

THE *June 2009* STANDARD BEARER

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

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Volume 85 ◆ Number 17

Praying for the Holy Spirit

And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?

Luke 11:9-13

When Jesus was about to ascend into heaven forty days after His resurrection, He said to His disciples, "And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you" (Luke 24:49). He was referring, of course, to the Holy Spirit,

whom the Father had promised. Upon making this promise, Jesus instructed the disciples to wait in Jerusalem until they were "endued with power from on high." However, when the disciples returned to Jerusalem, they didn't just wait around for the Holy Spirit to come; instead, Acts 1 tells us, they "all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication." No doubt they were praying for the gift of the Holy Spirit.

We might be tempted to think that praying for the Holy Spirit was something only for that time in history. But nothing could be further from the truth. It's true that the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on that Pentecost day some two thousand years ago was an event that is not repeated today. We don't hear the mighty rushing wind today. We don't see cloven tongues like as of fire. We don't find ourselves spontaneously speaking foreign languages. Nevertheless, still today God does give His grace and the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him.

God wants us to pray for the Holy Spirit. God wants the elderly to pray for grace and the Holy Spirit to deal with the trials of old age. He wants husbands and wives to pray that the Holy Spirit would work in them greater love for one another. He wants parents to pray for the Spirit to give wisdom and strength so that we may train up our children in the way they should go. He wants young adults and young people to pray for the wisdom of the Holy Spirit to guide them to make wise choices in this world full of lies. He wants children to pray for the Spirit's grace to honor their parents and all those in authority over them. God wants officebearers to pray for the grace of the Holy Spirit in order faithfully to shepherd His flock. He wants His people to pray for grace to be able to forgive others who have hurt us deeply.

He wants all of His people to pray for the Spirit in order that we might manifest the fruit of the Spirit. God would have His people manifest love, joy, peace,

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longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance. These are not qualities that our old man can produce. Such fruit can come only from the new man as he is nourished by the waters of the river of life. That is to say, such fruit can come only from the work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts. Surely, we all fall far short in manifesting the fruit of the Spirit. When we see our sins of omission and commission, we need to confess and seek forgiveness for our sins and our sinful natures. But we also ought to pray for the Holy Spirit to work His fruit in us. If we want to bear fruit, then we need the Holy Spirit.

When Jesus commanded His disciples to ask, seek, and knock, He was telling them to pray. When we pray for the Holy Spirit as Jesus instructs us, He promises that we will certainly receive what we desire.

Ask, seek, and knock!
For what?

Jesus teaches that we should be asking, seeking, and knocking in order to obtain the Holy Spirit. "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?"

Jesus was not talking about praying for the Holy Spirit to regenerate us and thus to give us spiritual life for the first time. The simple fact is that no unregenerated person would see the need to be regenerated. No spiritually dead person would ever desire the life of the Holy Spirit. Only those who have already been given life from above would desire the Holy Spirit. Jesus assumes those making such a prayer for the Holy Spirit can already call God their Father:

Such fruit can come only from the new man as he is nourished by the waters of the river of life.

"How much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" If those making this prayer are able to call God their Father, it must be that they have already been regenerated by the Spirit.

Rather, Jesus is teaching us to pray for the grace and the power of the Holy Spirit. The disciples who gathered together on Pentecost needed the grace of the Holy Spirit in order to serve in their stations and callings. They needed the Holy Spirit to give them boldness to preach the Word. They needed the Holy Spirit in order that they might bear fruit for the kingdom's sake.

Similarly, we pray for the grace of the Holy Spirit because we want to bear more of the fruit of the Spirit. We want to be like trees planted by the riverside. As the tree is nourished by a ready source of water, it grows up and bears fruit in due season. Our prayer ought to be that the Holy Spirit would work in us and cause us to bear the fruit of righteousness as we are sanctified by Him. God promised in Ezekiel, "And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them" (Ezek. 36:27). This is the Spirit that Jesus teaches His disciples to pray for.



Praying for the Holy Spirit is not, for the child of God, just a good idea. Praying for the Holy Spirit is a necessity.

It is necessary to pray for the Holy Spirit because Jesus Himself commands us to pray. He commands us to ask, to seek, and to knock. That's not something

we need to do once in our lives and then we are done. It's not a prayer that we make only once a year or once a week. The form in which these commands appear in the original indicates that we are to keep on asking, keep on seeking, and keep on knocking. We must constantly pray for the Holy Spirit to work in us.

Why keep on praying for the Holy Spirit? Because we lack the fruit of the Spirit. If we are honest with ourselves, we see that we do not manifest the fruit of the Spirit as we ought. We don't manifest enough love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, etc. Too often, the works of the flesh manifest themselves. The flesh lusts against the spirit so that we do not manifest godly fruit as we ought. We lack both the wisdom and the strength to live the godly life we should be living. That's why we must pray for grace and the Holy Spirit. We must pray in order that we might fight the good fight of faith. We are still in the midst of the battle and we need strength to fight. But without the strength of the Holy Spirit, it would be impossible to battle the old man of sin, and it would be impossible to bear any spiritual fruit.

We must pray for the Spirit because without His work there would be no sanctification. Of course, that doesn't mean we are stocks and blocks who have nothing to do with our spiritual life. We are not merely passive creatures swept along by the Spirit apart from our will. Therefore, we must not say to ourselves, "That's the Spirit's work; so I don't need to make any effort to live a godly life." We must not say, "I don't need to pray for the Holy Spirit, because if He is going to give me grace, then it's up to Him." To think that way would be to go directly against what Jesus teaches His disciples. He teaches us to ask, seek, and knock. We ought to pray for the

Holy Spirit because we need His grace and strength to live a sanctified life. Pray that the Holy Spirit would work in us both to will and to do according to His good pleasure.

The truth of the matter is, if we don't ask for grace to walk as God would have us walk, then He won't give us the grace to do so. This is why the Catechism says in Lord's Day 45, "God will give His grace and Holy Spirit to those only who with sincere desires continually ask them of Him, and are thankful for them." This is the teaching reflected in Jesus' words to His disciples. Those who ask, they shall receive. Those who seek are the ones who shall find. And those who knock are the ones to whom it shall be opened.

This doesn't mean that asking God for grace somehow merits grace for us; not at all. All the grace that we have received and will receive in the future has been purchased by Jesus Christ and comes to us only on the basis of His merits. Grace is ours because we are in Christ. The proper way of understanding the connection between our prayers and God's gracious gifts to us is to see that our prayers are the means that God uses to give us the grace of sanctification.

Think about that. If God sanctified us without our asking for it, we might be inclined to think that we ourselves had accomplished our sanctification, apart from His grace. We would think that we had made ourselves to differ. But when we pray for grace, we are acknowledging that all our salvation, including our sanctification, is from the Lord.

Furthermore, when we hunger and thirst for the grace of the Holy Spirit, it can only be that

the Holy Spirit put that in our hearts in the first place. When we grieve over our lack of desire to live a new and godly life, even that is the work of the Holy Spirit in us. Nevertheless, when we recognize our lack, we ought to pray for grace and the Holy Spirit that

we might be turned. We pray, "Turn me and I shall be turned; for thou art the LORD my God" (Jer. 31:18).

*...if we don't ask for
grace to walk
as God would have us walk,
then He won't give us
the grace to do so.*



Jesus promises that when we continually ask, seek, and knock for the grace of the Holy Spirit, God will certainly give us what we pray for.

When we ask for things that are truly good for us, God will give them to us. That's a promise! The same promise is repeated elsewhere in Scripture: "And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him" (1 John 5:14-15). When our requests are according to God's will, they will also be for our good. These are the requests that God promises He will hear and grant to us. When we pray for the greatest good, that is, when we pray for the Holy Spirit, our heavenly Father will give us what we ask for. If earthly fathers know how to give good gifts to their children, surely our Father in heaven will give good things to them that ask Him. Jesus, our elder Brother, has promised.

How do we know for sure that Jesus will give us what He promised? Consider the fact that Jesus is the one who secured that promise. He secured the right

to grant us the blessing of the Holy Spirit when He went to the cross and paid for the sins of His people.

Furthermore, because Christ was faithful, and humbled Himself to the death of the cross, God has given Him the authority to send the Holy Spirit. Just before Jesus ascended into heaven, He told His disciples that all authority had been given unto Him in heaven and on earth. He has authority to rule over the church and over all the world. According to that rule, Jesus sends forth the Comforter whom He Himself promised. Jesus sends the Holy Spirit to His people.


The promise therefore is sure. Christ Himself tells us. To illustrate how sure it is, Jesus points to the example of earthly fathers. Which of us would withhold necessary food from a child who came to us hungry and thirsty? Who would be so cruel as to give something worthless or even deadly in the place of that necessary food. Surely we would give good things to our children. Jesus says, "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" (Luke 11:13). Jesus was arguing from the lesser to the greater. If it's true with human fathers, then surely it is true with our Father in heaven.

Having that promise, all those who call God "Father" can pray to Him in Jesus' name. We can pray with the confidence that He will give us the Holy Spirit. He is gracious and compassionate and will give us what we need when we ask for it. God will not be upset with us for asking. Nor will God tell us to pull ourselves up by our own bootstraps and live a godly life in our own strength. Just the opposite, God is pleased when we seek our strength from Him and He is pleased to grant our request.

The disciples, knowing their weaknesses, asked for the Holy Spirit, and God gave it to them abundantly. Peter previously had three times denied the Lord Jesus during His trial. Recall that he had failed to pray for grace to resist temptation. In contrast, at Pentecost, by the grace of the

Holy Spirit, Peter did not deny Jesus. Rather, He confidently affirmed his faith in the Lord Jesus. He did not hesitate to say that the Jesus whom the Jews had crucified had risen from the dead. This was nothing other than the grace of the Holy Spirit working

in him. God was faithful to His promise.

As we see our need for the Holy Spirit, God's word to us is, "ask and it shall be given; seek and ye shall find; knock and the door will be opened unto you." May we ask knowing that God remains true to His Word. 

Editorial

Prof. Russell Dykstra

What Is on the Agenda for the Synod of 2009?

The Lord willing, on June 9, 2009, twenty delegates (half of them ministers, the other half elders) and three advisors (seminary professors) will arrive at Georgetown Protestant Reformed Church and take seats about tables in the fellowship room. The president of the previous synod, Rev. Kenneth Koole, will lead in devotions. The credentials from Classis East and Classis West will be read to establish formally that the authorized delegates are present. By motion, the credentials will be accepted, and Synod 2009 will become a reality. The delegates proceed then to elect from among the ministers a president, vice president, and two clerks.

What happens next is a solemn and significant event. All the delegates will rise to express assent with the form that the president will read, namely, the Public Declaration of Agreement with the Forms of Unity. This revered Reformed document begins: "Of all the marks by which the true church distinguishes itself from all human societies, the confession of the truth must be mentioned in the first place."

Delegates will not only affirm that they "from the heart" believe that all the doctrines in the "Three Forms of Unity in all respects agree with the Word of God," and firmly "reject all doctrines repugnant" to these confessions, but will also express their resolve "to conform all [their] actions to them, agreeably to...the Church Order."

Then the business of the synod can go forward.

One of the first items will be approval of an examination schedule for Seminarian Cory Griess. The faculty wholeheartedly recommends this fourth-year student for examination at the synod with a view to being declared a candidate for the ministry in the PRC. Including the sermon, the public exam is scheduled to last nearly seven hours.

Before any serious discussion of the contents of the agenda, a "committee on committees" will meet to divide the delegates into five committees and distribute the material of the agenda as evenly as possible. Each of these committees will deliberate over their material and submit recommendations to synod (with reasons,

or grounds). The smoothness of synod's operation and the precision of the motions depend much on these committees of "pre-advice," as we call them.

Usually in the morning of the first day, the student recommended for examination gives his sermon specimen before synod, with friends and family in attendance. If the synod approves the sermon, the examination will continue on Wednesday morning. Synod typically dismisses for the remainder of Tuesday to allow the committees to do their work.

Wednesday morning, Mr. Griess will be ready to demonstrate to synod his understanding of and hearty commitment to the Reformed faith. For the first time in many years, the examiner in Reformed Dogmatics will not be Prof. David Engelsma, now officially emeritus, but his replacement, Prof. Ronald Cammenga. This thorough oral exam should last into the early afternoon, at which time synod will take up the work assigned to "Committee I," if it is ready to report.

Almost certainly this committee will bring recommendations on the report of one of the four

standing committees of synod. If it begins with the **Domestic Mission Committee**, synod will have much over which to rejoice, starting with the organization of a congregation in Spokane, WA—the fruit of some seventeen years of labor, ten of which were by Missionary Thomas Miersma and his family on the field. Truly God has blessed this labor. In addition, the DMC gives favorable reports on the work in Pittsburgh, PA, and Sioux Falls, SD, and brings up the possibility of a new field in Tucson, AZ. Synod will note with gratitude the careful budgeting of money, and the increased financial support from the fields themselves.

Perhaps synod will turn to the report of the **Foreign Mission Committee**, and again express thanksgiving to God for providing not one, but two experienced and energetic pastors with willing families for the mission work in the Philippines! Synod will also note the zealous and fruitful efforts of the FMC and Doon's consistory to fulfill the mandate of the 2008 synod to supply the Berean PRC with preaching regularly.

In the report of the **Committee for Contact with Other Churches (CC)**, synod will find cause for joy. After contact dating back to 1975, the CC brought a proposal last year to establish the first-ever corresponding relationship with the Evangelical Presbyterian Church in Australia. The EPC has responded affirmatively and with gratitude, and the process can be completed at this synod. The CC, seeing some good changes in the proposed relationship that should make it operate more smoothly, accordingly proposes some changes to her constitution. Synod will note with gratitude that our relationship with our sister church in Northern Ireland remains strong and fruitful. Contacts with the Confessing Evangelical Reformed

Church in Giessen, Germany, and the Covenant Evangelical Reformed Church in Singapore, show good promise.

Likewise the report of the **Theological School Committee** will give joy to the synod. The TSC reports that the seminary had ten full-time students this past year, three from churches outside of North America. Two are scheduled to graduate—Mr. Cory Griess, and Dr. David Torlach of the EPC of Australia. The TSC recommends that two other young men from the PRC be admitted into seminary in the fall of 2009. God continues to provide good young men for the ministry. Reporting on the faculty, the TSC notes that Prof. B. Gritters was awarded his Th.M. from Calvin Seminary last year. Two other weighty matters proposed by the TSC are 1) a proposed remodeling of the seminary building as donated funds become available, and 2) a proposal on the Dutch language requirement for entrance into seminary.

No matter which of these reports synod is treating, there will be much cause for thanks to God.

Meanwhile, the oral exam of Mr. Griess will continue on Thursday morning in such areas as church history, Bible history, and church polity. The examination should be finished by about noon, or shortly thereafter. After facing the question of candidacy for Mr. Griess, synod can turn to the other material in the agenda. Thursday evening, the delegates of synod will join the seminary, along with family and friends, for the commencement of Mr. Griess and Dr. Torlach. We can look forward to hearing Professor Cammenga deliver his first commencement address for the seminary, D.V.

Appeals, Overture, and Protests

The major part of the agenda, as printed, consists of appeals of

classical decisions, protests of decisions made by synod in 2008, and one overture. All these deal with material treated at length by last year's synod. These documents line up on two sides. One side insists that synod of 2008 erred in allowing that "homeschooling falls within the area of Christian liberty." The other side maintains that last year's synod went in the direction of legalism, and laying down requirements that bind a believer's conscience. Many debate the meaning and intent of Article 21 of the Church Order. The one overture asks synod to revise the wording of this article to include homeschooling.

It is my prayer that God will give to all those involved, even to the whole of the denomination, the right attitude arising out of spiritual wisdom and brotherly love. May God give spiritual wisdom to those addressing synod that they present their case clearly and logically, yet also with meekness and humility. The love of Christ must be evident in our speech, even when sharp division exists. And the same love of Christ does not in any way conflict with the need for synod to make hard choices and clear decisions.

My prayer is too that God will lead synod by His Spirit so that the synod not lose sight of the concrete case that gave rise to all the protests and appeals. Over the 84-year existence of the PRC, a strength of the PRC has been a steadfast refusal of the ecclesiastical assemblies to enter into abstract issues. It can be necessary, when dealing with a particular case, for synods to make declarations of general principles and give interpretations of church order articles. Nevertheless, when crafting answers to these documents, Synod 2009 must keep its focus on the concrete case.

There you have a preview of what is on the docket of synod.

It should give all who love the church plenty to pray for. We desire your prayers for God's indispensable blessing.

If you live in the Grand Rapids area, you may have an inclination to attend the sessions of synod. Visitors are welcome, starting with the pre-synodical

service in Georgetown PRC, June 8, at 7:00 P.M. We hope the sanctuary overflows with worshipers.



Letters

■ On Nailed Tent Pegs

In the April 15 *SB* Rev. Koole questions why a like-minded son or daughter of Father Abraham would even think of not participating fully in PR communal schools and would choose to homeschool instead.

By its very nature, faith leads a man to where God wants him to be, not necessarily to where other men think he ought to be. This is

what truly makes a man a son of Abraham.

Consequently, what appears to be folly to man may, in fact, be the wisdom of God.

Much faith and even greater love, however, is required to fully accept differentiated sons of Abraham.

Faith's vision is always to conquer the land, not to nail tent pegs in so soundly that one's tent will not be enlarged.

This vision is what our Lord Christ graciously gives to men and then uses to bring His gospel to the ends of the earth.

May we be so used.

"Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" is a promise that we can count on.

I believe it. By faith.

Mrs. Scott Kunst
Hudsonville, Michigan

■ Common Grace in the *SB*?

I am an avid reader of the *Standard Bearer*, and also hold to the truths of the Reformed faith (as taught in the Reformed confessions, the Three Forms of Unity), and as interpreted by the PRC. In a day and age where those who call themselves "Reformed" are often compromised and have gone after the "mainstream lie," I find it refreshing to read materials from the PRC, and of course *Reformed Dogmatics* by Rev. Herman Hoeksema.

I am perturbed, however, about an article that was printed in the last issue of the *Standard Bearer* (April 15th) on page 329. First of all, I do not quite understand why you would print an article by Abraham Kuyper (who is the inventor of the "Theory of Common Grace"). Hoeksema condemns his teaching in his *Dogmatics* as "unbiblical." Does this mean Kuyper has a lot of other good things to say? This is the same with men like John Wesley.

Even though he was Arminian, a lot of Calvinists still liked him. To me, this is *contradictory*. To promote heresy is sin. I believe this is the case with Abraham Kuyper.

Also, in the article entitled "Forget it not," on page 329, he is quoted as saying, "Also the sinful weakness of forgetting stands under the healing influence of grace. And in common grace, which is the portion of all men, as well as in particular grace, which is bestowed upon all God's elect, a means is offered us by which to remove this forgetfulness from ourselves and from our children, if not all together, at least considerably to temper it."

Can you please explain why such an article that promotes the idea of two different "graces" has appeared in the Protestant Reformed *Standard Bearer*?

Also, why would the PRC publish any of Abraham Kuyper's articles?

Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter. May

the Lord really bless your efforts.

James H. East III
Ione, California

In the April 15 issue of the *Standard Bearer*, under the rubric "When Thou Sittest in Thine House," Abraham Kuyper's article entitled "Forget It Not" has a paragraph that reads in part as follows:

Also the sinful weakness of forgetting stands under the healing influence of grace. And in common grace, which is the portion of all men, as well as particular grace, which is bestowed on all God's elect, a means is offered....

It disturbed me to read that in the *Standard Bearer*. It is an affront to the very essence of our thoroughly Reformed publication. If the article was deemed worthy of print, a disclaimer should have appeared at the bottom of the page. Someone who is not knowledgeable about our

doctrine would be left with the impression that we are in agreement. This cannot be further from the truth.

Edward Ophoff, Sr.
Caledonia, Michigan

RESPONSE:

The *Standard Bearer* regrets not having any disclaimer regarding the reference to “common grace” in Abraham Kuyper’s reprinted article. There ought to have been a notice especially, although not only, for those who do not know the PRC. We apologize for the offense.

The question of reprinting

Kuyper’s articles at all is another matter. Abraham Kuyper was Reformed. Although in our judgment he was not consistently so, especially later in his life, his theology was the theology of sovereign grace. He rejected the well-meant offer of the gospel. To equate reprinting Kuyper with reprinting John Wesley is inappropriate. Wesley was thoroughly and essentially Arminian, Reformed not at all, whose theology at core is a foe of the true gospel of grace. The *Encyclopedia of the Reformed Faith* (Donald K. McKim, ed.) does not consider the

Wesleys as even worthy of listing. Abraham Kuyper had flaws in his theology – damaging flaws. But Reformed believers, Herman Hoeksema included, are indebted to him. The RFPA, publisher of this magazine, has translated and published Kuyper’s *Particular Grace*. Some of the chapters in the recently published *Our Worship* (Eerdmans, 2009), a translation of Kuyper’s old work on liturgy, may well find their way onto the pages of the *Standard Bearer*. His chapters from *When Thou Sittest in Thine House* are edifying. In our judgment.

—Ed.

■ Hoeksema on Homeschooling

In the February 15, 2009 *Standard Bearer* editorial Rev. Koole decries a perceived movement of confessing Christians away from creedal formulations of doctrine. He sees behind this ‘movement’ a deeply rooted spirit of independentism that smacks of individualism; an unbiblical spirit. In a parenthetical discussion he describes much of the home-school movement today as being infected with this same spirit. The conflict centers on the organic nature of the covenant and the meaning of C.O. Article 21. Herman Hoeksema in an editorial in the *Standard Bearer* (vol. 20, p. 392) shares his insights into this controversy.

I take it for granted that all our readers, even those that thus far have revealed little or no enthusiasm for a school of our own, and among these even those who definitely opposed it especially by the “moral obligation” argument, will have to agree with me, that our obligation to the existing schools and school societies can be none other than, and is rooted in, the obligation of the parents

with regard to the education of their children.

These school societies are, with respect to the instruction of our children, *only* a means to an end. If parents were in a position to give their children all the education they need, personally and at home, there would be no need of these societies. In fact, in that case it would be their sacred calling to provide such instruction themselves. Apart from the Church, to which the ministry of the Word is entrusted, they are the only responsible party before God with respect to this instruction.

Or even, if *all* could afford to employ a private tutor to educate their children, the school society might be discarded.

Clearly, in Hoeksema’s view, neither the organic view of the covenant nor C.O. Article 21 (revised only 30 years previously) precludes homeschooling, and in fact it recommends it when possible.

Roy T. Slice, M.D.
Hull, Iowa

In his April 15 editorial, Rev. Koole characterized the Christian homeschooling movement as led by an “anabaptistic spirit.” Does homeschooling by *Reformed*

believers also deserve this judgment? Many of them homeschool for a biblical reason: they are “in duty bound to instruct their children.”

But Rev. Koole thinks that “harbor[ing] great fears and suspicion” prompts Christians to homeschool. In his judgment, only foolish parents would make that choice.

How different was the view of the *SB* sixty years ago! Editor Hoeksema wrote in 1944: “If parents were in a position to give their children all the education they need, personally at home, there would be no need of [school] societies. In fact, in that case it would be their sacred calling to provide such instruction themselves.” Rev. Hoeksema was zealous for Christian day schools. But he understood them as a ministry for those that needed them; not as an obligation for all who could possibly use them.

According to Rev. Koole, our unity requires that our children spend the day with other children of the congregation. Never mind that God placed them in a community of parents and siblings. Never mind that God com-

manded that children be taught by the example of parents, not peers.

If the organic unity of the church indeed required this, we should be consistent. We should have day cares where the babies of the congregation are watched by others on behalf of the parents. We should live in communes, where church membership governs everyday life.

Look at the Amish communities to see where the reasoning of Rev. Koole leads us: straight into the *Anabaptist* camp! Misconceptions about the spheres of family, church, and society can lead to two extremes: individualism and communism. We should not, for fear of one extreme, plunge ourselves into the other.

Arjen Vreugdenhil
Jenison, Michigan

RESPONSE:

Since the burden of both letters is a quote from an article by Rev. H. Hoeksema (vol. 20), we will answer the letters together.

First, we wondered when a quote or two from Hoeksema on this matter would appear. We had thought perhaps it would come from a sermon on Deuteronomy 6:7 (reprinted in the *SB*, volume 71, pp. 483-8) in which HH states things in much the same way as found in the quotes lifted from volume 20. Interested readers who have the bound volumes can peruse the whole sermon at their leisure and for their edification. (All issues of the *SB*, back now to 1958, are online at rfpa.org.) Interestingly, the sermon found in volume 71 (Sept. 1, 1995) is the reprint of a sermon preached in 1916, early in Hoeksema's ministry, while he was yet in the CRC, just 30 years old.

In his 1916 sermon Hoeksema underscores the education of one's children as the primary responsibility of the parents in much the same manner as he does

in the quote given us by the two respondents.

Notice, in the second place, that all this time the parent is held responsible for the training of his children. Moses does not at all address the congregation of the people God in general, but emphatically he speaks in the singular. He addresses the individual parent. *Thou* shalt teach them unto thy children. *Thou* shalt talk of them, etc. Education is, therefore, the duty of the parent and of no one else. This stands to reason. In the first place, there is no one that has more right, more God-given right to the child than the parent. Education determines to a large extent what the child shall be in the future, how he shall think and act. And surely there is no one that has more right to determine this than the parent (p. 485, 2nd col.).

What Hoeksema is emphasizing here is what we have always emphasized, namely, that the parent (and in particular the head of the home) has the God-given responsibility to see to the instruction of his child in every sphere of life, not only in formal education, but even and especially in his spiritual instruction and the knowledge of God's Word. No matter whom a believing parent uses to instruct his children (if he uses anyone else at all), never may he abdicate his own responsibility and simply turn it over to others. He, you, I must stay personally involved. As Hoeksema put it,

From this it follows in the second place that you are responsible for all that your child is taught. It is not thus, that you are responsible for what the child learns directly in the home, and someone else for what he learns in the catechism and in the Sunday School. You are responsible always and everywhere. Not as if these other persons that teach your children have no responsibility. Surely, they do. But their responsibility

is entirely different from yours. You are responsible for all that your child is taught, responsible before God (p. 485, 3rd col.).

What is interesting and significant is what Hoeksema then goes on to state. And keep in mind that young Hoeksema is preaching at a time when the modern, scientific age was just dawning and when the Christian school movement in the CRC was still in its infancy. The need for Christian, covenantal, communal schooling was being seen as more and more necessary in an increasingly anti-biblical society and scientific age. Immediately following the above quote, Hoeksema declares,

Of course, we realize that this [namely, tending personally to all the educational needs of one's children—kk] was far easier in the time of Moses and the children of Israel than in our modern times. Life was so much more simple. The parent was not so busy from morning till night that he could find no time personally to instruct his children in the precepts of God. And life was not so complicated, not so exacting, the child did not have to learn so much, all things were more simple than they are today. And for that reason the education in the home was either the only or the main education the child received. The parent could realize directly his responsibility for the instruction of his children. *But this is entirely different today* (emphasis ours). The parent, at least the father, is not at home from the time he rises up till the time that he lies down, the mother is too busy or at least often makes herself too busy if she is not, and time for direct instruction by the parent is actually insufficient. *Besides, if the parent did have just as much time as the Israelite of old, he would not be able to instruct his children in all the necessary branches of education* (emphasis ours). And the result is that we have now the school, the catechism, the Sunday School, where one

person systematically instructs many of our children at the same time (pp. 485-6, 3rd col. ff.).

There are at least two points worth making in connection with the above quote.

First, Hoeksema clearly saw, as did the revisers of Article 21 of the CO (which revision occurred just prior to the time the sermon was preached), that the dawning of the modern, scientific age made communal education (based on Reformed principles) the wise and best choice for covenantal parents—the many branches of knowledge and explosion of information, to say nothing of the State's increasingly rigorous educational standards, made that increasingly necessary.

And second, it is noteworthy that what Hoeksema includes in the primary responsibility of the believing parent is not only formal education, but also *catechism*. In Moses' time, when, according to Hoeksema, parents took care of all facets of their children's education, such instruction included what we call "catechism"—instruction in biblical history and the doctrines of God. What are we to conclude from his observation? That Hoeksema was of the mind, therefore, that today it would be all right, maybe even best (the ideal), that catechism be taught solely by the parents, without the involvement of the elders? That certainly would be the logical conclusion following the respondents' arguments. And if *that* had been the young Hoeksema's conclusion, should we all agree with him?

Obviously, such a conclusion is unwarranted.

The church through history has recognized that, though the truth does not change, nor principles, *methods* of instruction may. For the church and believers what was once the common and best way of doing things may be so no longer. In a different age, faced

by new challenges, threats, and requirements, a different way may be wisest and best for believers and their seed. Young Hoeksema obviously was not oblivious to that. His remarks indicate that he plainly saw that such a time was upon the church and what the need of the hour was for covenantal-minded believers.

A reading of the entire editorial in Volume 20 of the *SB* (1944) referred to by the brothers makes it plain his perspective had not changed since 1916.

But this matter of Catechism instruction raises an interesting consideration, doesn't it!

We say again, the same arguments that are made for home-schooling (really, home-*education*) over against the primacy of the use the good Christian schools available to one could be used for the practice of home-*catechizing*, leaving such decision to each Reformed believer's preference. The point could be made: Show me one biblical text that requires teaching catechism as we Reformed have taught catechism for the last few centuries, namely, all our children divided according to age groups coming together Saturday mornings or Monday evenings to be taught together by a teaching elder. One looks in vain.

One could argue: I acknowledge that God's Word does say that the church is to be involved in my children's religious education. I suppose Deuteronomy 6:7ff. could be extended to include that (despite the singular pronoun 'thou' that refers first and primarily to the parent), and New Testament passages do call the elders to feed the flock—which includes the lambs and youth. But since when does that require catechism *classes*?

Surely a man could argue: I bring my family to church every Lord's Day to be indoctrinated unto godliness by the Word of God directed to me *and* to my

children. And in my own home as we sit around the table, in accordance with Deuteronomy 6:7, I fulfill my calling towards my children by instructing them in what the sermon was about, applying it to them. What the church attempts to do in communal catechism is nice and evidently good for many. But surely, the church's right over my children does not supersede my own rights and responsibility towards them. And so, as for me and my house, we will opt out. By coming every Lord's Day to hear God's Word, we are doing what Scripture requires of us. And the church, by preaching to me and my children, has taken care of its responsibility as well. Let the elders keep their 'extra-biblical' wisdom to themselves.

So now we all have the right to become home-catechizers, if that's what we prefer?

After all, as Hoeksema points out (to say nothing of Moses), catechism instruction is first of all a parental responsibility. Evidently it was how things were done throughout much of the Old Testament. And, as stated, one looks in vain for specific Bible texts that require that we must have our children catechized together, other than gathering together in church with their families on the Lord's Day.

And the officebearers are to be mute in the face of such arguments?

Brethren, let us consider our arguments with care and understand where simple insistence on parental rights above all considerations may lead us one of these days.

All that, first of all.

Second, what we set forth in our April 15 letter was, to borrow a phrase from HH, *Niet Dooperisch (Anabaptist) Maar Gereformeerd*. It is an educational perspective wholly in keeping with what is expressed in Psalm 119:63: "I am a companion of all them that fear

thee.” Significantly, Psalm 119 was written from the perspective of a youthful believer and for covenantal youth. It is exactly in the good Christian schools that these friendships of youth develop and carry over into the church for a lifetime. To raise our children all but isolated from the others of the congregation is simply not going to have the same benefit for the fabric of our churches and lives. And remember, little Jew boys of Old Testament Israel, even if educated at home, grew up surrounded by other little Jew boys, living cheek and jowl in their communities. They grew up together, having contact with each other every day.

Third, the phrase “need not harbor the same fears and suspicions” was warranted. How else should parents view schools that have swept away the antithesis and where all the educational disciplines are permeated with the principles of evolution (man steadily improving—and the instructors speaking like the three little monkeys, [I] Hear No Evil, See No Evil, Speak No Evil! Good reason to view such education with suspicion. Exactly what our good Christian schools were established to combat.

Fourth, the key sentence to which both brothers direct our attention is worded “If parents were in a position to give their children all the education they needed, personally and at home, there would be no need of these societies.” Notice the little word “if.” “If parents were....” The question is, was Hoeksema convinced parents of the modern age were? Or that parents educating their children at home was the need of the hour—either back then, or today?

The 1916 sermon sheds light on those questions.

But really, so does the 1944 editorial when read in full.

For that reason we have decided to reprint the opening section of Hoeksema’s editorial from which the quotes by the brothers are taken.

But before we do that, three things, and then a fourth.

First, keep in mind that Hoeksema wrote what he did in his 1944 editorial prior to the establishment of Protestant Reformed schools, meaning prior to the establishment of schools that he and his consistory could without reservation promote.

Second, we note that, having

made the statement quoted in the letters sent, HH (almost in the next breath) states, “However, this is impossible.” And this in the context of “the demands of modern life.”

Third, we point the reader’s attention to a couple of recurring phrases, namely, the calling of parents to *cooperate* in fulfilling their baptism vows, tying that in with establishing school societies, and he speaks of all this in terms of our “*moral obligation*” — a phrase found in the very title itself.

And then this—is it not possible that there has been, even since HH, development in understanding exactly how important for our day and age covenantal education is in covenantally based day schools, or maybe better, has increasingly become? In that connection, consider the benefit to those congregations and its families where such schools have been established through great cost and sacrifice. Its members will tell you.

As they say, the proof is in the pudding.

That said, we leave it to the reader to assess Hoeksema’s remarks in their fuller context below.

—Rev. Kenneth Koole

As to Our Moral Obligation

Herman Hoeksema

I take it for granted that all our readers, even those that thus far have revealed little or no enthusiasm for a school of our own, and among these even those who definitely opposed it especially by the “moral obligation” argument, will have to agree with me,

that our obligation to the existing schools and school societies can be none other than, and is rooted in, the obligation of the parents with regard to the education of their children.

These school societies are, with respect to the instruction of our children, only a means to an end.

If parents were in a position to give their children all the education they need, personally and at home, there would be no need of these societies. In fact, in that case it would be their sacred calling to

provide such instruction themselves. Apart from the Church, to which the ministry of the Word is entrusted, they are the only responsible party before God with respect to this instruction.

Or even, if all could afford to employ a private tutor to educate their children, the school society might be discarded.

However, this is impossible.

Parents lack time and ability to give their children a complete education according to the requirements and demands of modern life. And they lack the

SB, June 15, 1944 (vol. 20, pp. 392-394).

means to employ private teachers. Hence, they band together, organize societies, in order that together and with united efforts they may accomplish what individually they are not able to do. And these societies establish schools, determine the character of the education their children shall receive, and employ the teachers that shall furnish such education as the parents determine that their children shall have.

It should be plain then, that the moral obligation of these societies can be none other than that of the parents individually.

Nor can the obligation of the parent to the society of which he is a member be any other than to cooperate and put forth all his efforts to fulfill his obligation with respect to the education of his children.

That obligation, as we have seen, is that he shall instruct them "in the aforesaid" doctrine to "the utmost of his power," or "help or cause them to be instructed therein."

This latter phrase includes the instruction they receive in the school.

This part of his obligation he fulfills through the means of the school society.

For the parent that is Protestant Reformed this obligation, which he solemnly and very definitely assumes by covenant-vow before God and the Church, means that he will work to the utmost of his power, also through the school society, to provide for his children an education that is in harmony with Protestant Reformed doctrine and principles.

It follows, then, that this is his moral obligation with respect to the society of which he is a member.

He must seek the good of that society.

That surely is his moral obligation.

And because the society exists for the purpose of so serious a matter as the education of covenant children, he certainly has the moral obligation to seek the very best for it.

Hence, he must work to the ut-

most of his power to make the society an efficient means unto the end of providing a Protestant Reformed education for his children and the children of his fellow members.

Other obligations he may have toward the society and toward the school certainly follow from and are subservient to this one fundamental obligation. With a view to this great calling he pays his dues and school tuition, he takes part in the activities of the society, watches over the school and over the appointment of teachers.

All his effort must be directed to that one end: that the society may be a means to help him to instruct his children in "the aforesaid doctrine to the utmost of his power."



Is it possible for the Protestant Reformed parent to do this through the existing schools and school societies?

Yes, if there is no opportunity for him to send his children to a school of Protestant Reformed parents, or to organize a society for the establishment of such a school. In that case he meets his assumed obligation with a view to the education of his children in the "aforesaid doctrine" to the utmost of his power, by send-

ing his children to one of the existing Christian schools, or to a Lutheran school if necessary, to the best school he can find, and by supplementing and correcting such instruction at home in as far as it may be necessary.

No parent dare send his children to the public school on the pretext that the existing schools are not Protestant Reformed.

And in that case he has the moral obligation to work to the utmost of his power for the good of the society to which he belongs, and of the school to which he sends his children. And as far as cooperation on the basis of the constitution of such a society permits him, he will try to make that society and school a means to instruct his children according to Protestant Reformed principles.

But the above question must be answered with an unqualified *No* if he is strong enough, has the means and the opportunity, to establish a school of his own choice in cooperation with other Protestant Reformed parents.

For in that case he does not "help or cause them to be instructed in the aforesaid doctrine to the utmost of his power."

He is satisfied with the line of least resistance.

For he knows very well that, whatever efforts he may put forth to improve the school to which he sends his children, it is a foregone conclusion that he can never make it the means to instruct his children according to the Protestant Reformed conception of the truth.

He may remove certain evils, protest against the presentation of all kinds of dramas and moving pictures in the schools, against the singing of a few Arminian hymns, or even against the direct inculcation of the theory of common grace, perhaps; but he will never be able to make the school a means for the instruction of the children along Protestant Reformed lines.

Hence, they band together, organize societies, in order that together and with united efforts they may accomplish what individually they are not able to do.

This is impossible, first of all, because his influence is very limited. The Christian Reformed parents control the existing schools. They permit the Protestant Reformed parent to send his children to their schools, and to support their cause financially; but for the rest they pay very little attention to him as soon as he insists on positive, Reformed principles. This I could easily prove, if it should be required.

But this is impossible especially because of the very principle of cooperation. By joining

an existing society he waives the right to insist on positive, Protestant Reformed education. He has no right to demand such education of the existing schools.

And if he had the right it would be physically impossible to realize it, even in any local school where he might be represented in substantial numbers of members, for the simple reason that the whole school system, as to teachers, books, propaganda, etc. is under Christian Reformed control.

Nor can an instance be mentioned where this was ever at-

tempted, even by those who insist that it is our moral obligation to cooperate with the existing schools as long as possible.

Hence, I maintain that in such cases, i.e., wherever there are a sufficient number of Protestant Reformed parents, and they have the means and power, their sacred moral obligation with respect to the existing societies is to leave them, and to establish societies and schools of their own, where they may instruct their children "in the aforesaid doctrine to the utmost of their power."



All Around Us

Rev. Clay Spronk

■ The Other Birthday

As Reformed believers you probably know that this year marks the 500th birthday of John Calvin, who was born July 10, 1509. The Reformed community views the 500th anniversary of Calvin's birth as an occasion to celebrate—and rightfully so. Books are being published about Calvin's life and theology. Conferences are being held. Prayers of thanksgiving are being offered to God for using Calvin as a mighty reformer of the church and preacher of the gospel of salvation by faith alone through Christ alone.

Some view Calvin as the teacher of cold, harsh doctrines. But for hundreds of years Reformed believers have found unspeakable comfort, and enjoyed wonderful assurance of salvation, by confessing the truth of Scripture as taught by Calvin that salvation is the sovereign and gracious work of God alone. Surely Calvin's birth is an occasion worthy of our celebration. Surely it is an occasion worthy of making the trip to

the Grand Rapids area September 3-5 to attend the Calvin Conference that will be hosted by our Theological School.

But the focus of this article is not on the birth of John Calvin. Instead we focus on the other significant birthday that by the providence (!) of God also falls in the calendar year of 2009—the 200th birthday of one Charles Darwin, born February 12, 1809. Darwin's birthday is worthy of note because of the vast influence in the world, and sadly also in the church world, of his theory of evolution, which he set forth publicly 150 years ago in his book *On the Origin of Species*. It is almost impossible to overstate the enormous impact Darwin's theory of evolution has had since the publication of this book. Though his theory has been modified in many ways by modern scientists, most scientists today believe that, in the main, Darwin's theory is correct. Indeed for many scientists evolution is not a theory but a fact. The result is that Darwin's theory of evolution is poured into the young minds of students in our nation's public schools and universities. So it is no surprise that the 200th birthday of

Darwin is being enthusiastically celebrated in the world. Books are being published. Newspaper and magazine articles are being printed. Conferences are being held.

Shall we Christians join in the celebrations? Shall we assent to the plea of Olivia Judson: "My fellow primates, 200 years ago today, Charles Darwin was born. Please join me in wishing him happy birthday" (*New York Times*, February 12, 2009)! Perhaps you share my immediate answer, "No! I will not wish Darwin a happy birthday, especially if that means I have to believe that my family tree begins with primates." How absurd.

Yet, if we dig into Darwin's theory we can understand why so many people in the world today subscribe to his theory—even to the supposition that mankind descended from apekind.

What is Darwin's famous theory of evolution? It is a theory that attempts to explain the origin of the world and the development of the diversity of species on the basis of materialistic and naturalistic principles. Though Darwin did not deny the existence of God at the time he wrote *On the Origin*

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of *Species*, his theory is a rejection of God. Darwin believed that the material world always existed in some form or another and he denied that God created all things out of nothing “in the beginning.” Darwin also believed that the world developed by chance or by a process of natural selection, and he denied that all things are governed by God’s providential hand.

There is no God in Darwin’s theory of evolution. For members of the church, this is the fundamental reason for rejecting Darwin’s theory. But, for unbelievers, Darwin’s atheism is a major attraction. And we shouldn’t be surprised. Romans 1:18ff. tells us that the basic inclination of depraved human beings is to deny the existence of the one true God. For foolish men and women who say in their hearts “there is no God,” Darwin’s theory is the most plausible explanation for what the world was like in its primitive state (remember, Darwin denies that there is a beginning) and how it has developed to its current condition.

The implication of this denial of God’s existence, or at least of His involvement in the world, is also attractive to unbelieving men and women. The implication is that there is no divinely established moral standard according to which men must live. If there is no God, then there is no law of God that governs the behavior of men.

Again, this is very appealing to naturally depraved men. Part of man’s motivation for denying the existence of the true God is that he may do what is right in

his own eyes. The fiercest promoter and defender of Darwin today, Richard Dawkins, known as Darwin’s Rottweiler, recognizes how appealing it is for man to deny the existence of God so that he may live as he pleases. Dawkins sponsored an advertising campaign in which the slogan “THERE’S PROBABLY NO GOD, NOW STOP WORRYING AND ENJOY LIFE” was posted on hundreds of buses in Britain (Re-

ported January 6, 2009 on richarddawkins.net). The word “probably” was put in the slogan only because the bus company would not advertise the slogan without it. In Dawkins’ mind there is definitely no God, and therefore no standard of good and evil. In his book entitled *River Out of Eden* Dawkins states, “In a universe of blind physical forces and genetic replication, some people are going to get hurt, other people are going to get lucky, and you won’t find any rhyme or reason in it, nor any justice. The universe we observe has precisely the properties we should expect if there is, at bottom, no design, no purpose, no evil and no good, nothing but blind, pitiless indifference.”

This does not mean that Dawkins would like anyone to think of him as an immoral person. He thinks of himself as a basically good person, who just lives by moral standards that differ from those that come from the Bible. Indeed, in his book *The God Delusion* Dawkins argues that God, as described in the Old and New Testaments, is immoral.

According to Dawkins, God is immoral, a “cruel ogre,” because He is vindictive for many reasons, such as demanding an atoning death as payment for sins. What is Dawkins’ standard for morality? He rejects what he calls “absolutism”; therefore he does not believe in any absolute moral standards. If there are no moral standards, then conveniently it is impossible for anyone to accuse Dawkins or anyone else of being immoral or evil. Then again, if it is true that there are no moral standards, neither Dawkins nor anyone else may think of himself as basically moral or good, and what we are left with is moral relativism—everyone may do what is right in his or her own eyes. Thus, Dawkins argues that sins condemned in Scripture, such as homosexuality and abortion, should be tolerated.

It must be remembered that Dawkins derives his atheism and moral relativism from his belief in Darwin’s theory of evolution. Dawkins argues that that these things belong together and cannot be separated. If Dawkins is correct, and Darwin’s theory is necessarily anti-God and anti-holiness, it is obvious that the church must not wish Darwin a happy birthday or celebrate his work, but must instead see in his theory a very clever attempt by the devil to undercut the truth of Scripture and attack our faith in Genesis 1-3.

But is Dawkins correct? Does Darwin’s theory of evolution mean that there is no God, which also means that there is no divinely established moral standard for man’s behavior? According to Calvin College professors Loren and Deborah Haarsma, the answer is no. In a February 2009 article appearing in the *Banner* entitled “Speaking of Evolution,” the Haarsmas explain that Christians are united in confessing, contra Darwin, that God cre-

For foolish men and women who say in their hearts “there is no God,” Darwin’s theory is the most plausible explanation for what the world was like in its primitive state (remember, Darwin denies that there is a beginning) and how it has developed to its current condition.

ated all things. However, they state that there is disagreement amongst Christians about how God created all things. Some Christians reject Darwin's theory of evolution. The Haarsmas refer to them as "Young Earth Creationists." Other Christians, whom they dub Evolutionary Creationists, believe that a "modern version of Darwin's theory" is the "best scientific interpretation of God's revelation in nature, and they believe that God oversaw and used evolution to create life on earth."

The Haarsmas argue that Christians "agree about who created everything, who redeemed them, and how they should live out a Christian life. They also agree that the atheistic philosophy of evolutionism is wrong, but they disagree how best to challenge it." Evolutionary creationists challenge Darwin's atheism by arguing that "God could work through biological evolution to create the species, just as God works through natural processes like evaporation and condensation to govern rainfall." Young Earth Creationists, according to the Haarsmas, challenge Darwin's atheism by arguing that there is no scientific evidence for the theory of evolution. According to the Haarsmas, the areas of agreement outweigh the areas of disagreement, and Christians with different views should "maintain a charitable attitude toward each other." Such differences, they say, "need not break our unity as believers."

But the Haarsmas do not put their finger on the true difference between the so-called Young Earth Creationists and Evolutionary Creationists. Early on in their article they mention that Christians disagree about how to interpret the opening chapters of Genesis. But what they fail to note in the article is that Bible-believing Christians (whom they call Young Earth Creationists) re-

ject Darwin's theory of evolution because of the Bible's teaching in Genesis. Our position is not merely negative, namely, that Darwin's theory has not been proved by science. Our position is also and primarily positive, namely, that Scripture emphatically disproves Darwin's theory.

The Haarsmas might object that they too are Bible-believing Christians, and, after all, they accept Scripture's teaching that God is the Creator. Nevertheless, the Haarsmas, and other "Evolutionary Creationists," openly admit that they accept Darwin's theory of evolution on the basis of what they observe through scientific investigation and not on the basis of the Bible. They argue that they are allowed to base their views on what they learn through studying the creation because God reveals Himself in creation as well as in Scripture "with full authority." We agree of course, on the basis of Romans 1, that God does reveal Himself in creation. We also agree with the Haarsmas that there is great profit in scientific investigation. But where we do not agree is on the issue that God in Scripture does not reveal *at all* how He created the heavens and the earth, and therefore we are free to adopt whatever position seems most plausible on the basis of scientific investigation.

It is true that God does not fully explain every detail of the work of creation to us. Creation is a miracle that mere creatures simply cannot fully comprehend. Yet, God does tell us in Genesis 1 that He created all things in six days and rested the seventh day. The Haarsmas say that we do not have to take this literally because God's intention was not to tell us how many days there were in the creation week—

an argument that is echoed by many Evolutionary Creationists. The problem with this argument is that *God tells* us He did create all things in six days in Genesis 1. If we can question whether God intended to teach us that the creation week was literally seven days long, why can't we question whether He intended to teach us that He is actually the Creator? When God tells us He is the Creator, we believe Him. Likewise, when God tells us He created in six 24-hour days, we believe Him. Therefore, when Darwin says that the earth is old, millions or billions of years old, we reject his view as unbiblical, not merely unproven.

We must also take note that Genesis 1 explains exactly what Darwin attempted to explain in *On the Origin of Species*. Darwin attempted to explain why there are various species of creatures. The Haarsmas and other Evolutionary Creationists adopt this modern version of Darwin's theory that "random mutation and natural selection not only produce small changes over centuries (like the cichlid fish), but also produce large changes over millions of years. All species of plants and animals descend from a common ancestor, and the mechanism of species changing and splitting over time is random mutation and natural selection." Basically, Evolutionary Creationists argue that scientific investigation

shows us that the best explanation for why there are various species is that God in the beginning created some simple atom or particle that has slowly split and evolved into

plants, fish, birds, monkeys, and humans (some Evolutionary Creationists do try to maintain that God directly created Adam and Eve).


Creation is a miracle that mere creatures simply cannot fully comprehend.

The trouble with this argument is that Genesis 1 gives a different explanation of the existence of various species. First, Genesis does not say that plants evolved into animals and animals into humans. Rather, Genesis tells us that God created these different species. Second, Genesis tells us several times that God commanded the creatures He created to produce offspring after their kind. Genesis 1:12 tells us that the grass, herbs, and fruit trees produced offspring after its kind. And Genesis 1:24 tells us that every living creature also produced offspring after their kind. Genesis 1 tells us that fruit trees were created by God to produce fruit trees, not birds or fish. So while it is true that Darwin's theory of one species slowly evolving into another species is unproven (for an excellent account of how utterly devoid of proof Darwin's main theory is, cf. Phillip E. Johnson's *Darwin on Trial*), our reason for rejecting his

theory is, once again, because it is refuted by Scripture.

While we are certainly glad that the Haarsmas and others who hold their position continue to assert that they believe that God created all things and that Christians are called to walk in obedience to God's laws, we are extremely troubled by their willingness to set aside Scripture's authoritative account of how God created the world. How long will it be before more Scripture is set aside and God is rejected as the Creator of the heavens and the earth? One writer tried to argue that believing in evolution did not necessarily have to lead to atheism, but he admitted, "Evolution does seem to turn many believers into unbelievers" (Dinesh D'Souza, "The Evolution of Darwin," *Christianity Today*, January 2009). How long before it is determined that God only intended to give His law in order to encourage us to be good people

but did not intend for it to be an absolute standard according to which we should live in order to show gratitude for our salvation? I wonder how many Evolutionary Creationists today share Darwin's toleration of homosexuality, abortion, and other sins. I also wonder how many churches that allow its members to hold to the Evolutionary Creationist position also tolerate and refuse to discipline those who walk in other sins. Sadly, it seems that the theory of evolution and its devastating implications are an ever growing cancer in many churches.

Will we celebrate Darwin's birth? No. Instead, we celebrate Calvin and others who taught us to cling only to the truth of Scripture. And as we celebrate we are reminded also of the need to be sober and to be aware of the serious dangers of the theory of evolution. By God's grace may we continue to confess and *walk in the truth.* 

Taking Heed to the Doctrine

Rev. James Laning

A Refutation of Dispensationalism

1. The Days of Which the Prophets Spoke

The articles on dispensationalism so far have been designed to provide a historical introduction to the movement, while also pointing out some of the wild and seriously erroneous conclusions to which it leads. At this point I intend to begin a brief refutation of some of its main teachings.

Dispensationalism is much more than a view on the last things. It is an entire system of thought containing erroneous positions in all areas of theology. It is my intention to provide only a brief refutation of some of its most fundamental positions, and specifically on those positions that have to do with the subject of eschatology.

**The present age said to be
"not predicted by the
Old Testament"**

According to a typical dispensationalist, the prophecies of the Old Testament speak of a future earthly kingdom for Jacob's physical descendants, and include many promises that will not be fulfilled until a coming millennial age. Dispensationalists refer specifically to promises concerning the gathering of the Jews, the reigning of the Messiah upon David's throne, the rebuilding of the temple, and the dominion of Israel over all the nations of the earth. These and other promises,

Rev. Laning is pastor of Hope Protestant Reformed Church in Walker, Michigan.

they say, will be fulfilled in a future earthly kingdom that the Jews will enjoy on this earth for a thousand years. In their mind, this is the Messianic kingdom of which the Old Testament prophets spoke.

But what about God's kingdom in the days in which we presently live? This kingdom, says the dispensationalist, was not spoken of in the Old Testament:

...the present age is a parenthesis or a time period not predicted by the Old Testament....¹

According to the dispensationalists, the kingdom in our present day was not mentioned until Israel rejected the Messianic kingdom that Jesus offered to them. After this rejection, they say, Jesus started to speak of a new form in which God's kingdom would be administered. This new form of the kingdom would characterize the time period between Israel's rejection of Christ at His first coming and Israel's future acceptance of Him at His second coming.

Leaving aside for now the erroneous ideas that Christ offered an earthly kingdom to the Jews and that Israel as a nation is going to embrace Christ when He returns, let us consider the position that believers in the church today are in a new form of the kingdom not mentioned in the Old Testament. Is this really true? Are there no references in the Old Testament to the reign of King Jesus as we experience it today?

Of what kingdom did the prophets speak?

The New Testament explains to us the Old Testament promises. It also warns us of a common misunderstanding of these promises, and shows us how even Christ's disciples had some wrong ideas

about what kind of kingdom God had promised to His people.

Jesus pointed out this misunderstanding to two of His disciples soon after His resurrection. The men were walking on a road together, talking about the earthshaking events that had recently taken place. They mentioned how some women had been to the sepulcher, had heard the report of the angels, and had seen the place where Jesus had lain. But these disciples were still troubled by that horrible cross, and they expressed disappointment that Jesus had not redeemed Israel:

But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel (Luke 24:21).

In their mind the promise of Israel's redemption spoken of by the Old Testament prophets had not been fulfilled.

Jesus corrected His disciples, indicating the spiritual problem that was at the root of their misunderstanding:

Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself (Luke 24:25-27).

The disciples had been slow of heart to believe all that the prophets had spoken. That is why they did not understand them. The Old Testament prophets spoke of Israel's coming King, who would enter His glory *after* having suffered and died for the sins of His people. From heaven the Messiah would rule spiritually and graciously in the hearts of the citizens of His kingdom. It is in this sense that they would enjoy the blessings of the Messiah's kingdom in this life.

Especially after the Spirit

was poured out at Pentecost, the disciples came to understand that they had misread the Old Testament prophets. Now, having been endowed with power from on high, the disciples understood the nature of the kingdom of which the Old Testament prophets spoke. They saw clearly that it was a heavenly kingdom of which they prophesied. They grasped the glorious truth that King Jesus was now on the throne in heavenly glory. The promise that David's Son would sit on David's throne and reign over all nations had now been fulfilled.

Peter showed that he understood this when he preached on the day of Pentecost. He made reference to the fact that the promise found in the Old Testament was really a promise to the Messiah, and that this promise was fulfilled when the Messiah was exalted to God's right hand and received the promise of the Holy Spirit. In and by the poured-out Spirit, the King would graciously rule in the hearts of the citizens of His kingdom.

God's promise fulfilled in Christ's resurrection

The New Testament declares that the promise that was made to our fathers in the days of the old dispensation was fulfilled when Christ was raised from the dead. This important point is one of the first truths the apostles boldly proclaimed:

And we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee (Acts 13:32-33).

Paul preached that the promise unto the fathers had already been fulfilled. It was fulfilled in the resurrection of our Lord Jesus.

But, one may ask, what prom-

¹ John F. Walvoord, *The Millennial Kingdom* (Findlay, OH: Dunham Publishing Co., 1959), 231.

ise are the Scriptures referring to here? Let us take a look at Psalm 2:6-9, which is the reference that the inspired apostle is quoting:

Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.

The promise to which Scripture refers here is the promise that the Messiah would ascend to the throne in Zion and rule over all the nations. This specific promise is said to have been fulfilled when Christ was raised from the dead and ascended to the right hand of God.

When one believes and understands this central truth, he will see clearly how the Old Testament prophets really did speak of the days in which we presently live. The Messiah is already on the throne in the heavenly Zion, ruling over the nations with a rod of iron.

Admittedly, we cannot see this with the eye of the body. But we can see it with the eye of faith. Through faith we understand that Christ really is sitting on the throne in the Zion that is above. We believe that even though it appears that ungodly men are in control down here, it really is true that King Jesus is executing God's judgments from heaven, giving the nations of this world over to their sins, thrusting them down deeper into darkness. At the same time, our Lord and King is gathering all of His elect out of these nations, and causing them willingly to submit to Him as King.

Not only some, but all the prophets spoke of these days

It is important to note that

Jesus, and Peter after Him, both made a reference to the fact that *all* of the prophets spoke of these days. In Luke 24, which has already been quoted, we read of how Jesus showed the two men that all the Old Testament Scriptures spoke of how the Messiah was going to enter a heavenly throne after He suffered and died.

Since King Jesus had already ascended to the throne, the Messianic kingdom in principle had already come. This means the believers in Peter's day were already living in the glorious days spoken of by the prophets, and Peter declared to them this wonderful news:

For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people. *Yea, and all the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days* (Acts 3:22-24).

It was "of these days" that all the prophets spoke. The apostle is speaking here *after* the Spirit has been poured out. So by "these days" he is referring to the days from Pentecost on. Peter understood that the Messianic kingdom was not postponed to some future period. He knew and proclaimed the gospel that these present days are the days of which the prophets had spoken.

If we take a look at what this specific passage says the prophets declared, we can clearly see how these promises have been fulfilled. Moses declared that a Prophet like him would arise, and that all those who refused to listen to that Prophet would be destroyed. That is what is happening in the days in which

we presently live. King Jesus is speaking to us from heaven through the preaching of the gospel. Those who are believing His words are beginning to enjoy the blessings of Christ's kingdom, while all those who are rejecting His words are being thrust out of that kingdom. The ultimate fulfillment of this prophecy is still future, of course. But in principle the promise spoken of here has already been fulfilled.


Peter said that "all the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after" had spoken of the days in which we presently live. It was not an occasional reference here and there. All the Old Testament speaks of the Messiah's present-day kingdom.

The apostle Paul preached the same thing:

Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come: *That Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should shew light unto the people, and to the Gentiles* (Acts 26:22-23).

This is what was promised in the Old Testament.

The disciples thought it spoke of an earthly kingdom, and they were rebuked by the Messiah for this error. The prophets had spoken of a King that would be "the first to rise from the dead." They spoke of a risen Messiah, who from God's right hand would shine forth the light of the gospel and gather God's people from the ends of the earth.

To preach the gospel of the kingdom is to preach this good news. It is to proclaim with joy that the promise spoken of by the Old Testament prophets has now been fulfilled. This is what the apostles believed, and this is the truth they victoriously proclaimed. 

Teaching Our Children Wisdom from Proverbs 30:18–20

We seek her as silver, and search for her as for hidden treasures. More precious than gold is she, and better than rubies. All things that may be desired are not to be compared to her. She is wisdom, and she is the principal thing.

How do we teach our children to seek wisdom? Although all of the Scriptures speak of it, the Proverbs of Solomon place a special emphasis on the principles of wisdom. In fact, the Proverbs not only instruct us on what wisdom is, but also on how to teach it.

One way we are shown how to teach wisdom is by pointing out illustrations in the creation. This is something wise Solomon did as spoken of in 1 Kings 4:33:

And he spake of trees, from the cedar tree that is in Lebanon even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall: he spake also of beasts, and of fowl, and of creeping things, and of fishes.

This is something I would like to learn how to do. I would like to know what I should see in God's world, and how I can take advantage of the illustrations to teach His wisdom to my children.

God has given us a myriad of pictures in creation. These earthly pictures help to teach us heavenly truths. As the second article of the Belgian Confession

says, creation is "a most elegant book, wherein all creatures, great and small, are as so many characters leading us to contemplate the invisible things of God...." How awesome to contemplate the invisible things of God. When we stop to listen, watch, smell, taste, and feel, we have teachable moments all around us to share with our children.

One of the reasons why God made the creatures was that they might illustrate for us the behavior of human beings. This is something we know from Scripture, but we often do not think about it. How often do we consider the ostrich, to which God has not given understanding (Job 39:13–17), or the ant that is especially industrious (Prov. 6:6–8)? On a long rainy day, do we ever think of a contentious woman (Prov. 27:15)?

In Proverbs 30:18–19 is one such illustration I have found to be surprising:

There be three things which are too wonderful for me, yea, four which I know not: The way of an eagle in the air; the way of a serpent upon a rock; the way of a ship in the midst of the sea; and the way of a man with a maid.¹

This is an intriguing passage. What does an eagle, a snake, a ship, and a man with a maid have in common? How can I teach this

to my children, so that we together can grow in wisdom?

I remember when my children came running into the house after spotting a bald eagle flying overhead. We were so thrilled because eagles just started nesting again in West Michigan. My husband and I rushed out, but were disappointed to miss the bird. We searched overhead, but saw no trace of it.

Snakes are not the kind of creature I go looking for, but my children find them fascinating. I recall a time when one of my sons told me to go look at a snake outside. By the time I arrived, the snake had already slithered away. Though we searched, we could not see which way it had gone.

Last summer our congregation enjoyed camping together. Our children especially delighted in swimming in Muskegon Lake. How happy they were when the passenger ferry went by. This large vessel routinely travels from Michigan to Wisconsin, making some rather large waves. The children rode the waves with gusto. We watched the ship go through a channel into Lake Michigan for as long as we could. After awhile, we could not see it at all. The water became still again, and we could not so much as tell it had ever been there.

There are similarities in these pictures that God has given us. In observing the eagle, snake, and ship we can see that they leave without a trace. In other words, they leave no tracks behind. Be-

Mrs. Laning is a wife and mother in Hope Protestant Reformed Church of Walker, Michigan.

¹ A couple of commentaries on this passage that I found helpful were written by Keil and Delitzsch and by Matthew Henry.

ing left with no evidence, we can only wonder where they went.

Then there is this fourth example. What does a man with a maid have to do with the eagle, snake, and ship? The man with the maid is what these three examples are pointing to. I think the next verse explains why:

Such is the way of an adulterous woman; she eateth, and wipeth her mouth, and saith, I have done no wickedness (Prov. 30:20).

By considering and bringing up this truth pictured in the creation, we can get into a discussion with our children about the sin against the seventh commandment. Many men and women, young and old, have deceived themselves into thinking that they can violate the seventh commandment and get away with it. They are like the adulterous woman who eats and wipes her mouth, exclaiming that she has done no wickedness.

Thus we have another illustration to consider. Adulterers eat wickedness. They “eat the bread of wickedness, and drink the wine of violence” (Prov. 4:17). After doing so, they wipe their mouth and deny that they have

sinned. Since the way of a man with a maid leaves no evidence, they fool themselves into thinking that their sin will never be known.


Yet God knows what they have done, and His judgment has already begun to be executed. They hear His judgment in the testimony of their own conscience. A man or woman may be able to hide the sin from his or her spouse, and a young person may be able to hide the sin from his or her vigilant parents. But our God sees everything.

We want our children to keep this constantly in mind. A child who walks in the light of God’s Word will not desire to hide in the darkness of sin. The creation provides us with an illustration that helps impress this upon us. It reminds all of us how foolish it is to think that we can hide from our omnipresent God. As if the omniscient One will not know what we are doing! Whether or not man finds out, we can be assured that our Righteous Judge who is everywhere and knows everything will most certainly deal with us.

Our desire is that our children find comfort in the truth that the

Good Shepherd is keeping His eye on us. He ponders all our goings (Prov. 5:21), and in our new man we truly desire His watchful care. As we spend time having devotions with our children, it is important that we bring out how comforting it is to know that our Father in heaven knows our works. We are thankful that He chastens us in love to keep us on the right way.

To instruct our children, we must first take heed to ourselves. We need to make sure we are seeking wisdom from above. An aspect of seeking wisdom is meditating on the illustrations found in the creation.

However, *the* most elegant book, His Word, comes first. For when we look at God’s creation without the Scriptures that explain it, there is no way for us to understand what we are seeing. Yet when we read and believe the Creator’s own explanation of the behavior of His creatures, we are surprised and delighted as we begin to grow more in wisdom. This is one way in which we can make progress in our effort to apply the principles of heavenly wisdom to the children God has graciously given us. 

Report of Classis West

Rev. Doug Kuiper

At the request of the consistories of the Bethel PRC and Randolph PRC, Classis West convened in a special session on May 6-7, 2009. This session was hosted by the South Holland PRC, and was held in the facilities of the Cornerstone PRC. Rev. R. Hanko presided over this meeting.

The occasion for the meeting was the decision of Bethel PRC’s consistory to dismiss its pastor, Rev. J. Mahtani, from service in

its congregation under Article 11 of the Church Order, which decision required the approval of classis. Also on the agenda were appeals from eight members of Bethel PRC who disagreed with this decision of the consistory. Due to the sensitive nature of the issues facing classis, all of this material was treated in closed session.

Classis did not sustain any of the appeals. On the basis of the material presented in one of the

appeals, classis did declare that the consistory of Bethel had erred in one point.

Nor did classis approve Bethel’s request to dismiss Rev. Mahtani. Rather, with sorrow classis directed Bethel’s consistory, with the help of a special committee of classis, to labor pastorally with Rev. Mahtani, directing him to seek release from the ministry under Article 12 of the Church Order. With this decision the synodical deputies

from Classis East concurred. The consistory and special committee were directed to report to the September meeting of classis.

Classis provided Bethel PRC with some classical appointments, and asked Classis East to provide some as well.

If any aspect of this meeting of classis could be called joyful, it

was the presence of the delegates from our newest congregation, the Covenant of Grace Protestant Reformed Church of Spokane, WA, and the opportunity to get to know them better. Being our smallest congregation, they stand in need of financial assistance. Classis approved their subsidy request for 2009 and 2010, and

also provided them with classical appointments.

The total expenses of this classis were \$11,897.87.

Classis West will convene next, God willing, on September 2, 2009, in Randolph, WI.

Rev. Douglas Kuiper,
Stated Clerk.



News From Our Churches

Mr. Benjamin Wigger

Minister Activities

Rev. D. Kleyn announced on Sunday, April 26, his acceptance of the call to serve as second missionary in the Philippines. We give thanks for the provision of two missionaries for this field. Rev. Kleyn will remain in the area for at least six months to take some mission courses, study the language, and prepare for the work. Let us pray for the Kleyns, the Smits, and the church in the Philippines, that the major plans being made for all of this will be fruitful for the gathering and establishing of His church.

Rev. Kleyn's acceptance of the call to the Philippines also means that the congregation at First PRC in Holland, MI will be unable to host this year's anticipated internship of seminarian Mr. Martyn McGeown. Consequently, our seminary has asked that the Southwest PRC in Grandville, MI be involved in that internship. Southwest has enthusiastically accepted that request. In case you forgot, Mr. McGeown is a member of our sister church in Northern Ireland. Martyn has completed his third year of study at our seminary. The internship is part of the

fourth and final year of seminary training.

The faculty of our seminary also rejoices to announce to our churches that they have licensed three students to speak a word of edification in our churches. These students are Mr. Nathan Decker from Faith PRC in Jenison, MI; Mr. Brian Huizinga from the Grandville, MI PRC; and Mr. Jonathan Mahtani from Georgetown PRC in Hudsonville, MI.

Rev. M. VanderWal, pastor of the Hope PRC in Redlands, CA, declined the call he was considering to serve as pastor of the Immanuel PRC in Lacombe, AB, Canada.

The newly organized Covenant of Grace PRC in Spokane, WA extended a call to Rev. R. Kleyn, pastor at Trinity PRC in Hudsonville, MI, to serve as their first pastor.

On May 3 the Calvary PRC in Hull, IA extended a call to Rev. Doug Kuiper to serve as their first pastor.

Congregation Activities

The Ladies' Bible Study Society of the Loveland, CO PRC sponsored a Spring Lecture and Luncheon the morning of April 22. Rev. R. Miersma spoke on the life of Martin Luther's wife, Katie, "The Queen of the Reformation."

The ladies of the Georgetown PRC in Hudsonville, MI enjoyed a Lady's Luncheon at "Love in the Name of Christ" on April 28. The ladies enjoyed a tour of Love's facilities, had an opportunity to review their ministry outreach, and enjoy lunch.

We rejoice with Rev. and Mrs. N. Langerak, of the South Holland, IL PRC, in the birth of a son, Noah Brian, born on April 28.

The ladies of the churches in Iowa were invited to a Combined Ladies Meeting hosted by the Edgerton, MN PRC on April 2 at the Edgebrook Care Center. Rev. A. Brummel, missionary to the Heritage PR Fellowship at Sioux Falls, SD, spoke on "Singing—a Balm for the Soul."

Everyone from our churches in the Chicago, IL area were invited to attend the annual Combined Bible Study held on April 28 at the Cornerstone PRC in Dyer, IN.

The Sunday School teachers of the Southeast PRC in Grand Rapids, MI hosted this year's annual Sunday School Mass Meeting on April 23. Prof. H. Hanko was originally scheduled to speak on a topic relating to the kings of Israel and Judah, the subject of the Sunday School lessons this coming year. However, those plans changed with the Hankos

Mr. Wigger is a member of the Protestant Reformed Church of Hudsonville, Michigan.

flying to Singapore that same day. A last-minute replacement was found when Seminarian Dan Holstege agreed to speak to the teachers and, from our source, did a wonderful job speaking on the same topic.

Denomination Activities

At the request of our denomination's Contact Committee, Prof. H. Hanko and his wife left for Singapore April 23 to labor in the Covenant Evangelical Reformed Church there. They planned to be gone for six weeks.

The Psalm Choir, made up of members from area churches in west Michigan, presented two concerts this spring. The first at First PRC in Grand Rapids on April 19, and the second on April 26 at Grandville PRC.

Mission Activities

Rev. A. Lanning, pastor of the Faith PRC in Jenison, MI, along with Mr. Gary Kaptein, left on April 30 to supply the pulpit of the Berean PRC in Manila, the Philippines, for the first three Sundays in May, at the request of the Doon, IA PRC, the calling church for the Philippines.

The Council of Hope PRC in Walker, MI presented a public

program concerning the recent visit and work done in Myanmar at Covenant Christian High School gymnasium on Sunday evening, May 3.

School Activities

The Student Council of Covenant Christian High School in Walker, MI once again sponsored their annual Blood Drive on April 21.

The April 29th School Note from Heritage Christian School in Hudsonville, MI, included a big thank you to the students of Heritage who took part so energetically the week before in Heritage's annual Walk-a-Thon. The students were bused to the 1/4 mile track of nearby Unity Christian High School, where they raised money for Heritage through pledges they received for each lap completed. The kids walked or ran a total of 5,144 laps, equaling 1,286 miles.


Young People's Activities

The Young People's Society of the Hudsonville, MI PRC sponsored their first annual Job Fair and Trade Show in the gym of Covenant Christian High School on Saturday, April 25. The event showcased over 40 businesses that are owned or run

by various members of area PRC congregations, and was intended to provide the ultimate in PR networking.

The Young People's Society of Hope PRC in Redlands, CA hosted a breakfast on April 11 for their congregation. The menu included one item we have not seen offered before, and one that sounds kind of good: French Toast. Obviously, Hope thought so too, contributing close to \$900 to help their young people attend this year's convention.

The Young People's Society of Grace PRC in Standale, MI put together a progressive dinner for the adults of their church, on Saturday, May 2. Appetizers were served at 5:45 P.M., followed by dinner at 6:45, with dessert and devotions back at church at 8:15.

[As the SB goes to print today, we just received news that Prof. R. Cammenga's back surgery appears to have been successful. Surgery was a laminectomy to correct deterioration in the lower back caused by arthritis. Plans are for a 3-4 day hospital stay. Prof. Cammenga hopes to be back to limited work already within a few weeks. We pray his hopes are fulfilled, according to God's good will. (Ed.)] 

Announcements

Are you interested in obtaining bound volumes of the early years (1 - 40) of the *Standard Bearer*? The RFPA needs to gauge the interest level before embarking on a project to reproduce these volumes. Call 616-457-5970 or email paula@rfpa.org.

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RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The council and congregation of Byron Center PRC express their Christian sympathy to elder Sid and Lisa Miedema and family and Duane and Kathy Mingerink and family in the death of their stepfather,

MR. PRETT VAN DYKE.

"For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself" (Philippians 3:20, 21).

Brad Dykstra, Vice-All
Dale Bartelds, Clerk

John Calvin was many things to the church of his day. He was a church reformer and a seminary professor. He was a preacher and a pastor. He was a prolific author and letter-writer. He was an internationally renowned scholar and a lifelong student. He was a brilliant exegete and a fearless polemicist. He was a local minister and an energetic ecumenist. He was all of these and much more. He was all of these by the grace of God. He was all of these for the blessedness of the Reformed church of the sixteenth century. He was all of these for the enduring blessedness of the Reformed church the world over, down to the present day.

The Protestant Reformed Churches in America and the Protestant Reformed Theological Seminary enthusiastically embrace the legacy of John Calvin. The year 2009 marks the 500th anniversary of Calvin's birth. In commemoration of this event, in thankfulness to God, the Protestant Reformed Theological Seminary is sponsoring a Calvin conference. The theme of the conference is: "After 500 Years: John Calvin for Reformed Churches Today." The conference will be held September 3-5, 2009 at the 1st CRC in Byron Center, Michigan and will cover a wide range of pertinent topics and underscore the importance for the contemporary church to maintain Calvin's Calvinism.

We cordially invite one and all to join our celebration.

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The consistory and congregation of Calvary PRC express their Christian sympathy to Mr. Daryl Warntjes and family in the death of their father and grandfather,

MR. JOHN WARNTJES.

May they find comfort in the words of Psalm 121:1, 2: "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the LORD, which made heaven and earth."

Glenn Kooima, Vice-President
Marv VanDenTop, Ass't clerk

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CALL TO SYNOD!!

Synod 2008 appointed Georgetown Protestant Reformed Church, Hudsonville, Michigan the calling church for the 2009 Synod.

The consistory hereby notifies our churches that the 2009 Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America will convene, the Lord willing, on Tuesday, June 9, 2009 at 8:30 A.M., in the Georgetown Protestant Reformed Church.

The Pre-Synodical Service will be held on Monday evening, June 8, at 7:00 P.M. Rev. Kenneth Koole, president of the 2008 Synod, will preach the sermon. Synodical delegates are requested to meet with the consistory before the service.

Consistory of
Georgetown PRC
Gerald Kuiper, Clerk

REMINDER:
The *Standard Bearer*
is published
only once per month
in June, July, and August.

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On June 21, 2009, our beloved parents,

**FRED and MARION
ONDERSMA,**

will celebrate, D.V., their 70th wedding anniversary. We their children, grandchildren, great grandchildren, and great great grandchildren express our gratitude to them for the guidance, loving care, and diligent instruction that they have given to us these many years. Above all, we give thanks to Jehovah, our covenant God, for maintaining covenant homes through parents such as ours. "The LORD shall bless thee out of Zion: and thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem all the days of thy life. Yea, thou shalt see thy children's children, and peace upon Israel" (Psalm 128:5, 6).

We love you, Dad and Mom—from your family:

✿ Kaye and the late

Bob Moelker

Henry and Arlene Westhuis
Russ and Amy Zwak

✿ Gary and Rose Moelker

Mike and Jennifer Moelker
Scott and Sharla Moelker
Todd Moelker

James and Tami Boorsma
Scott and Lynette

Oosterhouse

✿ Larry and Judy Meulenberg

Jeremy and Heidi

Meulenberg

David and Dawn

Meulenberg

Rick and Marianne DeVries
Mark and Candace

Meulenberg

Daryl and Jodianne Koole
Curt and Julianne Gritters
Brad and Cherianne

VanderVeen

Joshua and Carrie

Meulenberg

Caleb Meulenberg
Matthew Meulenberg

48 grandchildren

4 great great

grandchildren

Wyoming, Michigan

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WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

Our parents,
**GERRIT and JEANETTE
BOVERHOF,**

are celebrating 50 years of marriage on June 19, 2009. There will be an open house in their honor on June 20 at Byron Center PRC from 1 P.M. to 3 P.M. We want to thank them for all that they have done for each one of us. We appreciate the love and kindness they have shown to us and praise God for bringing them together and blessing their marriage. It is our prayer that they will continue to experience God's richest blessing in their life together.

"He will bless them that fear the LORD, both small and great. The LORD shall increase you more and more, you and your children" (Psalm 115:13, 14).

✿ Gerrit and Debra Boverhof
Michael and Katie
Brent and Brooke
Owen
Joel

✿ Scott and Joyce Boverhof
Brandon

✿ Daniel and Lindsey Boverhof
✿ Jeremy and Tressa Lubbers
Paige, Jori, Sydney

Wyoming, Michigan

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On June 10, 2009,

TED and THERESA LOOYENGA will celebrate their 60th wedding anniversary. We, their children and grandchildren, are grateful for the many years that God has given them together. We are thankful for their continued faithfulness to God's truths, and that He blessed us with parents who instructed us in His ways. We pray that God may continue to be near them in the years ahead.

"They that trust in the LORD shall be as mount Zion, which cannot be moved, but abideth for ever" (Psalm 125:1).

✿ Joe and Mary Brummel
✿ Pat McCullough
✿ Larry and Kathy Looyenga
✿ Bob and Kathy Looyenga
✿ Randy and Lindy Looyenga
✿ Ken and Nancy Throop
✿ Doug and Melissa Looyenga
✿ Mark and Sara Looyenga
✿ Pat and Karen Witherall
28 grandchildren, 1 in glory
18 great-grandchildren

Grandville, Michigan

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

We are grateful to the Lord for granting our parents and grandparents,

**DON and CORRENE
VAN OVERLOOP,**

50 years of marriage, and for the godly upbringing we received from them. Their anniversary will be celebrated, D.V., on the 5th of June, 2009. "I will sing of the mercies of the LORD forever: with my mouth will I make known thy faithfulness to all generations" (Psalm 89:1).

✿ Mike and Mary VanOverloop
Derek, Keith, Caleb, Katelyn

✿ Kurt and Deb VanOverloop
Mitchell, Alex, Jared, Jenna,
Danae

✿ Larry and Lynn VanOverloop
Joshua, Lynnelle, Cory,
Cameron

✿ Kraig and Tracy Keegstra
Jamie, Riley, Colton, Macy

✿ Chad and Lori VanOverloop
Nicole, Marisa

Hudsonville, Michigan

Reformed Witness Hour

June 2009

Date	Topic	Text
June 7	"Let No One Despise Covenant Youth"	I Timothy 4:12
June 14	"Strengthen Each Other's Hand in God"	I Samuel 23:16-18
June 21	"Remembering Reformed Economics"	II Corinthians 8
June 28	"The Bread That Comes From Heaven"	Exodus 16