

The Standard Bearer

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CONTENTS

| | | |
|---------------------------------|---|-----|
| <i>Meditation</i> | Abraham's Instruction of His Children REV. JAMES SLOPSEMA | 458 |
| <i>Editorial</i> | Polemics: Fighting Words (4) PROF. BARRETT GRITTERS | 461 |
| <i>Understanding the Times</i> | Ideas Have Consequences: The Cult of Charles Darwin (5) MR. CAL KALSBECK | 463 |
| <i>Go Ye into All the World</i> | Missions Decreed in God's Counsel REV. WILBUR BRUINSMA | 467 |
| <i>A Word Fitly Spoken</i> | Labor REV. BILL LANGERAK | 470 |
| <i>All Around Us</i> | The Christian Reformed Church Replaces the Reformed Formula of Subscription (1) REV. NATHAN LANGERAK | 471 |
| <i>God's Wonderful Works</i> | Salvation by Grace Alone (1) REV. JAMES LANING | 474 |
| <i>Bring the Books...</i> | Book Review REV. MARTYN MCGEOWN | 476 |
| <i>News From Our Churches</i> | Activities MR. BENJAMIN WIGGER | 478 |

Abraham's Instruction of His Children

For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him.

Genesis 18:19

The Lord, accompanied by two angels, appeared to Abraham on the plains of Mamre. His purpose was to reveal two matters of importance to Abraham.

First, He revealed that now at long last Sarah would bring forth a son in her old age.

Secondly, the Lord revealed that He would destroy Sodom and Gomorrah on account of their sin. Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah was great, and because their sin was very grievous, the Lord would go down and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it.

Abraham knew immediately that this meant Sodom's destruction. But what about Lot and his family, who lived in Sodom? Abraham pleaded with the Lord

to spare the city if there were 50 righteous in the city. After Abraham 'whittled' the Lord down to 10 righteous, Abraham understood that the Lord would not destroy righteous Lot with Sodom.

But before revealing to Abraham his intentions to destroy Sodom, the Lord explained His rationale for revealing these things to Abraham.

The Lord had promised to make of Abraham a great nation, in whom all the nations of the world would be blessed. But for that to happen it was necessary for Abraham's children and household after him to "keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment." That in turn required that Abraham instruct and command his children. What the Lord was about to reveal to Abraham concerning Sodom's destruction was an important part of the instruction Abraham must give to his household.



Abraham would command his children and his household to keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment. Notice that this is given as the fruit of Abraham's instruction. But if it is to be the fruit, it must necessarily form the content of that instruction as well.

The way of the Lord!

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The “way of the LORD” is the way that the Lord would have us live. The name “Lord” is really “Jehovah,” which is God’s covenant name. The way of the Lord is the way of God’s covenant, the way that the Lord has determined for us to live in His covenant as His friend servants. If we will live as God’s covenant people, as His friends, there is a certain way we must behave in marriage, in the home, at school, at work, in our recreation.

This way of the Lord is further explained as doing justice and judgment.

The word “justice” is really the word righteousness, which has the idea of obedience to God’s law. God has given His law to regulate our lives in the covenant. To do justice, or righteousness, is to live in harmony with God’s covenant law. This is the way of the Lord.

But there is also the doing of judgment. “Judgment” has the idea of righteous administration. We must bear in mind that in the patriarchal age the family, church, and state were one and the same, not divided, as today. Abraham, as the head of his house, ruled as father, elder, and king over his family. Judgment points to the rules God set forth for the proper running of the home/church/state. To do judgment was to order the family/church/state according to God’s rules. Today the home, church, and state are all separate. We do judgment, when we order these institutions according to the rules God has set for them. This is the way of the Lord.

All this Abraham would command his children. This means that Abraham would instruct his children in the ways of the Lord, how to practice justice and judgment. He would do this, of course, by both word and example. He would also insist that his children walk in the ways of the Lord. This is the emphasis of the fact that he would command his children.

This is the calling of all covenant parents.

Repeatedly the Bible calls covenant parents to instruct and train their children. Here we find the substance of proper training. Parents must teach their children the way of the Lord. They must show from Scripture, by both word and example, what the way of the Lord is. They must also command their children to walk in the way of this instruction, and they must enforce that command through discipline. And when they send their children off to school, it is imperative that

these schools have the same covenant perspective as the parents cultivate in the home.

In this connection we must bear in mind the context in which this passage appears.

The Lord revealed to Abraham how He deals with both the righteous and the wicked. Even though the wicked prosper in this world, as did Sodom, the Lord will destroy them when they fill the cup of iniquity. And He will also rescue the righteous, sparing them from destruction, even though they deserve to perish with the wicked.

The Lord wanted Abraham to know this, so that he would instruct his children in these things.

Covenant parents of all ages must do the same. Covenant children must be taught how their covenant God deals with both the righteous and the wicked, as illustrated in His dealings with sinful Sodom and righteous Lot.



The fruit of this instruction is that the children of the covenant will in fact keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment. This is the emphasis of the text. “For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment.”

How must we explain this?

Covenant parents soon learn that they cannot control their children’s behavior, especially when their children reach their teenage years. This is true in spite of diligent training in the ways of the covenant. The reason is that parents cannot control their children’s hearts.

What is beyond parental control is in God’s control. He controls both the heart and the behavior of all men. “The king’s heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will” (Prov.21:1).

And within the covenant, God sanctifies the instruction of godly parents to the hearts and lives of their children so that they walk in the way of that instruction. This is due to the very nature of the covenant. God’s covenant is with believing parents and their children. The grace of God that leads believing parents to keep God’s covenant to do justice and judgment will also sanctify the instruction they give to their children in these things so that they join their parents in keeping God’s covenant. There are exceptions to this. This is due to the fact that God’s election and reprobation

*What is beyond
parental control
is in God’s control.*

cut across the line of the covenant. Not all born of covenant parents are the elect of God in whom God graciously works His salvation. Abraham found that in his own family. There was an unbelieving, ungodly Esau, with whom he and Isaac had to deal. But for the most part the Lord blesses covenant homes with the true seed of the covenant. Being born again, even as children, these will receive and embrace the training they receive to keep the way of the Lord to do justice and judgment. It was this great covenant reality that stood behind the statement of our Lord that “he [Abraham] will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment.”

May this covenant reality be an encouragement to believing parents today to be faithful in the covenant training of their children.

But there is more!

The Lord emphasized that it was necessary that Abraham’s children keep God’s covenant to do justice and judgment so that the Lord might bring upon Abraham that which He had spoken to him.

The Lord had spoken to Abraham, giving him many wonderful promises. He would give to Abraham a seed that would number as many as the stars in heaven, so that Abraham would become a great nation. This great nation would one day inherit the land of Canaan. The Lord had just informed Abraham that Sarah would have a son in her old age to realize all this.

Abraham understood that the things that God had promised were types and shadows of greater things to come. The great seed that the Lord had promised Abraham was really the Christ, who would one day come forth from his loins. In that seed Abraham and all his true spiritual children who possessed his faith would one day inherit not the earthly but the heavenly Canaan.

That is also the promise to us and our children as members of God’s covenant. The types and shadows of the Old Testament have been fulfilled. The earthly Canaan promised to Abraham and his seed is no longer of any significance. There remains, however, the greater Canaan, the heavenly Canaan, sealed in the blood of the cross. And all the true seed of Abraham, those that possess the faith of Abraham, are heirs of this heavenly country.

*God graciously sanctifies
this instruction to
covenant children
to keep the way of the Lord,
so that He may
bring to them that which
He has promised to them.*

And now here is the point!

The way to the Promised Land is not the way of the world but the way of the Lord, doing justice and judgment.

And so it is imperative that covenant parents instruct their children in this all important way.

God graciously sanctifies this instruction to covenant children to keep the way of the Lord, so that He may bring to them that which He has promised to them.



The cause of Abraham instructing his children after him was that the Lord knew him.

The Lord knew Abraham! This does not mean simply that the Lord knew who Abraham was and what he would do. When Scripture speaks of God’s knowledge of His people, it is speaking of an intimate knowledge of love. It is the knowledge that a father and a mother have for their children. It is a knowledge that leads parents to seek the welfare of their children, even making huge sacrifices for their children’s welfare.

This knowledge God has for His people from all eternity.

In His eternal foreknowledge of His people He determines their salvation in Jesus Christ. “For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified” (Rom. 8:29, 30).

As the Lord, in this eternal knowledge of love, carries out His glorious salvation, He draws near to His people, renews them spiritually, and establishes with them a close covenant bond of friendship and fellowship. The result will be that they

keep the way of the Lord to do justice and judgment.

And they will command their children to do the same.

This is God’s intent and purpose.

Are you known of the Lord? You will show that by keeping the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment. And you will command your children to do the same!

Be faithful in this!

This is the way to Canaan—for you and your children! ❧

Polemics: Fighting Words (4)

The last three editorials (June, July, and August) were written to call us to our duty to fight for the cause of God and truth. In these days when doctrinal purity takes the backseat to unity (see my editorial #2, July 2012, p. 413), the biblical call to combat error is vital for Reformed and Presbyterian churches. The first two editorials presented Scripture's mandate, the third issued the caution to do polemics properly.

It would not be surprising if some were to cheer for the first two but sneer at the caution; or, others, applaud the caution but cringe at the call to fight. To each we say: Balance, brethren. The danger of each ditch is real—not fighting at all, or fighting improperly. It takes strength (grace) to fight, and it takes additional strength (grace) to fight biblically.

Polemics is the activity of the church to defend God's name in preaching and writing by exposing, resisting, and opposing error, with the prayer that God, through this activity, will destroy the error. Scripture and Reformed tradition require that we Reformed office-

bearers be willing and able to battle the lie. That's motivation enough. But our motivation increases when we think of the people of God, especially the vulnerable youth. Paul warns that evil men "lie in wait to deceive," and he speaks of the "sleight of men" and their "cunning craftiness" (Eph. 4:14). Their false doctrines, unopposed, can toss the youth to and fro and finally onto the rocks of ruin. Paul's 2000-year-old prophecies are coming to pass: "Evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived" (II Tim. 3:13). Polemics—fighting against these seducers—is necessary.

But because polemics must be done properly, last time I noted four improper ways of opposing the lie. Let me remind us of them:

1. *The contentious spirit.* This man is probably not happy unless his (or his pastor's) sermons blast some error at length. He's preoccupied with, maybe obsessed with, polemics.

2. *Fighting against without fighting for.* Like the hired gun who goes to battle for any armed force, he's not fighting to defend a cause he loves. We must fight to defend the precious truth of sovereign grace and a God-honoring life of gratitude.

3. *Contending against errors that do not (presently) threaten.*

This spirit, in Old Testament terms, would have been very happy had the prophet Hosea lobbed mortars of criticism at Syria, because it would have diverted attention from where it presently belonged—in Israel itself.

4. *Failure to distinguish.* He does not show the difference between incorrigible enemies and erring friends, between fatal errors and nonessentials, between teachers of error and those they deceive. To use another example, between a position an opponent *actually* takes and where we believe his present position will *lead* him, or between a position and the *implications* of the position. Both are important, and if I love the neighbor I will also show him implications and inevitable conclusions. Failure to distinguish does great injustice to the neighbor who is in error.

Now, with the prayer that the searching Spirit of Christ will reveal what elements of any of these are found in ourselves, I mention two more:

5. *Taking careless aim.* In my classroom at seminary I have a small mountain quail that I shot as a teenager. I used it in catechism and still use it to show the kind of quail God sent the Israelites in the wilderness. Hunting with my father in

Previous article in this series: August 2012, p. 437.

the foothills in southern California, I shot this quail “from the hip,” that is, without careful aim, because time was short—probably the one time I ever actually hit what I shot at from the hip. But shooting from the hip is unwise—not because you usually miss, but because you may hit what you don’t want to hit. Doing polemics, we may never “shoot from the hip.”

This error is really “judging rashly or unheard,” as the Heidelberg Catechism explains the ninth commandment. A man criticizes an error without understanding it, without studying it carefully, perhaps quoting parts of a man’s article out of context. Then, having failed to present the error accurately, he demolishes it as carelessly as he erected it.

The Protestant Reformed Churches ought to be especially sensitive to this error because we are often judged rashly or unheard. We are accused of teaching presupposed regeneration—when our teachings and writings show clearly that this is an unfounded accusation, wrongly linking our teaching to Abraham Kuyper’s. We have been labeled Anabaptists, guilty of world-flight mentality—when our preaching and writing on antithetical living caution *against* world-flight. Others publicly brand us hyper-Calvinists for opposing the well-meant offer of the gospel—when reading PRC literature will show that this is a misguided and unfair judgment. “Listen to our sermons! Read what we have written!” we plead. “Read carefully. Present our positions fully and accurately.”

When the tables are turned, we must do polemics only after careful study of what we believe to be an error, presenting the error accurately, quoting authors in full context of their writings, even reading (as much as possible) what they most recently have written. If I do not do this, I cannot expect others to give a hearing to what I write or say, to learn how their teaching contradicts Scripture and the Reformed confessions. If I will not take seriously someone who misrepresents my beliefs, I cannot expect others will listen to mine. But I pray they do read, and are helped. That’s one of the reasons to do polemics.

That is, the necessity of carefulness here includes more than the ninth commandment’s warning not to judge rashly. Our careful examination of the error shows our opponents that we are serious about convincing them of the truth and bringing them to repentance from believing a lie. A half-baked presentation of their teaching, really a caricature, will lead them to dismiss whatever else we have to say.

To conclude this point, it’s easy to set up a “straw man” that can easily be blown down. That may impress some, but it will not do anyone any real good. And it will displease the Lord.

6. *Inappropriate tone and attitude.* Finally, we who contend for the faith must avoid an unbiblical tone and attitude.

Calvin spoke so often of this danger that the difficulty here is to choose his *best* words. As a good pastor of pastors, Calvin instructed,

Godly teachers must take heed, first, that they favor not the affections of the flesh too much under the color of zeal; secondly, that they break not out with headlong and unseasonable heat when there is yet place for moderation; thirdly, that they give not themselves over to foolish and uncomely railing.”¹

In his commentary on James, Calvin says that James “discourages...that immoderate desire to condemn, which proceeds from ambition and pride....” And that “this is usually done when impertinent censors...insolently boast themselves in the work of exposing the vices of others.”²

When the young Herman Hoeksema wrote a fine article lamenting that so few were willing to engage in controversy for truth, he judged it necessary to add some significant cautions, worth repeating here:

In the first place, in criticizing, the critic ought to practice self-control and self-restraint. His emotions may not be allowed to run away with him. In the second place, as to the form of our criticism,...it must be characterized by courtesy. The tone of our criticism must not violate the rules of etiquette and courtesy. Even though we may have serious objections against the views of anyone,...[it] must be free from personalities, must remain polite. In the third place, negative, destructive criticism may never predominate. The chief element

¹ *Commentary on the Acts*, I:509.

² *Commentaries on the Catholic Epistles*, p. 318.

of anyone's work must be positive and constructive.³

The most inappropriate tones and attitudes expressed in controversy are likely manifestations of pride. If they are not due to that damnable sin of pride, then they are at least due to a disregard of the souls of those we ought to try to win. But even that has roots in self and therefore in pride. Gone to seed, pride holds up an opponent to ridicule, flatters our own judgments, demeans others. Pride elevates ourselves and derides others who disagree. Pride is ugly.

And it's not true that some are naturally disposed to this sin and others naturally humble. Pride resides in every sinful nature. It's also ironic—to understate the matter—that pride would show itself in the writing or preaching of one who

³ "The Young Calvinist," March, 1921, p. 70.

believes sovereign *grace*. Among us, pride is manifestation that the unmerited favor that we confess has not made its way from our head to our heart. Pride is a horrible contradiction of grace, because grace is the favor of God to *unworthy* sinners, and *humility*—not pride—is evidence that we understand grace. Pride in a Reformed believer who confesses that we are righteous by faith alone *without works* makes his warning that *works*-righteousness leads to pride ring hollow.

What I need to hear, then, is what Paul warned the Corinthian Christians: "Who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? Now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory [boast] as if thou hadst not received it" (I Cor. 4:7). Then I want to ask myself, "Has my knowledge puffed me up? And is it perhaps exactly because I lack the charity that edifieth?" (cf. I Cor. 8:1).

Let's pray that the Lord will both prepare us for polemics when we would be inclined to be cowardly or even tolerant of heresy, and grace us with a carefulness to battle bravely as well as properly.

The devil is subtle, and he understands our natures. Those who are seriously wounded or shell-shocked from a former battle, he tempts to flee any battle. Understandable as flight is, it is wrong. Truth must be defended for the sake of God and His church. Others who are immature and naïve, the devil draws into his own devilish methods. In both ways, he does damage to God's cause.

Pray for your leaders, especially your elders and pastors. Pray for truth. Love truth. "Buy the truth, and sell it not; also wisdom, and instruction, and understanding" (Prov. 23:23).

(next time: the *fruit* of polemics)



Ideas Have Consequences: The Cult of Charles Darwin (5)

"And the children of Issachar, which were men that had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do: the heads of them were two hundred; and all their brethren were at their commandment."
I Chronicles 12:32

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Previous article in this series: April 15, 2012, p. 319.

In our previous article the case was made that modern science's adoption and strict adherence to Darwin's doctrine of evolution has resulted in serious detrimental consequences for the study and development of science. Further, it was pointed out that the evolutionist's position is rooted in the philosophy of naturalism (everything can be explained in terms of natural causes and laws), which is in itself a gigantic

“leap of faith.” Modern-day Israel could live with that. After all, this is exactly what one would expect from a reprobate world that does “...not like to retain God in their knowledge” (Rom. 1:28).

There is, however, a more significant problem with the cult of Charles Darwin for modern-day Israel. *Within the church* there are those who believe that the message of Charles Darwin and the testimony of Scripture can be harmonized. On this and its serious consequences we will focus in this article.

Theistic Evolution

The attempt to harmonize the theory of evolution with what Scripture teaches about creation is called “theistic evolution.” Those who try to harmonize the two often argue that Scripture’s account of creation demonstrates *that* God created, but does not address the question of *how* God created. With that as his premise the theistic evolutionist proclaims that he honors Scripture, which informs us of the fact that God created the heavens and the earth; but since the Bible was not intended to be a science textbook, it does not inform us concerning how God did it. Science must do that; and the theory of evolution provides the best explanation of this. (Mind you, this position is maintained in the face of God’s clear revelation of *how* He made all things. *Eight times* in Genesis 1, with the words “and God said, Let there be...,” God tells us that everything in the creation was called into existence by the word of His power.)

It is of interest to note that the idea of theistic evolution is not some new phenomenon. This monster raised its ugly head early on. What Darwin relates in *Origin of Species* is proof of that. He writes,

A celebrated author and divine has written to me [Darwin, ck] that “he has gradually learnt to see that it is just as noble a conception of the Deity to believe that he created a few original forms capable of self-development into other and needful forms, as to believe that He required a fresh act of creation to supply the voids caused by the action of His laws.”¹

Modern-day Issachar might wonder, what would

¹ Charles Darwin, *Origin of Species* (New York: Mentor 1959), 498.

motivate the “divine” quoted above and his present-day look-a-likes to take the Darwinian approach in the face of the clear testimony of Scripture. Some will piously answer, for one to hold unequivocally to the biblical creation model actually results in losing credibility in the sharing of the gospel with others.² Whether this is a real concern or simply an excuse is left for the reader to decide. Phil Hills and Norman Nevin present the matter somewhat differently:

No coherent, cohesive theology has yet been offered that would allow Christians to embrace evolution with integrity. Science has uncovered a great deal of empirical evidence that is challenging the Darwinian paradigm. Why then do so many want to embrace it? It appears that the only possible reason is the fear of appearing intellectually inferior to the academic consensus.³

The Devastating Consequences

Of far more significance than the *reasons* “Christian” scientists embrace evolution are the devastating *consequences* of their actions. As we list a number (not intended to be exhaustive) of these consequences, we leave it to the reader to order them according to importance.

First, in his book *Suicide of a Superpower*, Patrick Buchanan attributes the decline of the West in part to the cult of Charles Darwin. His argument runs something like this: The decline of the West is in part a consequence of the decline of Christianity in the West. To the degree that Darwin’s theory of evolution has had an impact on the decline of Christianity’s moral influence on the West, it has contributed to the West’s decline. Buchanan writes, “Our poets and seers saw it coming. Eight years after Charles Darwin’s *Origin of Species* appeared, Matthew Arnold, in ‘Dover Beach,’ saw the faith that had created Europe inexorably receding.”⁴ Fred Wilson supports Buchanan’s analysis when he

² Erin Roach, “Mohler vs. BioLogos Over Creation,” *Christian Renewal* March 16, 2011: 12.

³ Norman C. Nevin, editor, *Should Christians Embrace Evolution?* (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: P&R Publishing, 2011), 220.

⁴ Patrick Buchanan, *Suicide of a Superpower* (New York, Saint Martin’s Press, 2011), 67-68.

writes, "It is tragic to realize that Western Europe rapidly changed from an area of strong Protestant faith to its present-day paganism. The cause was not evolution but Christians compromising to make Scripture fit evolution...."⁵ To be noted is that it is becoming increasingly clear that the United States is not far behind Europe in this regard.

Second, while some may say that for one to hold to the biblical model of creation results in blunting their credibility in sharing the gospel with others, a better case can be made for just the opposite. Tom McIver, writer of anti-creationist articles and books, condemns Christians for trying to make Genesis fit evolutionary science. He writes: "Each [theory, ck]... involves critical compromises with the plainest, most literal reading of the Bible to force Scripture into concordance with scientific evidence regarding the age of the earth."⁶ Another secular humanist, A. J. Mattill, concurs: "Many creationists have taken the dishonest way of lengthening the days into millions of years, but the creationists make it clear that such an approach is nothing but a makeshift and is unacceptable biblically and scientifically...."⁷ Sad to say (regardless of their motives for saying it), these secular humanists are right on target. And the ironic result is that the credibility of these gospel-sharers is also compromised in their gospel-sharing.

Third, theistic evolution is the death blow to the truth of the historicity (and along with it the infallibility) of Scripture. As Ed Wharton notes, "Any view of these chapters in Genesis other than authentic history will necessarily regard the genealogies and the tracing of the messianic seed-line as unhistoric and unimportant. This will eat away at trust in God's Word and cause faith's fire to go out."⁸ James A. Herrick calls this "taking leave of history." He writes, "...advocates of the Revealed Word perspective have always insisted on history...as the ground of religion." Herrick goes on to explain why this is so important:

⁵ Fred Wilson, "Compromises and Consequences: The Genesis Account," *Impact* January, 1994: 3.

⁶ Tom McIver, "Formless and Void: Gap Theory Creationism," *Creation/Evolution XXIV*, vol. 8, no. 3, 1988.

⁷ A.J. Mattill, "Three Cheers for the Creationists," *Free Inquiry*, vol. 2, Spring, 1982: 17-18.

⁸ Wilson, 4.

Should history ground spirituality, as the Revealed Word tradition has insisted? Or should myth, allegory and private experience—each cut free from external events—provide the basis of our religious commitments? We might say that the advantage and the risk of basing spirituality on history are the same—the possibility of proof and disproof. Vulnerability to historical scrutiny imports openness and candor. When a religious claim can be examined, tested, subjected to critical review, the public being asked to accept the claim is at the very least invited to participate rationally in a process of choice. When, on the other hand, a claim cannot be tested or subjected to any ordinary tests of truthfulness, we are left with no recourse but to trust the probity [integrity, ck] of the claimant....

Does spirituality need history? The Revealed Word tradition has always answered yes; the New Religious Synthesis says no.⁹

By "taking leave" of the history with respect to the first chapters of Genesis 1, one loses claim to the historicity of all of Scripture and is left at the mercy of the self-proclaimed "experts." This becomes painfully clear by tracing the evolution of theistic evolution at Calvin College.

While we do not have the space to trace that sad journey in this article, the interested reader could easily do so by following this sequential thread: *Beyond the Atom* (1948) by John DeVries; *The Fourth Day* (1986) by Howard J. Van Till; *Science Held Hostage* (1988) by Howard J. Van Till, Davis A. Young, and Clarence Menninga; and most recently the writings of Dr. John Schnieder and Dr. Daniel Harlow. While it is true that the writings of Schnieder and Harlow have not been upheld by the college, they demonstrate the theological implications of embracing theistic evolution, namely: "...Adam and Eve are purely symbolic literary figures, that there was no historical fall into sin, and that the doctrines of original sin, Christ's atonement, election and eternal punishment need major revision."¹⁰

As an aside, this case study demonstrates the potential detrimental consequences of allowing the proverbial nose of the camel (theistic evolution) into the Reformed

⁹ James A. Herrick, *The Making of the New Spirituality* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 252 & 257.

¹⁰ John Byl, "The Evolution of Calvin College," *Christian Renewal*, November 24, 2010:6.

tent. It eats like a canker and tends finally to evolve into the all-consuming elephant in the room, a room now devoid of the Reformed faith.

Fourth, the truth of the perspicuity (clarity) of Scripture is another sad casualty of the theistic evolutionist's ungodly tinkering with the creation record. The numerous and varied attempts to harmonize Scripture with evolution speak loudly here. The multiplicity of theories (the Gap Theory, the Period Theory, the Framework Hypothesis, and who knows how many variations there are of each?) clearly demonstrates the confusion that results when one departs from the inspired historical record. Is Scripture really so murky as to be open to all these different theories? Furthermore, if Genesis 1 may be twisted so unrecognizably, doesn't that also place the rest of Scripture in jeopardy? There can be little doubt that an evolutionary approach to the creation account has had serious consequences for those churches that have tolerated it. The loss of the perspicuous nature of Genesis 1 puts all of Scripture at risk. It leaves the church at the mercy of the interpretation of the "experts" with respect to the rest of Scripture; after all, if God's Word is so confusing in Genesis, why would things be any different elsewhere in His Scriptures? Little wonder, then, that churches have also adopted innovations concerning divorce and remarriage, Sabbath observance, women in the special offices of the church, homosexuality, etc.

Fifth, the teaching of theistic evolution is a denial of the Lordship of Christ. This becomes clear when one takes into consideration passages in Scripture that declare that Christ as Lord was active in the work of creating. Take for example Colossians 1:15-18:

15. Who [Christ, ck] is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: 16. For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: 17. And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. 18. And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.

Consider how theistic evolution removes this work

from Christ and therefore also Christ as Lord of this work. Consider also, if Christ was not Lord in the work of creating, what right does He have to claim the "preeminence" now? Dreadful thought! Satan must laugh at those "useful idiots" (Lenin's words for those who unknowingly served his communist cause) who piously claim Christ as Lord in their lives and yet deny Him lordship in the work of creating.

Sixth, ultimately the precious gospel itself is lost! The Heidelberg Catechism (Q. & A. 19) makes this abundantly clear: "Whence knowest thou this [that Jesus was very God and very man, and had to be that to serve as our Mediator, ck]?" Answer: "From the holy gospel, which God Himself first revealed in Paradise; and afterwards published by the patriarchs and prophets, and represented by the sacrifices and other ceremonies of the law; and, lastly, has fulfilled it by His only begotten Son." The Scriptures are one! To cut out the gospel "first revealed in Paradise" (which is done by rejecting the historicity of the first chapters of Genesis) is to put the gospel as revealed throughout Scripture on the chopping block. In this connection, one cannot help but be reminded of the stern warning at the end of sacred Scripture on those who "...shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy," namely, "God shall take away his part out of the book of life" (Rev. 2:19).

The Cult of Charles Darwin

Indeed, the teachings of Charles Darwin have had, and continue to have, serious consequences for the church. It remains to expose his followers for what they are: part of the cult of Charles Darwin.

While it is true that in the formal sense evolutionism is not a cult, the five articles we have written on this subject demonstrate that it does bear a number of cult-like characteristics. Note just a few: they have their cult-like leader (Darwin) and an unquestioning adherence to his teachings. In fact, they demand that his teachings alone be used to brainwash unsuspecting victims in the public schools. Further, no tolerance is allowed for other views or challenges to the basic tenets of evolution. Also, total commitment is required of Darwin's disciples; to deviate in the least can, and often does, result in loss of position or even of the possibility of being considered for employment. This is true especially for

those seeking employment as professors in the colleges and universities. Another characteristic of a cult is that its adherents are devoted to converting others to their view. Again this characteristic can be readily observed on the college and university campuses, both Christian and secular, of our day.

The sons and daughters of Issachar are called to do battle with this cult of Charles Darwin, and in the process are enjoined never to "...make a peace treaty with the enemy of your king" (which is what those who

hold to theistic evolution have done).¹¹ Very likely this will result in various forms of scorn and ridicule. In such times find comfort in these words of Herman Hoeksema: "It is the resilience of faith by which we are enabled, in the midst of all the attacks of Satan, to remain faithful, to stay standing, and to bear suffering with joy for Christ's name's sake."¹² 

¹¹ Herman Hoeksema, *Peace for the Troubled Heart* (Jenison, MI: Reformed Free Publishing Association, 2010), 149.

¹² Hoeksema, 149.

GO YE INTO ALL THE WORLD

REV. WILBUR BRUINSMA

Missions Decreed in God's Counsel

This is the mystery of the church: people of many nations (the Gentiles) are made fellow-heirs, and of the same body with the church of the Old Testament (Eph. 3:6). Christ has abolished the Old Testament ceremonies of the law in order to make in Himself of two (Jews and Gentiles) one new man (Eph. 2:15). The church is no longer limited to one nation. It has become universal. This mystery was hid in God from the beginning of the world. But according to God's eternal purpose, which He purposed in Christ, this mystery has now been revealed to us.

It is both revealed and accomplished by means of the preaching of the gospel. Christ, through His church, has preached, and still preaches, peace to the nations that are afar off (Eph. 2:17). By means of this gospel the people of this world—who were no people—are now made partakers of the promise in Christ. This is why it is the task of the church to preach the gospel of peace. This gospel must be preached to those who are near and to those who are afar off. This means

that missions is central to the accomplishment of the eternal purpose of God regarding His church. It is true that the gospel must be preached to those who dwell within the confines of the church. They need to hear the call to faith and repentance. But the same unsearchable riches of Christ must be preached to all nations, since God has chosen to accomplish His eternal purpose and counsel regarding His church in this manner. Missions belongs to the essence of the church in the new dispensation.

Though the mystery of the church is revealed and proclaimed to the church of the New Testament in distinction from the saints in the Old, nevertheless, that mystery was taught through prophecy and through typical events in the Old Testament. The first prophecy that heralded the grafting in of the Gentiles into the church of Jesus Christ was that spoken by Noah directly after the Flood. Noah had planted a vineyard, made wine, and then sinned by becoming drunk on that wine. Noah's son Ham mocked his father in his sin. Shem and Japheth showed honor and respect to their father by covering his shame. After Noah awoke out of his drunken stupor he learned of the actions of his three sons. In Genesis 9:25-27 Noah then spoke these words of prophecy concerning them: "Cursed

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be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren. Blessed be the Lord God of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant. God shall enlarge Japheth, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant.” There are several truths contained in this prophecy that could be explained, but we are interested, for the most part, in the prophecy spoken of Japheth.

Actually, Shem is the son of Noah that received an immediate blessing: “Blessed be Jehovah, God of Shem.” Noah speaks this blessing upon God, and in this sense he praises God. Yet, such a blessing includes Shem. After all, Jehovah, the ever-faithful, never-changing God is Shem’s God. We cannot overlook the truth that the blessedness of Shem lies in the covenant God establishes with him: I will be your God. Neither does this covenant exclude the promise: I will be a God unto your children after you in your generations. Noah’s prophecy indicates that God’s covenant with Noah would be carried on in the line of Shem. Not with everyone of Shem’s children, however. As time progressed, God separated Abraham from the rest of Shem’s generations and continued His covenant with Abraham’s children. But it was in the line of Shem that God’s church in the Old Testament was indeed preserved.

Robert C. Harbach, in his commentary, *Studies in the Book of Genesis*, explains this particular aspect of Noah’s prophecy with perceptive and compelling insight: “Jehovah being the God of Shem, Shem, then, becomes the repository and heir of all the blessings of salvation which God intends for all nations.” A repository is a place where something is stored in order to preserve or save it for a later time. This was true of Shem and his children. In him and his children God stored the blessings of salvation throughout the Old Testament era. The blessings of salvation in Christ were preserved in Shem’s generations through Abraham, until which time God would fulfill His plan of bringing salvation to the nations in the new dispensation.

This is where the prophecy of Noah concerning Japheth applies: “God shall enlarge Japheth, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem.” That God enlarges Japheth refers to the development of the generations of this son of Noah. Truly, when we examine history,

we see that the generations of Japheth did become large and prominent in the earth. Concerning them Scripture records in Genesis 10:5, “By these the isles of the Gentiles divided in their lands; every one after his tongue, after their families, in their nations.” The children of Japheth make up the Gentile nations that settled in Europe and beyond.

But what is of great significance is that these Gentile nations born out of Japheth would come to “dwell in the tents of Shem.” This does not mean that some scattered Japhethites would at different times come to dwell in the tents of Shem. It does not even mean that a nation here and there from among Japheth’s descendants would be grafted into the generations of Shem. It means that God would bring the nations that developed out of Japheth under the umbrella of Shem’s descendants. They would dwell together in the same tents. This prophecy of Noah points to a great spiritual event that would take place in the future. That event is the mystery spoken of in Ephesians 3:6, that the Gentiles (Japhethites) should be fellow heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of God’s promise in Christ by the gospel. The great event Noah spoke of is the day of Pentecost, when the church of the Old Testament broke outside of the restrictions God placed upon it until that time. The blessings of salvation that God had stored in the repository of Shem’s seed during the Old Testament, was then brought out of storage and bestowed upon a church universal—a church out of all the nations of the earth! When the Spirit was poured out on all flesh on the day of Pentecost, God finally brought to pass what was His divine intention from eternity. John Calvin, in his commentaries, has a way with words that few can match in exegeting a passage. He writes in his commentary on Genesis 9:27,

Two thousand years, and some centuries more, elapsed before the Gentiles and the Jews were gathered together in one faith. Then the sons of Shem, of whom the greater part had revolted, and cut themselves off from the holy family of God, were collected together, and dwelt under one tabernacle. Also the Gentiles, the progeny of Japheth, who had long been wanderers and fugitives, were received into the same tabernacle. For God, by a new adoption, has formed a people out of those who were separated, and has confirmed

a fraternal union between alienated parties.... It is truly no common support of our faith, that the calling of the Gentiles is not only decreed in the eternal counsel of God, but is openly declared by the mouth of the Patriarch; lest we should think it to have happened suddenly, or by chance, that the inheritance of eternal life was offered [presented—WB] generally to all. But the form of expression, “Japheth shall dwell in the tabernacles of Shem,” commends to us that mutual society, which ought to exist, and to be cherished among the faithful.

In this same paragraph of his commentary, Calvin explains how this is accomplished by God in the New Testament age. “This is done by the sweet and gentle voice of God, which he has uttered in the gospel; and this prophecy is still daily receiving its fulfillment, since God invites the scattered sheep to join his flock, and collects, on every side, those who shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven.” For two thousand years, since the time of the Flood, the mystery concerning the church was hidden from God’s saints. Prophets diligently inquired and searched into the mystery in an attempt to find out what and what manner of time this prophecy of Noah (and others) spoke of. But it was not revealed until Christ, the Son of Shem, came and fulfilled this prophecy. Then was the mystery made known through the preaching of the gospel—a gospel that still is preached by the church to the Gentiles. All of this bespeaks the calling of the church in missions.

We live in the age of missions!

In no other age of history has the church been called to be involved in the work of missions. The church of the Old Testament, though a witness in the earth, was not given the task to preach the gospel to all nations. This is strictly a New Testament mandate. Yet, this is exactly the manner in which the prophecy of God to Noah is fulfilled. This present age, from Christ’s ascension to His parousia (Christ’s return at the end of time), is God’s chosen time for the gospel to go forth to all peoples, races, and nations of the earth. The proclamation of the gospel to the nations belongs to the church of the last days. This is our unique task. It bears repeating: *it is not a secondary labor or a luxury*. Missions is a part of the essential makeup of

the church since Pentecost. The church preaches the gospel. This is how the mystery is revealed and this is how the mystery is accomplished. There would be no church today without the powerful work of Christ through ambassadors He sends out through the church to proclaim the gospel to the Gentile nations of the earth.

That the work of missions is vital to the work of the church is proven by the prophecy of Christ Himself in Matthew 24:14: “And the gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.” The prophecy of Noah must be fulfilled to its fullest extent in order that Christ might return. God had in mind, therefore, already after the Flood—even from eternity in His counsel—a universal church gathered out of the nations. This universal church in eternity is viewed by God organically as one body of people united to Christ by a true and living faith. In this we find the beauty of our confession today: “I believe an holy, catholic church; the communion of saints.” With the Heidelberg Catechism, Q & A 54, we can say: I believe that I am, and forever shall remain, a living member of that church of Christ gathered, defended, and preserved out of the whole human race from the beginning to the end of the world. We can say that, even though we were born out of the line of Japheth! We can say that because our generations (wild olive branches—Romans 11), by the powerful work of the preaching of the gospel, were grafted into the tree of the church, whose root and fatness is Jesus Christ. That grafting-in of our own generations was accomplished by the mission work of the church in the past. God still accomplishes His purpose today through the same means. The age of missions is not past—not yet.

It is true that we live at the close of the ages. It is true that much of the church has been gathered. But it is equally true that there still are nations that need to hear the gospel. Obviously, the final fulfillment of Noah’s prophecy is still to come. Christ’s command to His church still holds firm: preach the gospel. When that gospel is preached for a witness to all nations, then shall the end come and the final fulfillment of Noah’s prophecy will take place in a new creation. ☺

Labor

In the U.S. the last holiday of summer is Labor Day. Ironically, it is celebrated by not working, which reflects also its origin by labor unions who coerce businesses to cough up maximum pay for minimum labor. Scripture says much about labor. Little is welcome by labor unions except, perhaps, “the laborer is worthy of his hire” (Luke 10:7) or its condemnation of greedy employers, especially those who gain wealth by defrauding their employees (James 5:4).

At first glance, Scripture seems to take a rather dim view of labor. Labor is the biblical word that emphasizes the arduous, backbreaking, endless toil of work. Labor belongs to the curse: “In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread till thou return unto the ground” (Gen. 3:19). The word occurs most frequently in Ecclesiastes, where the wise man complains how he hates his labor; it causes his heart to despair; and it is vanity and vexation of spirit (Eccl. 2:11, 18, 20). Why? Everything under the sun is full of labor (Eccl. 1:8); there is no end to it (Eccl. 4:8); we labor for the mouth but the appetite is never filled (Eccl. 6:7); we labor lifelong only to return naked as we came, leaving the fruits of our labor to another, who may be a fool besides (Eccl. 5:15; 2:19). The psalmist agrees: Man goes forth unto his labor until the evening; the span of our days is labor and sorrow, for it is soon cut off and we fly away (Ps. 104:23; 90:10).

Only Jesus Christ can change all that: “Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matt. 11:28). His gift is that a man may enjoy the good of his labor (Eccl. 3:13). His portion is that in all his labor a man may live joyfully with his wife; the two receive good reward for their labor; and their sleep is sweet (Eccl. 9:9; 4:9; 5:12). He sees our labor (Gen. 31:42). He gives the labor of the ungodly to the locust (Ps. 78:46), but gives us an inheritance for which we did not labor (Josh. 24:13). He assures we will eat the fruit of our labor (Ps. 128:2); the labor of the righteous tends to life; in all labor is profit;

and increase comes by labor (Prov. 10:16; 14:23; 13:11).

Some suppose that because of Jesus, we do not labor, we need not labor, and we are not called to labor. Physically we labor; spiritually we rest: God does all the labor; we do nothing. Now it is true that Jesus performs all labor in His kingdom, vineyard, and family. But He uses means. Us. Except the LORD build the house, they labor in vain that build it (Ps. 127:1). We still build. In spiritual life too, the talk of lips tends only to penury, the slothful cannot sleep, and the sluggard’s soul is empty (Prov. 14:23; 26:14; 13:4). Six days shalt thou labor, and not just physically, for even regarding the seventh day we must labor to enter into that rest (Heb. 4:11). The grand conclusion drawn by the apostle from the resurrection is not, “therefore retire, rest easy, and take a load off,” but rather, “be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord” (I Cor. 15:58).

Labor not to be rich (Prov. 23:4). Labor not for the meat that perishes. But labor. Labor for the meat that endures unto everlasting life (John 6:27). Labor, for every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labor (I Cor. 3:8). Let him that stole (whether from God or man) steal no more, but rather let him labor, working with his hands the thing that is good (Eph. 4:28). Paul, that great apostle of Jesus Christ, labored (I Thess. 2:9), more abundantly (I Cor. 15:10), to please God (II Cor. 5:9), according to the working of Christ worked mightily in him (I Cor. 15:10). His friends, Mary, Trypena, Tryphosa, Persis, and Epaphras, labored (Rom 16:6, 12; Phil. 2:25). Churches of Jesus Christ labor (I Thess. 1:3; Rev. 2:3). Ministers, elders, and deacons of His gospel labor (I Thess. 5:12; I Tim. 5:17). We all, recipients of His grace, are hired, thus obligated, to labor faithfully in His vineyard (Matt. 20:1). Not of ourselves, but by that grace of God in us (I Cor. 15:10). And He is never unrighteous to forget our labor of love that we show toward His name (Heb. 6:10). So they who die in the Lord are blessed, that they may rest from their labors, and their works do follow them (Rev. 14:13). May we enjoy our labor today. 

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The Christian Reformed Church Replaces the Reformed Formula of Subscription (I)

This year at the 2012 Synod of the Christian Reformed Church (CRC), after years of interviews, surveys, and revisions, the Form of Subscription Revision Committee presented its report and proposed replacement of Dordt's venerable Formula of Subscription (FOS).¹

The Synod of Dordt (1618–19) adopted the FOS, and since then it has served as the standard of confessional subscription in Reformed churches. In lofty, sober, clear, and compelling language the FOS sets down which are the Reformed confessions, the place of confessions in Reformed churches, the nature of Reformed confessional subscription, and the penalty for the Reformed officebearer who refuses to subscribe or violates his subscription vow. It is a sobering exercise to read the Formula. It is a solemn and sacred act to sign it. Every man who is Reformed in heart and confession gladly signs it. It has served the Reformed churches well since Dordt. In periods of great reformations, Reformed churches have always returned to the Formula and with it to the creeds.

On June 12, 2012, the synod of the CRC unanimously set aside the FOS and adopted a new Covenant for Officebearers (CFO).² Thus the CRC news reported: "After years of deliberation and debate, the Christian Reformed Church has decided to set aside

its historic Form of Subscription in favor of a new Covenant for Officebearers."³

The news report was correct: the CRC has "set aside." The CFO is no revision of the Formula, but is a setting aside, a replacement. It bears no resemblance to Dordt's FOS at all; it was not intended to. When the committee was originally formed in 2005, its mandate was "clarifying the FOS." The revision committee stated early on its understanding of its mandate: "clarification of the FOS required a more thorough restatement rather than a minor update of the language." Taking the occasion for "clarification," the committee simply defined that as "thorough restatement." Synod agreed, and the committee thoroughly restated the idea of subscription, the place of creeds in the church, and the duty of officebearers toward those creeds. Whatever the CFO is, it is not the Formula of Subscription; whatever an officebearer does when he signs the CFO, he does not subscribe to the Reformed creeds.

The Formula's longstanding opponents, who were crying for replacement of the FOS already in the 1960s—those rebellious officebearers who refused to sign the FOS and the dishonest officebearers who signed it and broke their vows by teaching publicly or privately against the creeds—must be rejoicing.

The CRC's adoption of the CFO is the culminating act in a decades-long decline of the Christian Reformed denomination from the creedal, Reformed faith and a signal victory for the forces of opposition to creedal orthodoxy within the CRC.

The adoption of the CFO is the natural outworking of previous synodical decisions. At the root is the synodical decision that misquoted the creeds and the classes' abuse of the FOS to depose unjustly faithful officebearers for their maintenance of the creedal doctrines of sovereign, particular grace and their denial of common grace in 1924. The judgment on that ecclesiastical sin is the loss of subscription entirely.

¹ "Form of Subscription Revision Committee II," in *Agenda for Synod 2012* [of the Christian Reformed Church], 448–61 (http://crcna.org/site/uploads/uploads/resources/2012_agenda.pdf). Quotes from the committee are from this source.

² See crcna.org/site/uploads/uploads/crccomm/synod/2012/Advisory%20Committee%208A%2006-11-10-30.pdf for the document as adopted by synod 2012. Quotes from the CFO are from this source.

³ <http://www.crcna.org/news.cfm?newsid=3538§ion=1>. This and future quotations from the reports of the 2012 synod are from this source.

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Closely related to the decision to adopt the CFO is the 1976 decision of the CRC, incorporated into Article 5 of the CRC Church Order, which gutted subscription of any real meaning. Defining that solemn and sacred act, the CRC said that “the subscriber does not by subscription to the confessions declare that these doctrines are all stated in the best possible manner, or that the standards of our church cover all that the Scriptures teach on the matters confessed.” Putting its own slant on that decision, the revision committee said that, “the supplement to Church Order Article 5 already grants that one does not subscribe to the particular formulation of a doctrine as that formulation is expressed in the confession, but only to the doctrine itself.” Since 1976 in the CRC, the understanding of the act of subscription is that an officebearer does not subscribe to the particular doctrinal formulations of the creeds. That was a fundamental departure from the Reformed understanding of subscription. The FOS itself stands as a witness against that undermining of its language.

That reckless attitude toward the FOS came from tolerating the open opposition to the creeds from men who had subscribed to them, but broke their vow by openly criticizing the creeds and teaching contrary to the creeds. From Harold Dekker to Harry Boer to many today, the Formula for a long time has been a dead letter in the CRC. The chairman of the revision committee, James Dekker, wrote in his blog: “The yearning to change or revise the FOS within the CRC has been around since the early 1950s. Then Calvin College German professor Clarence Boersma presented a gravamen detailing his difficulties with signing the FOS.” Now the CRC expects officebearers who would not keep the Formula to keep the CFO.

The origins of the current movement in the CRC to replace the FOS are simply the logical development of this history, as recognized by the committee that proposed the CFO: “In 2003, Fleetwood CRC in Surrey, British Columbia...overtured Synod 2004 to study the efficacy of the Form of Subscription (FOS) on the grounds that many churches in that classis no longer used the FOS because many individuals had difficulty signing it.”⁴ The issue was that “many” flatly refused to

⁴ “Form of Subscription Revision Committee II,” in *Agenda for Synod 2012*, 448.

use the Formula, in rebellion against the clear stipulations of the church to which they belonged. Those who had difficulties with the Formula were not disciplined, but were allowed to become officebearers without signing it.

Having first officially abused it, then having officially undermined it, the CRC has now officially rejected the FOS. Historically this has been the way of apostasy for Reformed churches from Dordt on. Whatever the merits or demerits of the document itself are, the origin of it determines that the CFO will be a singular failure for the maintenance of Reformed orthodoxy in that denomination.

As the committee itself admitted, the “real issue” was not the FOS. The committee talked about those who had difficulties with the Formula and those who did not like its language. The committee itself wanted a document with language that “sings” instead of “plods along,” language “that is easily transportable across cultural and linguistic barriers,” and is not “subject to misinterpretation.” The committee insinuated that the Formula was broken.

But the language of the FOS transported perfectly well from the Dutch and Latin of Dordt into English and many other languages. Everyone understands what the FOS requires. That is why some would not sign it. It is not unclear. It is not broken. The language of the FOS is exalted, clear, and fitting for its stated purpose of being a personal vow of adherence to the creeds for the preservation of the uniformity and purity of doctrine that is vital to the existence of a Reformed church.

The issue was men who disagreed with the creeds and wanted an opportunity for open season on the creeds, which the FOS does not officially allow. The grave offense of the FOS is that in crystal clear language it sets forth the Reformed understanding of the place of the creeds in a Reformed church and the meaning of subscription to a creed, an understanding that long ago many who signed the Formula neither agreed with nor practiced.

The synodical news report also says that the CRC set aside “its” FOS, as though it was a parochial action of the CRC. But the FOS is the possession of Reformed churches. Subscription to the three forms

of unity, in the language of the FOS, is according to Dordt's definition what it means for an officebearer to be Reformed. The FOS, as given and declared by Dordt, marks who is and who is not Reformed among the officebearers. By setting aside the historic Reformed Formula, the CRC has separated herself from other Reformed churches and their official adherence to the Reformed creeds by Dordt's FOS. As such she has lost the right to call herself Reformed. Barring the action of overturning this decision, the CRC is no longer officially a creedal, Reformed church in the accepted sense of the term.

Apart from its origin, the CFO itself is bad.

The adoption of the CFO officially opens the CRC to ecclesiastically sanctioned assaults on the creeds from all those in her midst who for years have chafed under the teachings of the creeds. Indeed this is the expressed hope of the members of the revision committee.

They talk about "discussion," "confessional vitality," and "confessional engagement." The committee states that it "recognized that the FOS or any proposed revision of it was not the real issue. Rather, the deeper issue was that we begin what we hope will become an ongoing process of discussion and reflection on the confessions, the nature of confessional subscription, and the renewal of confessional vitality." With this document, the committee says, "They have taken a significant step away from the mere signing of a fixed document." The committee agreed that the purpose of any revision should be "unity with a secondary concern for purity." According to the committee, "signatories promise to engage in committed, candid, and loving conversation as a community about the doctrines we hold dear and their confessional articulations." The language of the CFO, "encourages open, honest, respectful dialogue over questions that arise." According to the committee, "any regulatory instrument that is adopted by the church ought to be regarded as an invitation to the officebearers of the church to participate in this ongoing reflection rather than a document that precludes or hinders such reflection."

The bold separation of unity and purity and the willingness, then, to sacrifice purity for the sake of unity ought to alarm any Reformed person. It especially signals bad things when a committee for the revision

of the FOS talks this way. Unity and purity cannot be separated. The very name—three forms of *unity*—for the collection of Reformed creeds indicates this impossibility. In purity of doctrine there is unity. Indeed, the Formula's main concern is "to preserve the uniformity and purity of doctrine," by which it shows its love for the unity of Christ's church.⁵

And this cries for the question: What is the ongoing discussion of and engagement with the creeds in the CRC, as envisioned by the revision committee, supposed to involve?

The committee indicates that this "discussion" will involve "dissent." The committee envisions that the CFO will be "a promise to work through disagreements and to openly and honestly deal with questions that arise, rather than to have the first reaction be to stifle dissent." According to the revision committee, the nature of this dissenting conversation on confessional questions and difficulties would involve what formerly an officebearer would be bound to express by gravamen. In explaining the choice of the word *covenant* in the name for the new document, "The committee and many respondents considered that *covenant* both encouraged discussion and respected the honest confessional questions raised by those who might otherwise have been discouraged by the thought of facing a council, classis, or synod in a long process [that is, of a gravamen—NJL]." The officebearer is free to disseminate and agitate for his dissent against the confessions, all in the name of discussion and conversation, and without a gravamen.

This is also the meaning of the language of the CFO itself, which replaces Dordt's statement concerning the responsibilities of officebearers: "If hereafter any difficulties or different sentiments respecting the aforesaid doctrines should arise in our minds, we promise that we will neither publicly nor privately propose, teach, or defend the same, either by preaching or writing, until we have first revealed such sentiments to the consistory, classis, and synod that the same may be there examined." Instead the Covenant for Officebearers speaks about a

⁵ Formula of Subscription, in *The Confessions and Church Order of the Protestant Reformed Churches* (Grandville, MI: Protestant Reformed Churches in America), 326. This and future quotations from the Formula are from this version.

“promise to present or receive confessional difficulties in a spirit of love and fellowship with our brothers and sisters as together we seek a fuller understanding of the gospel.”

Dordt’s language assumes agreement with the creeds. By this language the committee assumes that there are confessional difficulties—grave confessional difficulties that under the FOS could be remedied only by gravamen.

By this language the CFO invites open disagreement and dissent with the creeds. It not only commits the CRC to dissent with the creeds, but also sanctions open dissent with the creeds, “in the spirit of love and fellowship” and a “seek[ing of] a fuller understanding of the gospel.” It gives its blessing to opposition to the creeds. It does not stifle dissent, but encourages it. The signatories are committed to it.

When it is not sanctioning dissent with the creeds, the CFO frowns on disagreement with those who so assault the creeds as implicitly being out of accord with the spirit of love and fellowship and a desire to seek a

fuller understanding of the gospel. The dissenter will be free to disseminate his dissent, and the hearer must meekly receive it. Opposition is virtually impossible. Indeed, not loving.

The revision committee’s purpose of “revitalizing confessional identity” is not only an admission that denominationally the confessions are a dead letter, but also confuses confessional vitality with open criticism and debate about the creeds. If the CRC wanted confessional vitality it would not have adopted the CFO. It would insist that officebearers sign the FOS, or refusing, that they be suspended from office. It would have insisted that officebearers who signed the Formula teach the doctrines of the creeds. It would have insisted that officebearers who signed it preach the Heidelberg Catechism on Sunday. It would have insisted that no officebearer is free to contradict the doctrines of the creeds or simply to ignore them in his teaching, preaching, and writing. The way to confessional vitality is to uphold the FOS, not to replace it.

... to be continued. 

Salvation by Grace Alone (1)

None Seeketh After God

Beginning with this article, I intend to start a new series on the subject of salvation by grace alone. It is of central importance that we thoroughly understand this truth, and that we know how to take the Scriptures in hand and teach this truth to our children and to others.

Rev. Laning is pastor of Hull Protestant Reformed Church in Hull, Iowa.

We all frequently encounter those who claim to believe that salvation is entirely a gift of God’s grace, but who then contradict themselves when they speak of man having to fulfill a condition to be saved. When speaking to these people, we do well to explain to them key passages of Scripture that show what is wrong with this very prevalent false teaching.

Furthermore, when our children are young, and when we ask them why God has saved them instead of other people, they sometimes give us an answer that suggests that they also are holding to the false notion

that they are saved because of something that they have done. For example, if you ask young children in catechism why God chose to save us rather than other people, it is not uncommon to hear one of them say that God chose us because we believe when others do not believe. It is, therefore, of great importance that we understand some central passages that we can use to explain to them clearly what it means that our salvation is entirely a gift of God's grace.

With that in mind, I plan to cover this subject a bit differently than I have in the past. Each article will have especially one passage of Scripture as its theme. The goal will be to promote our being better equipped, not only to quote Scripture, but also to discuss certain key passages in their context.

We start this series of articles with a passage that says that man by nature never seeks God. This passage is a good one with which to begin, since it manifests clearly that first God saves a person, and only then does that person begin to seek after God.

Does anyone seek God?

If we encounter a child, or anyone else, who thinks that his salvation is based on his own act of believing in God, a good passage to go to is one that tells us that a person outside of Christ will never seek God. Such a passage is found in the third chapter of Romans: "There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God" (Rom. 3:11). God says here that no one ever seeks Him. This saying should be meditated upon for awhile. It must sink very deeply into our hearts.

When one considers this statement, he may wonder how it squares with passages that say that only those who call upon the Lord will be saved. Those specific passages are saying that it is only in the way of constantly calling out to God for the blessings of salvation that we enjoy the *ongoing experience* of these blessings. Those passages are not saying that an unregenerate person must first call out to God, asking Him for a new heart, before God will give it to him or to her. If that were the case, then the result would be that not a single person would be saved, since calling out to God for salvation from sin is something that an unregenerate person never does.

So how is it, then, that someone changes from being

an unbeliever to being a believer? The answer is that first God gives the person a new heart, and that only then does he begin to seek God and to call out to Him for salvation. Having received the beginning of the deliverance from sin, he will certainly call out to God for the ongoing experience of this deliverance. He will find within himself a godly sorrow for sin, and an earnest desire to be freed from sin's grasp.

This is what is meant by salvation by grace alone. There is no condition that a person first fulfills before God saves him or her. An unbeliever is brought into Christ and receives Christ's life without even requesting this deliverance. His salvation is based solely on what Christ has done, and not even partly on any activity that he himself has performed.

About to drown or already dead

Many explain salvation by grace alone to mean merely that an unbeliever is unable to save himself, and that thus he needs God to save him by His grace. But that is not saying enough.

Someone who speaks this way often views an unbeliever to be like a man who is about to drown, and who cannot save himself. He does not have enough strength to get to shore or to a nearby boat. Yet although he is unable to save himself, he does have the ability to call out for help.

Yet Romans 3:11 says that an unbeliever never cries out to God for help. The text says that he lacks spiritual understanding, and this manifests itself in that he never cries out to God for deliverance from his sin. He thinks he is fine just as he is. In fact, he thinks it is Christ and those who follow Him that are the ones that have the problem.

An unbeliever is not like a drowning man. A drowning man is still alive. Rather, an unbeliever is like a man dead in the water. He has no life within him, and thus is completely unable to call out for deliverance. Then God speaks the word, breathes new life into him, and delivers him out of the water and sets him safely upon the dry land.

Romans 3:11 in its context

So what is the context of Romans 3:11? The apostle is proving that the Jews were no better than the Gentiles. He proves this by pointing out that every man by

nature is unrighteous. He has no spiritual understanding, and he does not seek after God. This means that if a Jew was a believer, he was not saved on the basis of anything that he did. He was not saved because he kept God's law. Before God saved him, he was spiritually dead and did not seek God in the least.

Thus believers, whether Jew or Gentile, have no grounds for boasting. If we were saved because of any activity that we had performed, including the activity of calling out to God for salvation, we would have grounds for boasting. Then believers could say, "We are better than the unbelievers, because we sought God when they did not." Yet verse 9 says, "What then? are we better than they? No, in no wise." And then Paul goes on to prove this in the text we are considering by quoting an Old Testament passage that says emphatically that there is no one that listens to God and seeks to do what is pleasing to Him.

The passage he is quoting is found in Psalm 14:1-3 and Psalm 53:1-3, the former of which reads:

The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good. The LORD looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God. They are all

gone aside, they are all together become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no, not one.

In the middle of this passage we read that God looked down to see if there were any that sought Him, and He found not a single one.

Paul then, in Romans 3, is applying this passage to the Jews in his own day. He is pointing out to them that they ought to have known from the Scriptures that they were no better than the unbelieving Gentiles, since no one by nature seeks after God. If a Jew has been delivered from his sins, it must be solely because of God's work of grace within him, and not at all because of any activity that the Jew himself has performed.

The same truth must be firmly grasped by us and by our children. By nature we are no better than any of the ungodly of this world. Before we were brought into Christ, we never called out to God. We never placed our trust in Christ. The fact that we do this today is solely due to the fact that God efficaciously called us out of death, and gave to us the everlasting life of His only begotten Son.

We have no grounds for boasting, but rather for praising our God, thanking Him for saving us, solely by His grace. 

BRING THE BOOKS...

MR. CHARLES TERPSTRA

Federal Vision: Heresy at the Root, by David J. Engelsma. Jenison, Michigan: Reformed Free Publishing Association, 2012. 252 pages. Hardback. [Reviewed by Martyn McGeown.]

This reviewer grew up in a Presbyterian denomination in Ireland. Although the church was not very doctrinal, one thing sticks in my head even now. It concerns baptism. At every occasion of baptism, the

Rev. McGeown is missionary pastor of CPRC NI, working in Limerick, Ireland.

minister said (whether this was an official baptismal form I do not know), "Baptism is a testimony to the divine initiative, that *God takes the first step in our salvation....*" I often wondered what that meant, but since there was no teaching on the covenant in that church I never did find out. Now, I thank God for my ignorance because it meant that, when I did learn about the covenant, it was the pure teaching of an unconditional covenant as developed in the Protestant Reformed Churches without the distressing detour of a conditional covenant dependent on the faith (and faithfulness and obedience of faith) of the sinner.

Engelsma has written extensively on the covenant of grace in other books, but here he attacks head-on *the* fundamental covenantal heresy of our day, the federal vision (FV). It is refreshing to read a critique that pulls no punches; that calls heresy what it is; that names and shames leading proponents and supporters of the heresy; and that blasts the trumpet loudly and clearly to warn God's people. Engelsma will not win many friends this way, but that does not trouble a soldier of Christ when the truth is at stake.

Other writers, while "interacting" with the FV, do so in a detached, scholarly, and therefore, quite frankly, boring manner. They commend the "valuable contribution" that the FV makes to ongoing theological dialogue; they welcome a renewed emphasis on the covenant occasioned by the FV, but many of them studiously avoid calling the FV a heresy. They might caution against its "theological imbalance" or its "misplaced emphases." Engelsma is, refreshingly, different. He writes, "The federal vision is a heresy. It is a stubborn, persistent, deliberate departure from and denial of a cardinal truth of Scripture, as this truth is rightly and authoritatively summarized and systematized in the Reformed creeds" (18). "The federal vision is the enemy of the Reformation. It is the enemy of the Reformation within the gates and therefore the most dangerous enemy of all" (64). And how will Engelsma deal with this heresy? Will he interact in a scholarly and detached way with it? Will he welcome it, and praise its valuable contribution to modern theological dialogue? Listen! "I expose the root of the federal vision. *I intend to destroy it*" (23).

The book itself is made up of two parts. The first section (15-73) is a greatly expanded transcript of a speech that Engelsma delivered in various parts of the US and is a setting forth of what the FV is; who its main proponents and defenders are; its history and development; and an impassioned warning to all to flee from the FV to the perfect righteousness of Christ imputed to the believer and received by faith alone. The second section (79-216) is a lengthy response to questions, criticisms, and challenges to the original speech. The book ends with a critical review of a book supportive of the FV.

Let me list what I see as the commendable features

of this book. First, the book is clear. A critic of the book might disagree with Engelsma's conclusions—in light of Scripture and the Reformed confessions, which Engelsma ably explains, I cannot see how—but he cannot complain that Engelsma is *unclear*. Engelsma carefully, painstakingly, and repeatedly *defines* his terms. He defines covenant; he defines conditional covenant; he defines unconditional covenant; he defines condition; he defines promise; he defines and traces the root of the FV. The root is, of course, the conditional covenant, out of which the FV has developed conditional justification, or justification by faith and works. Engelsma also repeatedly defines "condition" and concludes that the word, although used by Reformed theologians of the past as "necessary means," is best avoided today. Faith is not a condition but the necessary means and the gracious gift of God to the elect (Eph. 2:8). Grace, covenant grace, is never wider than election.

Second, Engelsma is faithful in exposing the heresy and heretics—he is not afraid to name the important names of influential theologians (Shepherd, Frame, Gaffin, Wilson, etc).

Third, Engelsma's approach, when dealing with objections and offering counsel, is not abstract, but practical, warm, pastoral, and comforting. The sections on assurance of salvation and on the place of covenant children are especially good in view of the devastating religion of doubt that is the FV. Writes Engelsma,

If I have faith, no matter how weak, if I believe the gospel of grace from the heart, I am sure of my final salvation. The reason is not that I am sure that I will perform conditions upon which this final salvation depends. Of this I am not sure at all. But I am sure that God will perfect what he has begun in me. I am sure that God is faithful. The Reformed faith is a gospel of fearlessness. The federal vision is a religion of terror. And this is a reason we oppose the federal vision (170).

Compare this with the FV:

Despite all the loud trumpeting of the men of the federal vision that their doctrine gives absolute certainty concerning the salvation of every baptized infant, their affirmation of the salvation of every baptized child is meaningless, deceiving, heretical and false. Their trum-

petings are mere, loud noise. For according to the theology of the federal vision, the child—every child—can lose his salvation and perish everlastingly” (166-167).

With the FV’s attack on justification by faith alone and on all five points of Calvinism, all certainty and assurance are lost.

Engelsma does what he promises in the title and introduction—he exposes and destroys the root (and therefore the branches) of the FV. Others leave the root untouched. About the root others are silent. Because others believe the root—a conditional covenant—they

are ultimately ineffective in their critiques of the bitter fruit of the FV.

There is so much packed into this small book that it is really a handy pocket guide to the FV; and Engelsma deliberately phrased it “in the simple language of the layman rather than the characteristic language of the theologian” (80-81). If you have never heard of the FV; if you want an accurate guide to what it is; and more importantly if you want to know how to answer it, and how to protect yourself, your family, and your church from the FV, read this superb book. 

NEWS FROM OUR CHURCHES

MR. BENJAMIN WIGGER

Young People’s Activities

Beginning on Monday, July 30, and running through Thursday, August 2, the Young People’s Societies of Covenant of Grace PRC in Spokane, WA and the Lynden, WA PRC hosted the second annual Young People’s Western Retreat at Pend Oreille Bible Camp in Newport, WA, north of Seattle on the Idaho border. Thirty-five young people from our churches in Lynden, Spokane, Loveland, Edmonton, and Lacombe planned to attend. The theme of the retreat was, “Stand Fast in One Spirit,” from Philippians 1:27. Rev. S. Key and Rev. R. Kleyn spoke on the retreat theme, and Rev. R. Hanko and Mr. F. Hanko led discussion groups on the topic of “True Christian Love.” Activities included volleyball, basketball, water games, swimming, hiking, and spending a day at the Silverwood Amusement Park. This retreat gives the young people of our isolated western

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

churches an opportunity to have a good time and fellowship with others of our denomination and get to know each other better. This is also helpful for Young People’s Conventions they may attend in the future. But even more importantly, it serves as a means to prepare our young people spiritually as they take their place in our churches and denomination.

Mission Activities

Rev. Daniel and Sharon Kleyn returned safely to the Philippines on July 11 after a busy and profitable furlough during which they gave numerous presentations on the work of the Philippine Mission. We pray for the Lord’s blessing upon them and the Smits as they return to their labors in the extension of the holy gospel of our Lord.

We also add here that Rev. Kleyn recently agreed to be reappointed by the Council of the Doon IA PRC and the Foreign Mission Committee to another three-year term of service as one of our denomination’s missionaries to the Philippines. Rev.

Smit has just completed the first year of his second three-year term of service. We give thanks to God for the good work that our missionaries willingly continue to perform.

We also extend to Mr. Vernon Ibe, a member of the Berean PRC in Manila, our congratulations on his graduation from our Protestant Reformed Seminary this past June. Mr. Ibe and his wife, Melody, and their two sons returned home to the Philippines in July where he, the Lord willing, will take up labors as a pastor of the Word and sacraments.

In connection with the Ibe family’s leaving in July for the Philippines, we see that First PRC in Grand Rapids, MI, the church home for the Ibes the past five years, held a farewell program for them on Sunday, July 8. All of our churches in the area were invited to join First congregation in saying farewell to the Ibe family.

With much thanksgiving to God, the Berean PRC in the Philippines declared Mr. Vernon Ibe a candidate for the ministry of the Word

and sacraments and has presented him to their congregation for a call. The congregation will be asked to vote on that call after their worship services on Sunday, August 5.

The Southwest PRC in Grandville, MI and the Domestic Mission Committee of our churches have approved sending four ministers from the DMC to assist in the work in Pittsburgh from the months of September through November. This added assistance is meant to help expand our witness to the north of Pittsburgh.

Congregation Activities

At a congregational meeting on July 8, the congregation of Covenant of Grace PRC in Spokane, WA approved a proposal from their Council to purchase the house in which their pastor, Rev. R. Kleyn, and his family are currently living, to be the church's parsonage. This will be the first property that the

congregation owns, as they currently worship in rented facilities. Some of the reasons the Council gave for doing this are: 1) This should reduce Covenant's subsidy burden on the denomination; 2) this will help the church to establish real estate and financial records, which will be good for other real estate purchases in the future (e.g., the purchase of a church building; 3) this frees the pastor of real estate and financial burdens; and 4) Covenant is in a good position to do this financially. We add that this is a big and positive step forward for Covenant of Grace as they continue to grow and seek to become more established as a church.

On Sunday morning, July 8, Rev. Doug Kuiper was installed as the 13th pastor of Edgerton, MN PRC. The service was led by Rev. D. Kleyn, missionary to the Philippines. Rev. Kleyn chose to preach from the Word of God found in John 3:30 under the theme, "John's Willingness to Decrease." Rev. Kuiper preached

his inaugural sermon that night under the theme, "The Fundamental Duties of a True Prophet," using the Word of God found in I Samuel 12:23, 24. A welcome program for the Kuiper family was held after the evening service. We join with Edgerton in asking for God's blessing upon Rev. Kuiper as he takes up the work of pastor in their midst.

Minister Activities

We extend our congratulations to Rev. Jonathan and Keri Mahtani on the occasion of the birth of a son, Ezra Samuel, born on July 24.

Rev. Cory Griess declined the call extended to him to serve as the next pastor of the vacant Hope PRC in Walker, MI.

Rev. Andrew Lanning received the call from the Grandville, MI PRC to serve as minister-on-loan to our sister church in Singapore, the Covenant Evangelical Reformed Church. ☺

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Teacher Needed

■ The Board of Reformed Heritage Christian School is currently seeking applicants for a full-time high school math and science faculty opening for the 2012-13 school year. Successful applicants will be able to serve the kingdom of Jesus Christ by teaching His covenant youth. Reformed Heritage is committed to distinctively Reformed Christian education. Our goal is to train our young people to be servants of Christ in all areas of life.

A cover letter and resumé can be mailed to: Reformed Heritage Christian School, 700 N. Fletcher Ave., Kalamazoo, MI 49006, attn.: Mr. Dave VanderMeer; or e-mail: dnjvm5@att.net.

David Pryor
RHCS Board President

Resolution of Sympathy

■ The Men's Society of Hope PRC, Walker, MI, express their Christian sympathy to Roger Kamphuis and family in the death of his mother,

MRS. ANN KAMPHUIS,

and to Jim and Ron Koole and their families in the death of their mother,

MRS. JOSIE KOOLE.

Revelation 14:13b, "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them."

With loving concern,
Clare Kuiper, Treasurer
Harry Langerak, President

Resolution of Sympathy

■ The Council and congregation of Peace PRC express their heartfelt Christian sympathy to Mr. Bartel Zandstra in the loss of his dear wife,

MRS. MATILDA ZANDSTRA,

who went to be with her Lord on July 8, 2012. We also express our Christian sympathy to the Zandstra family in the death of their dear mother, grandmother, and great grandmother. May our covenant God comfort them by His Word and Spirit.

"In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also" (John 14: 2-3).

Rev. Clayton Spronk, President
William J. De Jong, Clerk

Standard Bearer

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PERIODICAL
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AT JENISON,
MICHIGAN

Resolution of Sympathy

■ The Council and congregation of Southwest PRC extend their Christian sympathy to our fellow officebearer Rev. Bruinsma and his wife in the loss of Mary's mother,

MATILDA ZANDSTRA.

"Whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die."

Rev. denHartog, Pres.
Gary Boverhof, Clerk

Resolution of Sympathy

■ The Consistory and congregation of Grandville PRC express their sincere sympathy to their pastor, Rev. Kenneth Koole, and his wife Pat and their children, and to Mr. and Mrs. Jim VanderKolk and their children in the loss of their mother and grandmother,

MRS. JOSIE KOOLE.

May they be comforted by the Word of God in I Corinthians 15:55-57, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Tom Bodbyl, Asst. Clerk

Wedding Anniversary

■ On September 14, 2012 our parents, **RODRIGO ("DICK") and VIOLETA ESPIRITU,**

will celebrate their 35th wedding anniversary.

We their children are thankful to our heavenly Father for the years He has given them together and for the covenant care and instruction they have given us. May the Lord bless them and keep them in their future years together.

"But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him and his righteousness unto children's children" (Psalm 103:17).

- ✿ Roderick
- ✿ Herbert Joseph
- ✿ Andrew

Philippines

Wedding Anniversary

■ It was with wholehearted praise and thanks to God that our parents,

GARY and CAROL NIENHUIS,

celebrated their 30th wedding anniversary on July 9, 2012. We are thankful to God for the years that He has given them together. We thank God for their faithfulness in establishing a covenant home and for their godly instruction and example. It is our prayer that God will give them many more years of marriage together. "I will sing of the mercies of the LORD for ever: with my mouth will I make known thy faithfulness to all generations" (Psalm 89:1).

- ✿ Charles Nienhuis
- ✿ Chad & Mary Nienhuis
- ✿ Gary Edward Nienhuis
- ✿ Dustin Nienhuis

Grand Rapids, Michigan

Notice

■ Access an eSubscription to the *Standard Bearer* online in PDF, eBook, and FlippingBook formats for just \$21/year and only \$10.50 for current hardcopy subscribers! Visit www.rfpa.org to purchase an eSubscription.

Classis East

■ Classis East will meet in regular session on Wednesday, September 12, 2012 at the Grace Protestant Reformed Church, Standale, Michigan.

Jon J. Huiskens
Stated Clerk

Convocation

■ Reminder: Seminary Convocation is planned for September 5 with Prof. Cammenga speaking on "The Protestant Reformed Seminary and the 'Good Christian Schools'" in Grandville PRC, at 7:30 P.M.

**RFPA
ANNUAL MEETING**



September 27, 2012
7:30p.m.

Hudsonville Protestant
Reformed Church

In a great follow-up from Hudsonville PRC's conference this past winter concerning postmodernism, Professor Barry Gritters will present

**Church Membership in a
Postmodern Era**

at the Annual Meeting for the RFPA. Stick around after the speech to hear more about the work of the RFPA. All are welcome to attend!

Reformed Witness Hour
September 2012

| Date | Topic | Text |
|--------------|---|--------------------|
| September 2 | Nehemiah (18-19) | |
| September 2 | "Shall We Transgress in Forming Mixed Marriages?" | Nehemiah 13:23-29 |
| September 9 | "Remember Me, O God, for Good" | Nehemiah 13:30, 31 |
| September 16 | "Christ's Letter to the Ephesian Church?" | Ephesians 1:1, 2 |
| September 23 | "The Election of the Church" | Ephesians 1:4-6 |
| September 30 | "Christ: Head of the Church" | Ephesians 1:22,23 |