost and post road-to-Damascus-conversion) understood that. As did also the saints in Corinth to whom he addressed this epistle.

But did the Jews of Moses’ day see that, and of David’s, and of Isaiah’s? And, if so, to what degree?

In his attempt to answer that question, Ophoff chose to examine just one of the many types in the Old Testament, the rite of expiatory sacrifice—which, as Fairbairn declares in his *Typology of Scripture*, was “the very core of the religion of the old covenant.” It was that, the core, because it pointed directly to *atonement*, the one great need of the saints of God ever since the fall of Adam. And thus it pointed in a most fundamental way to the Messiah, *the Seed*, who, according to the mother of all promises, would gain the victory for God’s people by His “bruising” of the head of the serpent, though He Himself would be “bruised,” but “for our iniquities,” as the prophet Isaiah (chapter 53) was given to see it some 700 years before the event.

Atonement—by the shedding of innocent blood. Adam and Eve saw it in a figure, when they looked into the lifeless eyes of the animal slain, perhaps by God Himself, to provide coats to cover the nakedness that fig leaves had left exposed. A vivid picture—reenacted repeatedly for 4,000 years of old covenant history. A type. A shadow. Cast by Christ—on whom the Lord would lay “the iniquity of us all” (Is. 53:6).

Paul, we say, understood that. As do we. After Pentecost.

What about the saints of God from Adam to Mo-

ses? And from Moses to Isaiah? And from Isaiah to John the Baptist?

Ah yes, John the Baptist. The greatest of the prophets of the old dispensation (Luke 7:28). The prophet who could not only testify that “the kingdom of heaven is *at hand*” (Matt. 3:2), but also actually point to Jesus and exclaim, “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). Whom Isaiah saw dimly, 700 years earlier, John was privileged to see before his eyes. The greatest of the prophets indeed. And yet...after languishing for nearly half a year in Herod’s dungeon, this greatest of the prophets called for two of his disciples and sent them to Jesus with this question: “Art thou he that should come? or look we for another?” (Luke 7:19).

And then there were the disciples of Jesus. Surely, it would seem, if an ability to ‘connect the dots’ of Old Testament prophecy from Genesis 3:15 to Malachi 4 were possible, such ability would be epitomized in those who were privileged to walk with Jesus for the three years of His public ministry. Believers, those disciples surely were. When asked by Jesus, some two and a half years into that ministry, “Whom say ye that I am?” Peter could with conviction respond for all of them save one, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matt. 16:15, 16). But did they understand Old Testament typology? Did they connect the Messiah of Genesis 3:15 with the suffering servant of Isaiah 53? So soon they revealed that they did not. We read that “from that time forth began Jesus to show unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer...and be killed...” (Matt. 16:21). The very disciple who had made that wonderful profession of faith in Jesus now “took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee” (16:22).

Writes Rev. Ophoff, “The blunders of the disciples of Christ do not favor the view that the church, from the days of Isaiah on, associated the sacrificial victim with the Christ.”

What, then, of our earlier assertion that we sell the saints of the old dispensation short if we imagine that they were not able to see beyond the bare ceremonies? And what, then, of Calvin’s characterizing the worship of the Jews of Jeremiah’s day as a robbing Christ of His honor?

... to be continued. 

■ The White House's Aggressively "Evolving" Homosexual Marriage Agenda

The first line of Michael Martinez's article for CNN.com reads, "He has been declared America's first gay president [on the cover of *Newsweek* May 21, 2012—CWS]." After listing some of President Obama's statements early in his political career against homosexual marriage, Martinez lists President Obama's more recent actions that signal the "evolution" of his position from hesitant support to an aggressive agenda to seek the legalization of homosexual marriage.

- 2009: Obama signs a memorandum granting some benefits to same-sex partners of federal employees.
- February 2011: The Obama administration instructs the U.S. Justice Department to stop defending the constitutionality of the Defense of Marriage Act in court.
- June 2011: White House Communications Director Dan Pfeiffer says President Obama's 1996 questionnaire was "actually filled out by someone else, not the president." Obama "has been against" same-sex marriage, but his and the country's position was evolving on the matter, Pfeiffer says. "I can't tell you when that evolution will continue."
- 2012: Obama endorses same-sex marriage, the first such statement by a sitting president. The legal decision should be up to the states to determine, he says.
- January 2013: Obama becomes the first U.S. president to mention gays and lesbians in an inaugural address and champions same-sex marriage.
- March 2013: Obama personally reviews and OKs his administration's amicus or "friend of the court" brief filed with the U.S. Supreme Court as it weighs the constitutionality of California's 2008 Proposition 8 referendum banning same-sex marriage.

Source: <http://www.cnn.com/2013/03/02/politics/obama-evolution-gay-marriage>

The administration's amicus brief filed before the

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US Supreme Court weighs in *against* the constitutionality of California's ban of homosexual marriage. According to President Obama this ban on homosexual marriage violates the California Constitution's guarantee of equal protection. Writing for *washingtonpost.com*, Jonathan Caphart calls the President's filing of this brief a "bold" but also "narrow" move ("Obama continues to make gay history" is the title of the article). It is a narrow move, according to Caphart, because President Obama is seeking at this point to legalize homosexual marriage only in California, rather than in the whole of the United States. Legalization for the whole United States is the ultimate goal. Noting that there may be backlash in response to an aggressive push for legalization, Caphart suggests that President Obama is following a wise course that will keep the momentum steadily moving in the direction of nationwide legalization.

Martinez shares Caphart's hope that Obama will succeed in achieving nationwide legalization for homosexual marriage. Martinez hopefully asks about 2013-2017, "Will Obama's next evolutionary step seek change in the 41 states that currently define marriage as between one man and one woman? As a second-term president, he certainly has the clout."

Equality is now the important subject of the homosexual marriage debate. Gay people are equal to straight people, the argument goes, and therefore have the right to marriage. Stories are beginning to multiply about how gay "married" people are suffering from discrimination. For example, you can read about Tracy Johnson, who was supposedly discriminated against when Donna, her spouse (sic), was killed in Afghanistan. Though Tracy possessed a marriage certificate signifying the killed soldier was her spouse, federal law prohibits the military from recognizing the "marriage." Therefore, Tracy was not notified of Donna's death. Tracy was treated unequally. Clearly, homosexual marriage must be legalized. Such is the argument of the Obama administration and others.

Arguing for homosexual marriage on the basis of

equality because of a story like Tracy Johnson's is patently absurd. One could easily imagine a story of a bigamist who experienced unequal treatment. Yet it is not likely, at least at this point, that many would argue for the legalization of bigamy as an equal right. A sad-sounding story does not establish that a person has actually been treated unequally.

Besides, equality is not the primary issue. The moral propriety or impropriety of homosexuality is the basic issue, just as it is the basic issue with regard to bigamy. Why do people not argue that bigamists deserve equal protection? Because most believe that bigamy is morally reprehensible. If homosexuality is likewise immoral, then homosexuals do not deserve "equal" treatment when it comes to marriage. Of course, there is no "if" about it. Homosexuality is condemned as gross immorality in the Bible.

In the Bible God has defined moral purity with regard to marriage as a lifelong union of one man and one woman. Whatever men may call other relationships (that are supposed to be equal to a marriage between a man and a woman), they are not morally pure or marriages. The pro-homosexual-marriage agenda is advancing sin, not equal rights. The test of our commitment to condemning homosexuality is coming as, sooner rather than later, "equal rights" for homosexuals with regard to marriage figures to be the law in the whole United States. He may not have right on his side, but in his second term President Obama does indeed have clout.

■ Will Quebec Legalize Murder?

Murder is already legal in all of Canada and the US in the form of abortion. But the Province of Quebec may be on pace to legalize murder in the form of Euthanasia this spring. The province's legislative body formed a select committee on "dying with dignity." This committee issued a 96-page report with 24 recommendations. The pertinent recommendation is number 13, which reads:

The Committee recommends that relevant legislation be amended to recognize medical aid in dying as appropriate end-of-life care if the request made by the person meets the following criteria as assessed by the physician:

- The person is a Québec resident according to the *Health Insurance Act*;
- The person is an adult able to consent to treatment under the law;
- The person himself requests medical aid in dying after making a free and informed decision;
- The person is suffering from a serious incurable disease;
- The person is in an advanced state of weakening capacities, with no chance at improvement;
- The person has constant and unbearable physical and psychological suffering that cannot be eased under conditions he deems tolerable.

On January 15, 2013 the process started towards implementing all 24 recommendations of the committee along with recommendation 13. Quebec may soon legally allow doctors to give, in the language of the committee, "medical aid in dying." This is part of what the committee calls "dying with dignity." Some might call it physician-assisted suicide. It is simply murder. Dr. Marc Beauchamp explained the real meaning of the committee's recommendations:

Technically, giving someone a lethal injection to cause death "is a homicide," said orthopedic surgeon Dr. Marc Beauchamp. He stressed the responsibility doctors have in caring for vulnerable people and protecting them. "If doctors can kill people, it's dangerous, it endangers vulnerable people," he said. "Killing is not care. Doctors will become accomplices in homicide, engaging in a criminal act according to Canada's Criminal Code if Quebec redefines medicine to include directly inducing death," Beauchamp said.

Source: <http://www.catholicregister.org/news/canada/item/15926-quebec-doctors-step-up-the-fight-against-euthanasia>

Peter Ryan warns of a slippery slope if Quebec adopts physician-assisted murder. He points to developments in Holland, where physician-assisted murder was adopted with strict guidelines such as are proposed in Quebec. But now, Ryan notes, Holland allows the killing not only of the "terminally ill" but also of the "chronically ill" and "those suffering mentally"—even "children as young as 12 could demand it." Ryan goes on to write, "So when the Quebec report proposes patient guidelines...no one should expect such limits to be maintained. If adopted

they would balloon over time, just as in Holland. The committee claims euthanasia would only be practiced 'in exceptional circumstances.' Quebecers should have no such illusion" (Source: <http://www.lifecanagda.org> "Heaven Help Quebec").

With the imminent legalization of homosexual marriage in the US and euthanasia in Canada, this world is not becoming a better place. Christians should have no such illusion. ☞

CONVOCATION ADDRESS

PROF. RONALD CAMMENGA

The Protestant Reformed Seminary and the "Good Christian Schools" (3)

Promotion of the "Good Christian Schools" Practically

Besides grounding seminary students in the basis for the "good Christian schools," the seminary also commends to the students all of the ways in which officebearers, and especially ministers, ought to promote these schools practically.

Practical promotion of the good Christian schools includes the wise promotion of the establishment of them in areas where we do not have our own Christian schools. This includes patiently laying the groundwork for the establishment of such a school in the preaching. It includes pointing out in sermons how the Christian school, our own Christian school, is a "demand of the covenant." It includes recognizing when God in His providence makes possible the establishing of our own Christian school, rather than radically and recklessly pushing for the school and foisting the school on the

people. A clear majority in the congregation must be convicted of the need for the establishment of our own Protestant Reformed Christian school.

In areas where we have our own Christian schools, but not all the parents send their children to the schools, ministers, especially young ministers, must be encouraged patiently to labor with these parents. Some never change their mind and see the need to send their children to our own schools. The ministers or committees from the consistory ought to visit these families at least once or twice a year. They ought to ascertain the reasons on account of which they are not sending their children to those schools. Often it is just that they do not see the need. But in some instances there may be valid, or at least understandable, reasons for not sending the children. The officebearers ought then to work patiently with these parents in order to overcome their difficulties, in the hope that they will then send their children. Many will, also as they begin to see the good fruits, under the blessing of God, upon our own Christian schools.

Seminary students ought to be encouraged to promote the good Christian schools whenever they have opportunity in the preaching. When they preach on Lord's Day 38 of the Heidelberg Catechism, for example, in which Lord's Day the Catechism is busy

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

Convocation exercises of the Protestant Reformed Theological Seminary were held on September 5, 2012 at South-west Protestant Reformed Church of Grandville. The text of Prof. Cammenga's address on that occasion continues here. Second installment of the address can be found in the March 15, 2013 issue, p. 276.

expounding the Fourth Commandment, “Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy,” they have such an opportunity. The 103rd Question is, “What doth God require in the fourth commandment?” And the answer begins: “First, that the ministry of the gospel *and the schools* be maintained....” Their promotion of the good Christian schools in a sermon on this Lord’s Day ought to demonstrate clearly the connection between the Christian school and obedience to the Fourth Commandment. Why is the Christian school one of the first things mentioned by the Heidelberg Catechism in this Lord’s Day? And what connection is there between the schools and the ministry of the gospel? (One important point that the answer establishes—I cannot resist pointing out just this one—is that the Reformed churches have always believed in a trained ministry.)

Sermons dealing with Christian education are appropriate in connection with the administration of the sacrament of baptism. These sermons ought to draw out the implications of the vow of baptism that parents promise to see their child instructed and brought up in the true doctrine to the utmost of their ability. These sermons ought to call attention to the “three-fold cord” of church, home, and Christian school, which is not easily broken.

In Reformed churches the practice of preaching an annual “school sermon” in the Fall of the year, at the beginning of a new school year, is of long standing—a commendable practice indeed. Let Protestant Reformed ministers carry on this worthy tradition and take advantage of this opportunity.

The subject of Christian education and the Christian schools ought to have a place in the congregational prayers on the Lord’s Day. Let our ministers pray regularly for our Christian school teachers and for our children and young people who study at these schools. Let the prayers include petitions on behalf of the parents who sacrificially support our Christian schools and the school societies and school boards that govern them. The men serving on the school boards volunteer tremendous amounts of their time and expertise in the service of our schools. Where would our schools be without such men willing to give of themselves for the great cause of Christian education?

Let the ministers and the consistories promote mem-

bership in the school societies—*active* membership. Let them promote membership in the societies not only by men of the congregation who have children attending the Christian schools, but also by both the young men who do not yet have children and the older men whose children are past school-age.

Let the ministers and elders make the subject of Christian education a matter for discussion on family visitation. At the visits, let the responsibilities of covenant parents in this regard be pointed out and let the parents be encouraged to fulfill “the demands of the covenant,” especially in difficult financial times. As a pastor, whenever I heard parents groan about the high cost of tuition, I would always tell them that they couldn’t afford *not* to send their children to the Christian school. On family visitation, let the pastor and the elders direct questions to the children and young people concerning their faithfulness in applying themselves to their studies in the Christian schools. And let promising young people be encouraged to give serious consideration to the teaching profession in our Christian schools. What a high calling among God’s covenant people! What a need we have for qualified and committed Christian school teachers.

These are only some of the ways in which the seminary ought to be involved in promoting the good Christian schools among our students, the future ministers in our churches and sister-churches, so that they in turn will be equipped to promote them to God’s people.

The Goal at Which We Aim

In promoting the “good Christian schools,” our own Christian schools, we aim at a great goal. The seminary encourages prospective ministers to set this goal before themselves and before God’s people in all their preaching, teaching, and writing, in which they promote the “good Christian schools in which the parents have their children instructed according to the demands of the covenant.”

The goal is, first of all, the good of the children themselves. When parents fail to instruct their children to the utmost of their power, fail to carry out their calling with regard to the Christian education of their children, the results, apart from the intervening grace of God, are disastrous in the children. Then a generation grows


up that does not know the Lord and, not knowing the Lord, does not serve the Lord. *That's* what happened in Israel, as God said would happen in Deuteronomy 6:12-15. A generation grew up that "forgot the Lord" (v. 12), that did not "fear the Lord thy God, and serve him" (v. 13), a generation that "went after other gods, of the gods of the people which are round about you" (v. 14). For that reason, "the anger of the Lord thy God," who is "a jealous God among you," was kindled and He "destroy[ed] the[m] from off the face of the earth."

But under the blessing of God the faithful instruction of the children bears fruit in children who know, who love, and who serve the Lord (Deut. 6:2, 18, and 24). Oh, that makes all the hard work, all the sacrifices, all the tuition worthwhile.

In the second place, the goal is the good of the church. History shows that children not instructed in the fear of God leave the church. And children of parents who did not send their children to Protestant Reformed Christian schools, when they could have

and should have, usually leave the Protestant Reformed Churches when they become older. As much as we want to see our children members of our Protestant Reformed Churches when they grow up and after they marry, so much we ought also to be committed to sending them to our Protestant Reformed Christian schools, where this is possible.

But ultimately the goal is the glory of God. That is God's purpose in the salvation of His people, that His mighty hand may be exalted (Deut. 6:21); that He may be feared (v. 13); and that He may not be forgotten, but remembered and adored (v. 12).

May God use the Protestant Reformed Seminary on behalf of the promotion of the "good Christian schools." May those schools stand in the service of God's covenant with us and with our children and children's children after us. And may those "good Christian schools" stand in the service of the still greater goal of the glory of His name, the name of the God who establishes and maintains the everlasting covenant of grace. 

BRING THE BOOKS...

MR. CHARLES TERPSTRA

The Intolerance of Tolerance, D.A. Carson. (Eerdmans Publishing: Grand Rapids, MI, 2012.) 196 pp. ISBN: 0802831702. [Reviewed by Matt Kortus.]

Throughout Western culture, more and more emphasis is being placed on the importance of tolerance. However, as society has elevated the position of tolerance in recent history, it has simultaneously changed the idea of tolerance to mean something subtly different from the formal definition. This shift in the meaning of tolerance has produced an ideology that is largely *intolerant* of true Christianity, and thus relevant to the Reformed believer. Donald Carson, Professor of New Testament at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, addresses this subject in his recent book *The Intolerance of Tolerance*.

Carson begins his treatment of this matter by presenting two different definitions for tolerance, which

Mr. Kortus is a member of Faith Protestant Reformed Church in Jenison, Michigan. Elizabeth Ensink is a senior at Covenant Christian High School in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

he refers to as the old tolerance and the new. The old tolerance allows people to adhere to a particular set of views or beliefs, but also insists that others have the right to a different stance. In contrast, under the new tolerance, all views become equivalent and thus must be accepted by everyone. As Carson writes, "We leap from permitting the articulation of beliefs and claims with which we do not agree to asserting that all beliefs and claims are equally valid" (p. 3). This shift in the meaning of tolerance results in a similar shift in the meaning of intolerance. This new tolerance labels intolerant any who claim to know truth and oppose the idea that "all beliefs and claims are equally valid." Thus, when tolerance becomes the pinnacle of morality within a society, then intolerance becomes the most grievous offense someone can commit. This stance on intolerance leaves no room for the existence of absolute and dogmatic truth; therefore, truth becomes relative.

Having established the two competing definitions for tolerance, Carson provides an array of examples that amply demonstrate that this new form of tolerance is quite often *intolerant* of Christians. Therefore

we often observe attempts to suppress Christianity under the banner of tolerance that “thinks of itself as intrinsically neutral” (p. 96). In response to this, Carson offers the reader a series of ways to move forward that focus on exposing this new form of tolerance as intolerant.

The majority of Carson’s arguments rely on a large number of well-researched case studies that support his thesis. However, this book fails to incorporate a biblical response to the issues that Carson addresses. For example, no mention is made of the parallel between the growing prominence of this new form of tolerance and the coming of the Antichristian kingdom. Furthermore, while the author does make the necessary connection between the development of tolerance and the post-modern movement, he fails to recognize that both of these have greatly influenced nominal Christianity. Churches throughout the world readily apostatize by allowing for the inclusion of homosexuality or divorce and remarriage in the name of tolerance. The language Carson uses can be difficult to understand, and the connection between the evidence he provides and his thesis can be unclear, making this a challenging read. Overall, while the book is well written, I would not recommend it unless you desire a detailed explanation for the progression of tolerance or an increased awareness for how frequently true Christians are viewed as intolerant by a society that claims to be tolerant. ☞

Nadzieja: The Story of a Girl Named Hope, Nadzieja Jadwiga McMillan. (Crown & Covenant Publications: Pittsburgh, PA, 2012). 413 pages. ISBN 1884527345. [Reviewed by Elizabeth Ensink.]

Imagine how you would react if your mother left you at an orphanage full of strangers without saying good-bye. Imagine what it would be like to go to America but leave all your friends and family behind in poverty. Imagine uprooting your family and moving across the country countless times for the sake of the church. Finally, imagine an elderly woman named Nadzieja sitting in her small apartment room writing down these amazing events in her life. If you can imagine all that, you will get a good idea of what her autobiography, *Nadzieja: The Story of a Girl Named Hope*, is like. This book shows us what it truly means

to put our trust in the Lord and is an excellent example of how we should devote our whole lives to Him.

Nadzieja’s autobiography is not meant to captivate an audience with a suspenseful plot or rich descriptions. It is simply the story of a girl who becomes a faithful woman of God. She does not delve into details concerning the doctrines that she believes, yet almost every chapter contains the words of a hymn, Bible passage, or prayer to express how she felt. Sometimes the order of events can be confusing, and the many Polish names can be hard to pronounce, but although these things make the book harder to read, they do not detract from the overall message. In her humble style, Nadzieja tells her story like it happened and leaves the reader with a memorable and inspiring impression of her unwavering hope in God.

Nadzieja’s story begins with the story of her parents and how she became a Christian because of them. Nadzieja was born in Russia, but when she was only a few years old, her mother became a widow and the atheistic communist party took over the country. Her mother had to make the difficult decision to leave the relative prosperity and certainty of their home in Russia for the sake of her three children’s faith. The way Nadzieja explains it is striking: “She resolved that she would rather see her children starve to death than to grow up to become atheists, brainwashed about the existence of God.” They moved to Poland; but with no food or income to keep them alive, her mother had to send the children to an orphanage. There Nadzieja is taught the truth of Scripture and grows up with the same outstanding faith of her mother. Many stories of her time at the orphanage are humorous, but there were plenty of struggles for her also. Yet in every trial Nadzieja turns to God in prayer.

As Nadzieja matures, her story becomes an amazing example of God’s providence in her life. Because of her gift of singing, Nadzieja gets accepted into a Polish choir that is traveling to America. Through this she is saved from the poverty and turmoil of Poland during World War II. Although she must live in an unfamiliar country, Nadzieja’s faith remains and she finds comfort knowing that God has His church in America also. Nadzieja’s story then shows us how God worked in her life to give her a free college education, an American family to care for her, and eventually a God-fearing family of

her own. Once again, Nadzieja gives all the credit and thanks to God for these blessings.

The final section of the book describes her life as a minister's wife in the Reformed Presbyterian Church and the work they did in churches across the country. No matter where they went, Nadzieja's family was welcomed by members of a body of Christ that cared for one another and were eager for the preaching of the truth. Even the young people were willing to serve

and looked forward to Bible studies and church events. This book gives us an excellent example of how we ought to view the church and the members of it.

In the face of tragedy, triumph, and undeserved love, Nadzieja's story consistently shows what it means to devote our whole lives to God. Her name means "hope," and if you read her story you will see exactly what can happen when hope is put in the right place. ☞

CLASSIS WEST REPORT

REV. DOUG KUIPER

Classis West met in regular session on March 6, 2013. The congregation in Lynden, WA hosted this meeting, as well as the officebearers' conference the previous day—a commemoration of the 450th anniversary of the Heidelberg Catechism.

God reminds us that we must make all our plans subject to His will. One minister busied himself on Tuesday preparing a funeral speech; another minister and an elder had to return home early because of the death of the elder's father; and another elder never arrived, his flight being cancelled due to winter weather.

Rev. Spronk presided over the meeting. Classis approved the labors of its stated clerk, classical committee, church visitors, and reading sermon library committee. Classis also appointed Rev. Brummel as Doon's moderator, adopted a classical appointment schedule for Doon and Randolph, and approved subsidy requests for Bethel, Covenant of Grace, First Edmonton, Heritage, Immanuel, and Lynden.

Elections are always on the agenda of the spring meeting. Classis appointed Rev. Key to a three-year term on the classical committee, and Rev. Griess to finish the remainder of Rev. Overway's term. Church visitors for the next year are Revs. Key, Kleyn, Kuiper, and Marcus, with Revs. Brummel and Laning as alternates.

Rev. Lee was appointed to a three-year *primus* term as synodical deputy, Rev. Kleyn to a three-year *secundus* term, and Rev. Laning to a one-year *secundus* term.

Classis appointed Revs. Brummel, Key, Kuiper, Laning, and Spronk as delegates to Synod 2013; their alternates are Revs. Griess, Kleyn, Langerak, Lee, and Marcus. Elder delegates are Garry Eriks (Peace), John Heystek (Lynden), Brian Kroese (Hull), Alan Meurer (Bethel), Dewey Van Der Noord (Crete). Their alternates are Ted Andringa (Crete), David Griess (Loveland), James Lenting (Crete), Victor Solanyk (Loveland), Gysbert VanBaren (Crete).

The expenses of this meeting totaled \$11,865.52.

The fall meeting of the Classis will be held in Loveland PRC. This meeting will be held on September 4, unless the classical committee reschedules the meeting. Sometimes Classis meets twice in the fall—once for its regular meeting, and then for a special meeting (to examine a candidate, for instance). Because two fall meetings are time-consuming and costly, Classis mandated its classical committee to reschedule the September meeting, if necessary, to avoid a second meeting.

May God bless the decisions that were made for the good of the churches.

Rev. Doug Kuiper, Stated Clerk ☞

NEWS FROM OUR CHURCHES

MR. BENJAMIN WIGGER

We begin this issue of the "News" with an apology to

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

the Southeast PRC in Grand Rapids, MI. In the March 1 issue we mistakenly wrote that the Southwest PRC in Grandville, MI was celebrating their anniversary as an organized congregation on March 7, 1944. We

should have said Southeast PRC not Southwest. The information given us was correct. We erred in our reporting of it.

Congregation Activities

Reflecting on the Word of God found in Psalm 84:4, “Blessed are they that dwell in thy house,” we call your attention to the anniversary of the Edgerton, MN PRC, organized on April 11, 1938.

The Randolph, WI PRC recently formed a Helping Hands Committee to assist their Deacons with the needs of their congregation. Acts 20:35: “I have showed you all things, how that so laboring ye ought to support the weak.”

The Southwest PRC in Grandville, MI enjoyed their annual church potluck dinner on March 1. Those signing up to attend were also encouraged to consider volunteering to provide a special number for their after-dinner program as well.

The Cornerstone PRC in Dyer, IN invited surrounding congregations to join them on Sunday evening, March 3, for a presentation on Georgetown PRC’s work in India. Rev. C. Haak, pastor at Georgetown in Hudsonville, MI, was there to explain that work, as well as to update those in attendance on his recent trip to India with Prof. B. Gritters and Mr. Deane Wassink.

Denomination Activities

On Tuesday, February 26, Rev. K. Koole and Elder Tom Bodbyl flew to Singapore to visit Rev. A. Lanning and his family and the Covenant Evangelical Reformed Church on behalf of our denomination’s Contact Committee and the congregation and Council of the Grandville, MI PRC, to give encouragement and to discuss the work being done there. Plans also called for the men to conduct Church Visitation with the Session of Covenant as well.

Members of the PR congregations in West Michigan were blessed to be able to attend and to be part of two combined Mass Choir Concerts on the Sundays of February 24 and March 3. The choir was made up of members of the Grand Rapids area churches and totaled around 175 members. The first concert was held at Fellowship Reformed Church in Hudsonville and the second at First Byron Christian Reformed. The two concerts were truly evenings of praise and glory to God. We can also add that the concert was recorded for release on CD sometime in the future, so if you could not be there in person, or you would like to hear the concert again, you will have the opportunity.

Mission Activities

We thank the “Kleyns in the Philippines” for providing the “News” with the following update.

In the past few months, with the approval of Doon, IA PRC and the FMC, the missionaries have been visiting and speaking every Thursday evening in the Provident Christian Church in Marikina, Manila. We came into contact with this church through one of the pastors who attends the twice-monthly meeting of 7M (Metro Manila Monthly Monday Morning Ministers Meeting). The PCC is located about 12 miles from where we live. The church is not new to the Reformed faith, but has a keen interest in growing in their understanding of the truth. Initially the PCC asked the missionaries to speak on a variety of topics. Rev. R. Smit gave four speeches on “Particular Grace (over against the error of common grace)” and Rev. D. Kleyn spoke on

“What Is a Reformed Church?” followed by two speeches on “Is God Sovereign Over Evils?” The Consistory of the PCC has also asked that we preach for them on Sundays at least once a month, but more often if possible. This request comes especially in light of the fact that the congregation is currently vacant. For the month of February, Rev. Kleyn plans to preach there on the 24th, the Lord willing. We thank the Lord for this new opportunity to teach others of the truths that are dear to us. May God be pleased to bless and prosper this work.

Sister-Church Activities

On Friday evening February 8, Rev. A. Stewart, pastor of the Covenant PRC in Ballymena, NI, gave a public lecture at Covenant entitled, “Calvinism, Hyper-Calvinism, and Hypo-Calvinism.” Rev. Stewart promised to answer questions like, What is Calvinism and how does one determine this? What are the errors of hyper-Calvinism (over and above Calvinism) and hypo-Calvinism (under and below Calvinism)? May you simply define these terms as you wish and call people names—“Hyper” or “Hypo” Calvinist!—if you don’t agree with them?

Rev. M. McGeown, missionary pastor to the Limerick Reformed Fellowship in Limerick, Republic of Ireland, a mission field of the Covenant PRC in Ballymena, gave a lecture on February 22 in Porthcawl, South Wales on “Justification by Faith Alone.”

Parents in the Covenant ERC of Singapore, and any others interested, were encouraged to view the video on “Shepherding a Child’s Heart.” The first screening, entitled

“Getting to the Heart of Behavior,” was shown on Sunday, February 17.

School Activities

The Hull PR Christian School presented their annual all-school program on March 1 at the Hull, IA

PRC. The theme this year was, “Our Glorious God, Worthy of Praise.”

The Parent/Teacher Association of Heritage Christian School in Hudsonville held their Spring meeting on March 5. Rev. N. Decker, pastor of Trinity PRC in Hudsonville, MI, spoke for the parents and teachers on

the importance of a sound devotional life for our covenant youth.

Minister Activities

On Sunday evening, March 3, the Faith PRC in Jenison, MI extended a call to Rev. R. Kleyen to serve as their next pastor. ☺

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Wedding Anniversary

■ On March 15, 2013, we were privileged to celebrate the 60th wedding anniversary of our parents,

JONATHAN and MARY SCHWARZ.

We have been blessed by their godly example of faithfulness to each other in their marriage and are thankful for their godly instruction, pointing us to the Word of God by word and walk of life. We are grateful for the many years that the Lord has given them and pray that He will continue to bless and keep them in their life together, upholding them by His almighty hand. “...the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness to children’s children” (Psalm 103:17).

- ☺ Joanna Straayer
and husband Tom Vatrano
Jason and Brenda Trupp
- ☺ Marvin and Esther Schwarz
Caleb and Jenn VanBaren,
Joelle, Isaac
Travis and Kayla Feenstra
Jon and Aryn Schwarz
Karl
- ☺ Ray and Joy Schwarz
Sarah, Jacob, Ruth, Mary

Loveland, Colorado

Wedding Anniversary

■ We rejoiced with our parents and grandparents,

AL and SHARON BRUMMEL,

as they celebrated their 45th wedding anniversary on March 12, 2013. We as children and grandchildren thank our heavenly Father for the many blessings God has given to them and to us through them. God has been faithful to His covenant promise to continue His covenant in succeeding generations. “And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee” (Genesis 17:7).

From their children
and 34 grandchildren

Edgerton, Minnesota

Synod

■ All standing and special committees of the synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches, as well as individuals who wish to address Synod 2013, are hereby notified that all material for this year’s synod should be in the hands of the stated clerk no later than April 15. Please send material to:

Don Doezema
4949 Ivanrest Ave. SW
Grandville, MI 49418

Classis East

■ Classis East will meet in regular session on Wednesday, May 8, 2013 at the Faith Protestant Reformed Church, Jenison, Michigan. Material to be treated at this session must be in the hands of the stated clerk by April 10, 2013.

Jon J. Huisken, Stated Clerk

Reformed Witness Hour
April 2013

Date	Topic	Text
April 7	“The Path of Reconciliation”	Genesis 42:1-25
April 14	“When it Seems that Everything Is Against You”	Genesis 42:26-43:14
April 21	“Loving Discipline”	Genesis 43:15-44:13
April 28	“I Am Joseph”	Genesis 44:14-45:45:15