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The Lord Is Risen Indeed

"The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon."

Luke 24: 34

The two travelers to Emmaus had seen the risen Lord Jesus. At first Cleopas and his companion did not know it was Jesus. He appeared to them as a stranger. He had talked with them for most of the seven miles to Emmaus and they did not know Him. But as soon as their eyes were opened and they identified Him, they immediately returned to Jerusalem in order to tell the eleven.

And there they found their story confirmed. For even as they rushed into the room to tell the eleven and others of their experience in seeing and talking with the Lord, they were told that Jesus had risen indeed. And Jesus' appearance to Simon confirmed that the women had not just seen a vision early that morning, but had actually seen the Lord Himself.

Rev. VanOverloop is pastor of Grace Protestant Reformed Church in Standale, Michigan.

There was only one conclusion: "The Lord is risen indeed."



You can feel their excitement! "The Lord is risen indeed." Earlier the women had been doubted. But not anymore. It is a reality. Now they know for sure that He is risen.

The fact and reality of Jesus' resurrection from the dead is uppermost in the minds of the disciples. Jesus did really arise from the dead. They believed it because of everything they had heard that day, climaxing in Peter's testimony that the risen Lord had spoken with him. First, it was the women who told of the stone rolled away from the entrance of His tomb, and of the fact that there was no body left in the grave—just the grave-clothing, and that lying undisturbed in such a way as if His body just passed through them. The women also told of the words of the angels, "Why seek ye the living One among the dead? He is not here, but is risen: remember how he spake unto you when he was

yet in Galilee, saying, The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again" (5-7). And the women told the disciples that they did remember Him saying this (8, 9). Then John and Peter had gone to the site of Jesus' burial, and they came back confirming the story of the women that the tomb was indeed empty and that the grave clothes were lying there so uniquely. Later Mary Magalene told of her seeing the risen Lord Jesus, and then the other women reported His appearance also to them. And now Simon Peter told them that Jesus had come and spoken to him. The fact and reality of their Lord's resurrection could not be denied.

They observed that Jesus' resurrection was unique—unlike the resurrection of those whom Jesus had raised from the dead. A couple of things make Jesus' resurrection different. First, no one saw Jesus arise and could be a witness of the actual event. (Later, when they would understand the resurrection better, they would say that no human eye

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could have seen it.) And second, Jesus arose changed. He did not return to them the same as He had been. Mary Magdalene told them of her Master's words. And the report of all those who saw Him was that, while He truly had arisen from the dead, there was a change—a change that they all recognized, but could not well describe. At this point, the disciples were not yet able to grasp the otherness of His resurrection.

The church today has the fact of Jesus' resurrection well established. The fact of it is established by strong evidence and by hundreds of witnesses, all of which can now be put together. The evidence is found in the empty grave, and the positioning of the linen grave clothes. The fact is also established in the words of the angels. And the fact of Jesus' resurrection is established by Jesus' appearances, one of them being to over 500 at one time (I Cor. 15:5-8). Additionally, the fact of Jesus' resurrection is established by the gospel preaching recorded in Scripture, which over and over presented the fact of Jesus' resurrection. There are at least seven different instances recorded in the book of Acts where the apostles spoke of Jesus' resurrection. And then there are many times that the apostles' epistles present the resurrection of Jesus as an established fact: Romans 1:4; 4:25; 10:9; I Corinthians 15; Ephesians 1:20; I Thessalonians 4:14; I Peter 1:3.

The fact of Jesus' resurrection must be well established because it is the heart of the gospel. Consider the familiar words of Paul, "If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain." "And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins" (I Cor. 15:14, 17). And then all believers who "are fallen asleep in Christ are perished" (I Cor. 15:18). Without the resurrection, the cross of

Christ is without value, and there would be no salvation. Then we would be without hope. The church of Christ must be able to say, "The Lord is risen indeed!"



There is great and beautiful significance in the fact of Jesus' certain resurrection.

As the fact of creation reveals the Creator, so the resurrection of Jesus reveals God as having power to make alive the dead. To understand this, we must have a correct understanding of Christ's death. His death was and is the revelation of God's holy wrath against sin. The wages of the sins of all of the elect is what caused Jesus' death. He was delivered unto death on account of our transgressions (Rom. 4:25a). Then Jesus' resurrection declares that He who kills also makes alive. The holy Punisher of sin is completely satisfied with the punishment having been completely borne, so that divine justice is perfectly satisfied. Then we can understand that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself (II Cor. 5:19). God had sent His Son and laid on Him the iniquity of all His people. For that iniquity Christ had died. And God raised Him from the dead because the price for that iniquity had been fully paid, all of the offenses were covered (Rom. 4:25b).

There is something about Jesus' personal appearance to Peter that makes abundantly and amazingly clear the truth that the resurrection of Jesus declares sinners to be forgiven and justified. When the disciples excitedly told Cleopas and his companion that the Lord is risen indeed, they added (as if giving the best proof): "and hath appeared to Simon." Notice which name they deliberately used. They did not use the name "Peter," that is, rock. They all knew of Peter's denials of Jesus. It was as if that

sin deposed him from office. He was no longer Peter. He was just Simon—what he was before he met Jesus. "Simon" is the name his parents gave to him—it is the name of his natural face (James 1:23). When he denied Jesus, he forfeited his right to the name Peter. But it is very significant that while the disciples identified him as Simon, earlier that very morning the angels had instructed the women to "tell his disciples *and Peter*" about His resurrection (Mark 16:7). And now, later in the day, the crucified and risen Savior appeared personally to Simon Peter. Although we do not know the details of this appearance, we may believe that Peter learned that Jesus had forgiven him. His sin of denying his Lord had weighed heavily on the disciple. He had wept bitterly. His Lord knew that he needed to be assured that all his sins were forgiven. And we may know that as Simon was forgiven, so we may be assured that all our sins are also forgiven.



The disciples were excited. Their sorrow was turned to joy! "The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon."


Jesus' resurrection from the dead is God's testimony of our salvation. He who was delivered to death because of our sins was raised from the dead. His resurrection clearly and powerfully indicates that the sins for which He died are gone. The sinners for whom He died are justified. Simon Peter needed to know this! So do we. God's raising Jesus from the dead was a putting of His approval on Jesus' cross. We may know that the punishment we deserve was fully endured and that our righteousness was completely earned. Jesus overcame death (our death), so that we may experience already a resurrection to new life in Christ (in our regeneration), so that we

may know of our justification, and so that we may have hope of the resurrection of our bodies and of life everlasting.

While the disciples did not yet grasp it completely, they did have a sense that Jesus' resurrection was different from the

other resurrections they had observed. Jesus did not come back to the earthly. He passed through locked doors. This is because He went through death to glory. He made a way out of the grave, which the physical eye cannot see. It is the way to a glory that

eye hath not seen. It is grasped only by faith. He is truly risen.

The Lord's resurrection is a cause for great joy. We may rejoice and be glad. The Lord is risen indeed! Let us rejoice in the Lord! Now and always! 

Marriage, Divorce, and Children (2)

Marriage is the God-ordained institution that bonds one man and one woman for life. God determined that this unique relationship of love and fellowship would picture His glorious covenant of grace between God and His chosen people in Christ. The wickedness of man has developed to the point that man despises this fundamental relationship, this "creation ordinance." In Western countries, and increasingly about the world, divorce is common and acceptable—if young couples even bother to get married.

God is not mocked. Man pays the price for this rank rebellion—the heaviest of which is the oft denied and covered up price, namely, the toll on children.

The last editorial highly recommended two books that describe the effects of divorce on children. The first is *Child of Divorce, Child of God: A Journey of Hope and Healing* by Kristine Steakley. The second, written by

Elizabeth Marquardt, is *Between Two Worlds: The Inner Lives of Children of Divorce*. The recommendation is not an unqualified endorsement of everything they contain. The latter book is by an unbeliever. The former is written by a believer who does not share the Protestant Reformed Churches' conviction that Scripture forbids the remarriage of divorced persons so long as the spouse is living.

Yet both women, themselves children of divorce, strongly oppose divorce due to the damage perpetrated on children. They document their shared conviction that all children of divorce are deeply affected by divorce. They reject the notion that a divorce can be "good" or that some kinds of divorces do not scar the children for life. Divorce is permanently life altering for the children. They do not simply "get over" the divorce of their parents.

It is worth our while to consider some specific ways that divorce does damage to children.

First of all, a child of divorce has an inner life of turmoil and uncertainty hidden from the

casual observer. Not only is the initial breakup of his or her parents' marriage earthshaking for the child, but divorce causes a restructuring of childhood. The children grow up in two worlds, which "creates endless and often painful complications for the child" (*Two Worlds*, 21). Marquardt describes one such complication arising out of the fact that children resemble their parents.

As children of divorce, we became insiders *and* outsiders in each of our parents' worlds. We were outsiders when we looked or acted like our other parent or when we shared experiences in one world that people in the other knew little or nothing about. And, in a powerful piece of symbolism, we could also have a different last name. By contrast, we were marked as insiders by whatever traits we shared with the family members in one world—physical characteristics, personality, and name—as well as the experiences we shared with that family. We always had at least some traits and experiences in common with the family in each world. Yet because we grew up living in two worlds we never fully belonged in either

Previous article in this series: April 1, 2009, p. 292.

place. At any moment, without warning, one of our distinguishing traits could mark us as an outsider" (21, 22).

Steakley likewise reminds divorced parents:

Biologically, half of our DNA comes from the other parent. When you criticize our other parent, we feel the sting ourselves. We fear that, along with our freckles and the ability to curl our tongue, we might have inherited the dishonesty or slovenliness or whatever it is you comment on each time our other parent's name comes up in the conversation (*Child of Divorce*, 163-4).

Marquardt reminds us that when two become one in marriage, two lives, or worlds, come together. Every husband and wife knows how very difficult it is to bring these two lives together. Some couples have a more difficult time than others of welding these two lives together. But everyone recognizes that it is the parents' job to make one life out of the two. However, with a divorce, the two parents are no longer trying to resolve differences between their two lives. In fact, their lives become increasingly diverse. This will be particularly true when one of the parents is a believer, and the other turns his back on the faith.

Consider what this means for children who are shuttled back and forth between these two worlds. They must figure out the different rules in each home and try to adapt. They must try to remember what "secrets" from the other home they should conceal, and what is acceptable to reveal. They wonder whether they look or act too much like dad, or mom. The children are forced to adjust themselves to both parents, shaping habits and beliefs to imitate the particular parent with whom they are living at the moment.

The believing child has the

added dimension of seeking to live the antithesis in a home that allows and perhaps promotes ungodliness. At every visit to the home of the unfaithful parent, choices have to be made, mind you, by a child, of whether to go along with watching the movie that the parent watches, or turn from it. And should he go home and tell the believing parent of the ungodly entertainment that the unfaithful parent provided, or keep it to himself to minimize the dreaded conflict between father and mother?

Imagine the turmoil in the soul of the child! Children learn their beliefs and lifestyle from their parents. But what a warfare goes on in the soul of a child when the parents are divorced and teaching conflicting beliefs and morality! And how Satan must work in such a little one.

Children of divorce are also forced into the role of adult much younger than children in intact families. This arises partly out of the terrifying experience of seeing one or both parents scared or hurt. In a strange kind of role reversal, the children often try to protect their parents from anything else that would distress or hurt them. They pretend that they are fine, and that they are able to handle the turmoil. They become quite independent, often being left home alone for long periods of time. Many are model children—well behaved, kind, and amazingly mature. Marquardt, however, gives the perspective of children of divorce: "We might look 'fine' to everyone else, but talk to us about our inner lives and you will find, just beneath the surface, a potent mix of loss and confusion that haunts us to this day" (39).

She also makes this perceptive comment. "Children have to grow up too fast for all kinds of reasons: poverty, or a parent who dies or has a chronic illness. But divorce is different. Children

know that it's the result of at least one parent's choice" (34).

One of the most horrendous legacies of divorce is the abuse it fosters. Writes Marquardt,

Tragically, it is well documented that children are at significantly greater risk of abuse after their parents' divorce. More than seventy reputable studies document that an astonishing number—anywhere from one-third to one-half—of girls with divorced parents report having been molested or sexually abused as children, most often by their mothers' boyfriends or stepfathers. A separate review of forty-two studies found that "the majority of children who were sexually abused...appeared to come from single-parent or reconstituted families." Two leading researchers in the field conclude: Living with a stepparent has turned out to be the most powerful predictor of severe child abuse yet."

Clearly God judges this wicked perversion of His will concerning marriage. God hates divorce, but man will pursue his lusts regardless that he does lifelong damage to his most precious earthly possession—his own children.

That the world of the ungodly ignores the judgment of God on their lifestyle and continues to divorce is to be expected. But it is unthinkable that the church would allow this reckless destruction of marriages, if only for the sake of the children. Nevertheless, both of these books demonstrate that by and large this is exactly what the church is doing.

The church of Rome loudly proclaims that she prohibits divorce. Less well known is the fact that Rome rather easily grants annulments of marriage. That is convenient for the adults who refuse to keep their oaths of marriage, and it is clean and neat for the church. But what does this do to the children of divorce

(annulment)? One such child responded, "That is something that I don't think I have really come to grips with. In college I touched on it a bit because once I learned what annulment meant I thought it was ridiculous. I said, 'How can I not exist? If the marriage didn't exist, who am I? What am I?'" (*Two Worlds*, 152).

Kristine Steakley rightly criticizes churches that, in her experience, did not give solid teaching on divorce from Scripture. After describing the confusing array of views on divorce and remarriage found in various Protestant churches, she wrote,

Making matters worse, none of this teaching came from the pulpit. Sure, if you scheduled an appointment with the pastor, he would be happy to sit down and discuss what the Bible has to say about divorce. But teaching from the pulpit on the subject of divorce was conspicuously absent (*Child of Divorce*, 151).

She points out the obvious, namely, that Scripture is hardly silent on the subject of divorce.

Her most pointed criticisms are of churches that are tolerant of divorce. One passage in particular is most instructive.

If one segment of the church is too quick to condemn and exclude families in which a divorce has taken place, another segment is perhaps too welcoming. There is a fine line between a "come as you are" mentality and an "anything goes" standard of behavior.

The "anything goes" philosophy sounds good when we are the sinner receiving abundant grace over and over again. Such cheap grace, as Dietrich Bonhoeffer termed it, is shallow and detrimental to spiritual growth, but it feels good to be able to do whatever we want under the cover of forgiveness. Paul anticipated such a response when he taught about the magnificent grace of God in his letter to the

Romans: "What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means!" (Rom. 6:1-2).

Churches should be places of grace, but sometimes they become places where grace is used to excuse sin. Pastors may even encourage divorce for people in unhappy marriages. That's what happened in the family of Rob Evans. Evans has his own line of Christian CDs and videos for kids, setting Bible stories to music as the Donut Man. He appears in churches all over the United States and Canada, singing his songs and teaching children about God. There was a time, though, when Evans was not a churchgoer. In an interview with *National Catholic Register*, Evans said, "When my parents divorced when I was 6, the church in Paoli (Penn.) told [my mother] that divorce might be the best thing for her in this situation because she found 'true love' with another man and that she had her whole life ahead of her. The church did not fight for the unity of our family.... So we stopped going to church."

Churches that take a lax view of divorce—allowing it for trivial reasons or even encouraging individuals to seek divorce outside of biblical parameters—not only corrupt grace, they hurt the children of divorce. They cheapen marriage, making it disposable, and in the process tell the children of divorce that what happened was perfectly fine and normal and sometimes just happens when grownups cannot get along. This is a wholly unsatisfying answer to a child, teenager or adult whose family has just been ripped in two.

When the church fails to hold us to a higher standard—whether in business dealings, sexuality, marriage or any other facet of life—we lose what makes the church distinctive. God tells us again and again in Scripture that we are set apart and holy, and that we are to live holy lives. We need the help of the church in this quest. We need pastors and church leaders who will call us to be holy and who will let us know

when our lives are meandering outside the boundaries of holiness. We need shepherds who are willing to tend the flock and keep us in the fold, not letting us wander aimlessly around the mountainside peering over cliffs and into lions' dens.

Addressing the sin in our lives is an acknowledgment of our brokenness. We are fundamentally broken before God. Our relationship with him has been severed by sin, and only his grace can restore it. Any child of divorce will tell you about the brokenness of a family torn apart. We even use the term "broken home" to talk about divorce. We do not come from "a home where things just did not work out" or "a home different from other people's homes." We come from broken homes. Sweeping divorce under the rug of grace and embracing everyone without telling them about God's requirement of holiness minimizes the brokenness that children of divorce feel when they look at their families (152-154).

This casual attitude toward divorce is exactly what the *Standard Bearer* has inveighed against for years. The rampant divorce rate among "evangelical churches" indicates that God's judgment rests on the churches that take this tolerant view of divorce. And this tolerant attitude means that the church is unable to condemn even such sins as adultery, desertion, remarriage (of guilty or innocent parties), and more. In such churches, the covenant of God is profaned, and the children are damaged, even spiritually destroyed.

In the face of this, the church of Christ has a high calling. Christ demands that she preach the full truth on marriage and divorce, and in this way also set forth real hope for the children of divorce.

... to be continued.



Independentism and Homeschooling

In his editorial entitled “Creeds, the Believer, and the Sufficiency of the Scriptures” (the *Standard Bearer*, February 15, 2009), the Rev. Kenneth Koole takes aim at what he calls “independentism.” What comes under his fire, specifically, is an “independentism that smacks of individualism, which individualism, in the end, borders on an autonomy of self.”

Included in the range of the Rev.’s editorial gun is homeschooling. It is “the simple fact,” according to the Rev. Koole, that not all, but “much of what belongs to the homeschooling movement today is infected with this same spirit.” “The spirit of individualism,” we are told, “is the driving force behind the movement itself.”

Due to the fact that “homeschooling” is indeed, as the Rev. Koole notes, “a sensitive subject in our own circles,” and because of the seriousness of the Rev.’s charge, it is reasonable and fair to request some explanation.

*Are homeschoolers themselves the problem? Is it clearly evident that homeschoolers are, by and large, self-seeking independentists who have no regard for the rest of the body of Christ?

*Or is home schooling *itself* the problem? Is the very *idea* of home education *opposed* to the cause of a community of believers who are concerned for the nurture and edification, not only of a few, and not only of a few families, but of that large and glorious “family” that is the body of Christ?

*Or are both the problem—homeschoolers and homeschooling?

Just what is the Rev. saying?

Most importantly, what do the Scriptures say?

From God’s all-sufficient Word, and from any creed of the church that might give insight into what the Scriptures have to say about homeschooling, we believers wait to hear.

Rev. Mitchell Dick

RESPONSE:

First of all, we find it a bit strange that one who knows where the *SB* over the years has stood in promoting the establishment of good Christian schools (presenting it always as a calling laid upon covenantally-minded parents) would take exception to our referring to the home-school *movement* as being shot through with the spirit of independentism.

This is the movement’s history to begin with. Its beginnings did not originate with professing Christians but with unbelievers with an anti-government bent. They wanted nothing to do with the government setting the standards and requirements for education of its citizens. Nor were their children going to be taught to pledge allegiance to a flag that symbolized what they basically despised.

Sadly, this same spirit carried over into much of the religious side of the movement, as more and more became disenchanted with and disturbed by what was being taught in the public schools. We experienced this firsthand a few years back in our church extension work. Families that had fled another state attended the services for a time. They were evading truant officers as they insisted on their constitutional right to educate their children at home without having to register with the state. They confessed the Reformed religion, but it soon became evident that their homeschooling convic-

tions tied in with a number of other issues, such as refusing to have social security numbers, as well as to pay taxes (all business transactions were in cash). When questioned about this troubling disregard for lawful authorities, they informed us of the large network of like-minded supporters they had nationwide.

That this virus of independentism moving in the direction of autonomy (suspicious of any and all outside their own home or not of their mentality) is loose in the movement simply cannot be denied. But even where this radical spirit does not rule, one will still find an anabaptistic spirit governing many in the movement.

And second, I carefully distinguished between the spirit of individualism characterizing much of the *movement* and putting all homeschoolers in that category, which you note, and then ignore.

Thirdly, though the questions you raise are really extraneous to the point made in our *SB* article, your letter gives us opportunity to address the issue of homeschooling, lest there be any misunderstanding where we stand on this matter.

Evidently you would like to read my reference to the home-school *movement* as a reference to all who homeschool, and therefore as an indictment of all who decide to educate their children at home. This is not what we wrote, nor is it our conviction. There are any number who educate their children at home who are not infected with the spirit of independentism. We do not dispute that. Nor will we allow you to place upon us that mantle. There are God-fearing parents who, in our judgment, are in a position where they have

little option if they are going to protect their children from unbiblical, anti-Christian education and counteract the world's influence. They are going to have to separate their children from untrustworthy teachers and from children who for the most part are devoid of the Spirit of the Lord Jesus, and they will have to educate their children as much as they can and as well as they can on their own.

Placed in a situation where I had little option, I would most likely have homeschooled my children too (or looked for like-minded believers who had the same concern, with whom perhaps my wife and I could share the burden and demands of homeschooling). No little enterprise, I am sure.

I am well aware that there are some saints in Wingham, ON, Canada as well as in Redlands, CA (with high-school-age children) who are faced exactly with what I am talking about, and are doing just that.

I say, God bless them in their joint education labors in their homes.

If you think I am being facetious, you are wrong.

If I were their pastor I would be praying mightily in congregational prayer for these 'homeschooling' mothers who have the heavy, daily burden of formal education added to their already demanding calling of having to provide everything for their children's physical well-being and biblical instruction as well, praying that they might not become exhausted in this additional burden placed on them. Such a mother, while teaching three or four children, might have to go through the rigors of child-bearing, as well as having to nurse a little one, while trying to tend to the formal education both of grade-school and perhaps also of high-school-age children. No small matter.

That I know. I can understand why some, before good Christian schools were established, if they had a little wealth, would bring in a tutor or two, so that the mother could tend to the little ones who were not ready for school, little ones who really require nearly undivided attention early on. Surely, the more that little ones have the mother's undivided attention in these pre-school years, the better for their development. I cannot imagine there can be more than one school of thought on that!

But now we come to the crux of the issue in our circles these days. Though extraneous to the *SB* article that is the object of Rev. Dick's questions, we address it nevertheless in the interests of the explanation requested. The crux of the issue, we say, is that *where good Christian schools have been established by God-fearing, like-minded Reformed believers, and where trustworthy teachers have been hired, there is an option that would present itself for believing parents.* With this option, I would not need to harbor those great fears and suspicions that would compel me to consider homeschooling. I could freely send my children to such schools, knowing that if undue worldly threats were to surface in that school, or sinful behavior (which almost certainly is going to happen with our spiritually immature children), those other believing parents, whom I consider my brothers and sisters in Christ, would have the same concerns that my wife and I have, and they would, therefore, also work to resist and oppose those worldly threats. To be sure, some with greater and some with lesser zeal, but how is that any different from what each of us finds in his own beloved congregation?

Surely if *such an option* presented itself (all these co-laborers

interested in the same goal that I have in educating our children), one would be foolish to go it alone.

Or would you not agree?

The question arises, if I do not make use of those schools where the Holy Spirit dwells in little sinner-saints being slowly sanctified, what is the option? This? The children of the parents who belong to the same family and household of faith that I do may very well be interacting together on one playground—but mine are in my backyard, with a strong fence between the two. How that would show that I view these other spiritual sons and daughters of Abraham (filled with the beginnings of the life of Christ's Spirit) as belonging essentially to the same *home* and *family* as my children do, I fail to see.

Well, for the sake of argument, let us say that you hesitate to agree to all the above.

Then I would have you consider this—why would one, living in a community of like-minded believers, that is, with good, Bible-believing sons and daughters of Father Abraham (of my own spiritual *family*, mind you, who struggle with the same sins and spiritual weaknesses that I do, looking to the same Elder Brother for His Spirit day by day), I say, why would one hesitate to join with these other God-fearing parents to make use of believing teachers who are ready to use *the gifts given them of God Himself* and developed through focused study, and not send his children to them?

I believe it was no less an educator than Dr. Luther who stated that such teachers were worth their weight in gold. Almost as much as that of a minister, if memory serves me right. No, I am not making that up. I recollect quite clearly, that Luther said that if he could not have been a minister of the gospel, he would have wanted to have been

a God-fearing school teacher, so useful are such persons to the kingdom of God. But then the thought crosses my mind: Of what service would Luther as a teacher have been, if no believing parents really cared to send their children to him and others of his caliber?

Quite a missed opportunity and waste of gifts given by God, I would say.

But I am convinced that this matter of our making use of the good Christian schools that the consistory itself wholeheartedly approves of and promotes rests on more than that it has these dedicated and God-fearing teachers to whom we can entrust our children (or at least we should, it seems to me: they come from our own congregations after all).

Still, I suppose there might be, on the rare occasion, a couple so gifted and educated that there is not a subject in the whole curriculum that they could not themselves teach as well or better than those hired to do so for them. For the sake of argument we grant it the possibility. Why, then, send their children to the good Christian school to grow up with the children of the church of Christ, children related to Christ by inner birth, when they can do just as good a job, or maybe even better, instructing their children at home in the various subject matters?

Let me put my answer in the form of a question. Are we to suppose that the Lord gave us our children, with their gifts and personalities and His Spirit as well, in order that we might withhold them from the rest of the members, thus preventing them from adding to the lives of those other elect seed what would otherwise come to those other children from your and my homes though our children?

As officebearer to officebearer, I would especially ask that question of ourselves (pastors and

elders). For officebearers ought to be the most spiritually mature, and thus their homes should exert the greatest positive influence on those schools and the seed of the covenant in them. If those schools need the involvement of any believers' homes, it would be those of the officebearers first of all. This will be for the greatest good of the very families of one's own congregation who use those schools.

You mention an interest in hearing what the Reformed confessions have to say about this issue. Article 21 of the Church Order comes to mind. True, the Church Order is called a minor confession, to distinguish it (and some others) from the Three Forms of Unity, but it is a confession for all of that, based on principles that are lifted out of the Scriptures, as those scriptural principles are brought to bear on the church's life in that society in which she happens to find herself at the time. Our perspective towards the wisdom of the Church Order for our churches found in North America in the twenty-first century is nicely described in the Ministerial Certificate of Dismissal and Testimonial (a document, as you know, that follows a minister from Classis to Classis). The pertinent phrase speaks of the recommended minister faithfully "adhering in doctrine and life to the Word of God, as interpreted by our Forms of Unity *and the Church Order*" (emphasis ours—kk).

So, as an officebearer of the PRC, this is what I have subscribed to—that what one finds in Article 21 of the Church Order is a faithful interpretation and application of the Word of God as applied to our churches in our present society and circumstances. As long as the article remains unchanged, that is what I intend to promote without apology. I am called to. Besides, it is based on covenantal wisdom.

You inquire about scriptural basis? Take those texts that speak of parents called to bring their children up in the fear of the Lord, and add to them those that urge believers, and heads of homes in the covenantal community in particular, to do those things that edify (build up the church) and enhance the unity of life of the members of Christ's church as the family of God, and you are well on the way to an understanding of the Scriptures that lie behind the Reformed and covenantal wisdom of Article 21 of the Church Order.

The unity of life of which the Scriptures speak (and which they call us to foster and nurture with zeal) is not simply unity in church on Sunday, but unity in the whole of our lives together as the new, redeemed humanity. And I say without apology that good Christian schools (starting with our own) are not only a wonderful expression of that unity and the Spirit who ties its members together, but they are also a powerful tool to begin to nurture that unity of life and walk of our children from early on. I want my children and grandchildren growing up with the other sons and daughters of Abraham as much as possible, not differentiated from them.

Such instruction, carried out properly and prayerfully, can only be for the well-being of the church herself (having to do with nurturing her organic life and unity), since she is made up of the very families and homes using those schools.

In light of the above, surely no Reformed man should take umbrage with a statement that indicates that *much* of the home-school movement is shot through with individualism. Much of it knows very little of the covenantal and organic view of things.

—Rev. Kenneth Koole 

Ideas Have Consequences: Political Correctness (2)

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

I Chronicles 12:32

(In our previous article on political correctness we answered the questions: What is it? and Where did it come from? We now move on to the questions: How is it being promoted? What are its consequences? and Why should modern-day Issachar be concerned?)

How is it being promoted?

Make love not war!" That would be the way to accomplish the cultural revolution of Lukacs, Gramsci, Adorno, Marcuse, and company. Not only does this revolution slogan implement the negative, anti-establishment theme of the revolution as set forth in the Frankfurt School's ideology of "Critical Theory," it also embodies that which they believed would serve most to destroy the West: sex! "Free sex" they believed, more

than anything else would lead to the destruction of the family. Just as Lukacs had promoted sex education in the Hungarian schools, so too it would be promoted in the American schools.

The cultural Marxists saw that the American public schools could be used in many ways to serve the advancement of their revolution. William Ayers put it this way, "Education is the motor-force of revolution."¹ (This is the same Ayers, by the way, with whom our President worked in the 1990s to promote "school-reform projects" in Chicago.) Consequently the cultural Marxists worked hard to promote their ideas in the public schools. A tribute to their success is the promotion of "values clarification," which teaches students to cast off their parents' values and make their own choices. While other of their successes could be noted, we mention one currently being tried in Wisconsin.

"Rethinking Schools" is a Milwaukee-based organization that publishes instructional materials to assist teachers how to "weave social justice issues throughout the curriculum." Lessons include "Rethinking Mathematics: Teaching Social Justice by the Numbers" and "Reading, Writing and Rising Up: Teaching About Social Jus-

tice and the Power of the Written Word."²

To further accomplish the destruction of the family "the Frankfurt school advocated the alternatives of matriarchy, where the mother rules the roost, and 'androgyny theory,' where male and female family roles are made interchangeable, and even reversed. Female boxing, women in combat, women rabbis and bishops, God as she,...films that depict women as tough and aggressive and men as sensitive and vulnerable...."³ All of which to the casual observer has been accomplished with alarming success, primarily by means of the various forms of the media that bombard us and our children on a daily basis.

Also successful has been the promotion of the political correctness agenda in the colleges and universities. Many of the student promoters of the "counter culture" in the 1960s are now (or have been) the administrators and professors of those same institutions. Little wonder, then, that these institutions serve as significant conveyers of the cultural revolution. One way they are accomplishing this is by promoting their goal of destroy-

² Schlafly, 2.

³ Patrick J. Buchanan, *The Death of the West* (St. Martin's Press, 175 Fifth Avenue, New York, New York, 2002), p. 5.

¹ Phyllis Schlafly, "Public Schools Change Young Evangelicals' Values," <http://www.humanevents.com/article.php?print=yes&id=30090>, p. 1.

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Previous article in this series: March 1, 2009, p. 258.

ing the liberal arts tradition that has helped create and sustain Western civilization. T. Kenneth Cribb, Jr. writes about this:

The proponents of Political Correctness have concentrated their efforts on the core of a liberal education, the curriculum. Their efforts will radically alter what new generations of Americans will learn. In this battle the handmaiden of Political Correctness has been the "multicultural" movement. A number of critics have rightly pointed out that multiculturalism is more than an argument for courses that concentrate on groups that at one time were disadvantaged or oppressed. Rather, multiculturalism involves the systematic restructuring of the curriculum so as to hinder students from learning about the Western tradition. Since the ulterior motive behind Political Correctness is an attempt to restructure American society along egalitarian lines, it is imperative for its proponents to instill in the minds of students a thoroughgoing cultural relativism.

Perhaps the most disturbing aspect of the Politically Correct assault on the curriculum is that it has occurred at many of America's elite universities.¹

Cribb then goes on to reveal what this means. For example, at Stanford University the long-standing Western civilization course requirement was replaced in 1988 with a multicultural program known as "Cultures, Ideas, and Values." Also, students at Stanford, like students at all but one of the 50 top universities in the United States, are not required to take a single course in history. And because elite institutions such as Stanford set the standard for the rest of American

¹ T. Kenneth Cribb, Jr. "Political Correctness in Higher Education." *Political Correctness: A Short History of an Ideology*. Ed. William S. Lind (Free Congress Foundation, November, 2004), p. 3.

higher education, others have adopted similar programs.

Deconstruction is another way the cultural revolution is being promoted on the college campuses. Deconstruction is just another way of applying the Frankfurt School's "Critical Theory" of continuously finding fault with Western ideas and institutions.

One might ask, "Can we really attribute all this chaos in the West to Lukacs, Gramsci, Adorno, Marcuse?" Patrick Buchanan's answer is, "Probably not, but they did devise the strategy and the tactics of a successful Marxist revolution in the West, and the culture they set out to destroy is no longer the dominant culture in America and the West. They began their lives as outcasts and may end on the winning side of history."²

What are its consequences?

While much more could be said about *how* the counter culture and its ideology of political correctness is being promoted in the West, we must move on to its consequences. Ideas *do* have consequences! Here too we will not be exhaustive. Rather, we simply present a few examples and leave the reader to fill in the blanks.

Phyllis Schlafly would say that one consequence is seen in the 2008 election and the fact that 32% of 18 to 29 year-old evangelicals voted for Obama, while only half that percentage voted for John Kerry in 2004. The reason many of them gave for putting the moral issues of life and marriage on the back burner and voting for Obama was that he stood for *social justice*. In today's world it is politically correct to be in favor of social justice, which is simply left-wing jargon for the overthrow of those who have economic and political power. Schlafly attributes this to "attitudes and decision-making they

² Buchanan, 92.

learned in the public schools, which 89 percent of U.S. students attend."³ Whether or not Schlafly is entirely on target is open for debate, but it cannot be doubted that these ideas *are* being promoted in the public schools with apparent effect.

Another consequence of political correctness is that it places restrictions on what may be expressed in our society. Supposedly we have the right of "free speech." However, that right is more and more restricted, as the sad case of John Rucker illustrates. Sports enthusiasts recognize Rucker as a former pitcher of the Atlanta Braves. (That they still have the politically incorrect name *Braves* is a bit of a surprise.) In the year 2000 Rucker came under fire for some of his comments in an interview with a reporter:

New York City is "the most hectic, nerve-racking city," Rucker complained. "Imagine having to take the (Number) 7 train to the ballpark, looking like you're (riding through) Beirut next to some kid with purple hair next to some queer with AIDS right next to some dude who just got out of jail for the fourth time right next to some 20-year-old mom with four kids. It's depressing." Rucker also complained about the preponderance of "foreigners" in New York, and the fact that a visitor "can walk an entire block in Times Square" without hearing the English language being spoken.⁴

Whether one agrees with Rucker's assessment of New York City is not the point here. What is the point is the vehement response to Rucker's remarks. The then-president Clinton even weighed in: "...these bigoted remarks were outrageous and unacceptable and send a ter-

³ Schlafly, 1.

⁴ William Norman Grigg, "Off His Rucker," *The New American* 14 February, 2000:21.

rible message to our kids.... He (Rocker) should be appropriately sanctioned." And sanctioned he was. Whether "appropriately" is still in doubt. However, "appropriate sanction" for Major League Baseball Commissioner Bud Selig meant that Rocker needed to undergo psychological testing. The *New York Times* suggested that the testing was done to give Rocker a chance to prove he was not off his rocker, though they said it in more politically correct terms. The *Times* said the test was to give Rocker a "chance to prove that, despite the inflammatory remarks...he is a rational person."

Additionally, as one might expect, the political correct movement has resulted in numerous methods of indoctrination and the application of speech codes on those who attend the colleges and universities. For more on this, review a previous article written by the undersigned: "Standing in the Shadow of Dawkins" (Vol. 84, p. 250).

The political correctness movement's feminist attacks on home and family also have borne bitter fruit. Its themes of children being a burden, marriage as old-fashioned, and dads as unnecessary have wreaked havoc in the home and nation. As Buchanan aptly expresses it:

Millions of Western Women now share the feminists' hostility to marriage and motherhood. Millions have adopted the movement's agenda and have no intention of getting married and no desire to have children. Their embrace of Marcuse's Pleasure Principle, their tours of duty in the sexual revolution, mean marriages put off. And as our divorce and birthrates show, even the marriages entered into are less stable and less fruitful. In the depopulating nations of Europe, even in the old Catholic countries, use of contraceptives is almost universal. Contraception, sterilization, abortion, and

euthanasia are the four horsemen of the "culture of death...." The pill and condom have become the hammer and sickle of the cultural revolution.¹

The statistics are in. These ideas also have contributed to a *depopulation* of Europe. At present birthrates without new immigration, Europe's population will plummet from 728 million in 2000 to 600 million in 2050. The average fertility rate of European women has fallen to 1.4 children, with 2.1 needed just to replace the existing population.

Neither is America off the hook. 30 percent of all U.S. pregnancies now end in the abortionist's clinic. This, combined with the use of contraceptives, has resulted in a significant drop in American birthrates from the 1960s to the present. Furthermore, we have seen a "1000 percent increase in the number of unmarried couples living together in the United States, from 523,000 in 1970 to 5.5 million today."² It would appear America is fast following in the footsteps of her mother countries in Europe.

A final consequence of political correctness that we will examine briefly is a result of its multicultural tenet, which denounces as "racist" the criticism of any culture other than our own. This hands-off policy has closed the door to honest critical examination of the beliefs and practices of those who hold to and promote Islam. We have on the one hand promoters of Islam who say, "Islam isn't in America to be equal to any other faith, but to be dominant. The Koran should be the highest authority in America, and Islam the only accepted religion on earth."³ And, on the other hand, we have a politically-

correct ideology that makes it impossible to examine the spread of these ideas in America without being labeled "Islamophobe." In this environment the door is wide open to what Robert Spencer calls "stealth jihad." In his book with that title Spencer writes:

The West today faces the threat of stealth jihadists. By using this term, I am not implying that they operate in secret; to the contrary, one of the key characteristics distinguishing them from their violent counterparts is that they carry out their business openly, carefully constructing a façade of moderation. What is stealth about these operatives is their ultimate agenda—they are not seeking to protect Muslims' "civil rights" from the rampant "Islamophobia" that ostensibly plagues Western societies, as they claim. Rather, they are leading a full-scale effort to transform pluralistic societies into Islamic states, and to sweep away Western notions of legal equality, freedom of conscience, freedom of speech, and more.⁴

Consequently, the United States, in the name of multiculturalism, is unable to do polemical battle with an ideology that is presently working in America to destroy it.

Why should Issachar care?

While these and other consequences of political correctness are reason for concern, those whose desire it is to be "understanding of the times" also have a concern for how these ideas affect the church of our Lord Jesus Christ. Modern-day Issachar recognizes that throughout history, according to the council of God, nations rise and fall. This will continue until our Lord returns.

¹ Buchanan, 88.

² Buchanan, 42.

³ Art Moore, "Did CAIR founder say Islam to rule in America?," *WorldNet Daily*, December 11, 2006.

⁴ Robert Spencer, *Stealth Jihad: How Radical Islam Is Subverting America without Guns or Bombs* (Regnery Publishing, Inc. One Massachusetts Avenue NW, Washington DC, 2008), 6.

Nevertheless, it is imperative to consider how best to respond to these developments such that His cause is furthered.


There is a warning here that the church and her offspring not fall into the same politically-correct ideas of the society in which she resides. Some self-examination might be in order: to what degree have the politically-correct viewpoints of tolerance, diversity, multiculturalism, and feminism influenced us? Are we willing to sacrifice much of what this world has to offer for the bringing forth, and the godly rearing, of the covenant seed? Do we dare speak out in response to political correctness in a way that may well result in being labeled "racist," "homophobe," "Islamophobe," "bigot," etc.?

Furthermore, knowledge of what is being promoted in our

society under the banner of godless political correctness, alerts modern-day Issachar to how vulnerable her offspring is to these ideas. William Lind, director of the Center for Cultural Conservatism at the Free Congress Foundation, provides excellent food for thought as well as action by informing us that:

The entertainment industry...has wholly absorbed the ideology of cultural Marxism and preaches it endlessly not just in sermons but in parables: strong women beating up weak men, children wiser than their parents, corrupt clergymen thwarted by carping drifters, upper-class blacks confronting the violence of lower-class whites, manly homosexuals who lead normal lives. It is all fable, an inversion of reality, but the entertainment media make it seem real, more so than the

world that lies beyond the front door.¹

Back in 1987 University of Chicago professor Allen Bloom wrote *The Closing of the American Mind*, in which he bemoaned that "American high school graduates are among the sensitive illiterates in the world." Thanks in part to the ideas of Lukacs, Gramsci, Adorno, and Marcuse they are that. God grant that Issachar's graduates may be those whose minds are open to the truth and thereby "understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do." 

¹ William Lind, "Turn Off, Tune Out, Drop Out: A Cultural Conservative's Strategy for the 21st Century," *Against the Grain*, Free Congress Foundation, Washington, D. C., 1998.

Facebook!

Who would think that, after only five years of its existence, such a word would cause such feelings at its mention?! For some parents the word gives a feeling of helplessness about a secret world. They know very little about it except that their children (younger and older) spend a great deal of time in it. They see that their children are often secretive about their time and activities there.

For young people, and maybe not-so-young people, that word

elicits all kinds of different feelings. About their friends they have a feeling of togetherness. About their parents that same word brings a feeling of defensiveness, of having a private and personal domain violated. Whatever the feelings are, they are very strong. And those strong feelings often lead to overreaction on the part of both parents and their children.



What is it about Facebook, Myspace, and all these different social networking sites that makes them so attractive and that provokes such strong feelings?

Social networking sites are attractive for two different reasons.

The first reason is that they are an excellent way for people to keep track of what their friends are doing. Without even asking, one can know at an instant not only what his friends are doing, but how they are feeling and how they are reacting to different events and circumstances, everything from their day at school to the most recent loss of a favorite sports team. Picture Facebook as being present at a large party of friends. At this party, all kinds of different projection screens are set up, each belonging to one person. Each person controls his own presentation on that screen: images, conversation, attitudes, and personal opinions. Each person at that party is also able to di-

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rect his attention to any of those screens to see what his friend is saying or presenting. Part of the attraction, then, is to get as many as possible in the network looking at your screen.

The second reason social networking sites are popular is that they provide a way to interact socially without risk. Talking face to face with people, especially in a group setting, carries all kinds of risks. There is the risk of saying or doing something embarrassing. There is the risk of being rejected by the individual with whom you are speaking. There is also the risk of being too much yourself! How does Facebook eliminate or reduce these risks? First, the standard of acceptable conduct and behavior is lowered dramatically. Words are spoken and images are shown that simply are unacceptable in a real-world setting for their offense. Words spoken that would otherwise destroy and break friendships in the real world pass for common currency among friends in the social networks.

Why should this difference be so great between the real world and the world of social networking? A simple answer: drama! These social networks can be compared to a gigantic stage on which actors and actresses present their alter egos. These alter egos are largely experimental, constantly being molded and shaped by their authors. Sometimes (the best) there is an effort to maintain an exact correspondence between who an individual really is and his online persona. At other times (worse and worst), the on-line persona is nothing at all like the user's real personality.

One of the prevailing understandings of social networking sites is that all members do a certain amount of tinkering with their self-presentations. Everything about yourself is subject to change. Too young?

Make yourself appear older. Too tall? Make yourself shorter. Boring hobbies and interests? Change them to what excites other people, not what they truly might be. What young person isn't going to put on his profile that he enjoys "chillin' with friends"?

Why these differences? Sometimes people are too afraid to be themselves for fear of being ridiculed. In cyberspace they will adopt a hard, exterior shell. Sometimes others work hard to make themselves more attractive than they think they are, all for the sake of attracting favorable opinions from current or potential friends.



For the above reasons your Facebook profile can be misleading. Your parents, checking up on your profiles, may find completely different creatures than those dwelling in their homes, and this can provoke a powerful reaction. They find that these creatures look dissimilar, speak differently, act abnormally, and have morals incongruous with the real you!

These differences have their dangers. One danger is that you might prefer your Facebook alter ego to your own self. You feel more comfortable being online than off. Then another danger presents itself, that you prefer cyberspace to real space, drama to reality. Real life becomes less real than life on Facebook. Then, an even worse danger is that your preference should lead you to adjust your real self to fit that online persona.

Another danger is that you neglect caring for those around you in your everyday reality for the sake of your online friends. That care involves dealing with difficulties that come up in real life but are never present among online friendships. Deep needs among friends never make their

appearance in cyberspace, but only in reality. In reality you can be truly helpful to your friends. Members of your family demand commitment from you as part of your relationship with them. Social networking sites cannot substitute for those commitments. Likewise, the Lord is pleased to give you strength through your Christian friends and family that He has given you in real life. Your social networks cannot be an effective substitute.

The Lord has placed you in real life. His expectation is that you learn to enjoy and treasure real life, where the communion of the saints is, where your family, friends, and neighbors are. His determination is that you exercise yourselves in the keeping of His commandments to your neighbors in real life. The Lord is in real life, to be believed on, worshiped, and served. He has given priority to real life over cyberspace.

Now, don't get me wrong. All of the above is possible and must be obligatory in your social networks in cyberspace. But they cannot be a substitute for living for and obeying God away from the computer screen. In other words, remember that you have a real-time, living social network in which God has placed you: your family, immediate family and church family, the friends that you can reach out to and with whom you can share real-time events, and your neighbors.



Facebook and other social networking websites are like windows. Your Facebook profile is like a window before which you appear to your friends or to the world. This window is a controlled presentation of yourself. You govern your appearance through this window to your audience, whoever it might be.

What are your motives in that government? Do you Photoshop your pictures until you look like somebody else? Do you present yourself worse than you are, perhaps dressing yourself in a way you wouldn't dare appear before your parents? Then your profile may not even be a window, but a simple picture that is posted to look like a window.

But also think about Facebook as a mirror. See your own reflection in that mirror. Is that reflection true to who you really are? Is that reflection properly yours, or is it someone else's? Is that reflection really appealing to you? Is it appealing to the Lord? Now think of Facebook as a mirror in a deeper way to reflect your heart. What about those differences between you and your online persona? You use your online presentation for a reason. How do you see yourself in this mirror according to that use? Are you deceptive? Are you worldly or profane? If your parents are troubled when they

meet your Facebook persona, is it because they see a caricature of the real you?




One of the most important questions that you can ask yourself about your use of Facebook is whether or not anyone can tell from your profile, etc., that you are a Christian. Does your profile place you squarely on the right side of the antithesis? Follow that same thought through to every aspect of your communication, everything from gifts to bumperstickers to the conversations among yourselves: do they clearly benefit the people with whom you are communicating?

Let me give a helpful suggestion about using Facebook properly. One of its appealing features is instant feedback to postings. This feature can often lead to regret as opinions and judgments offered in haste can cause irreparable damage to

friendships. A good preventative measure is delay. Before you send anything, wait a little bit. Ask yourself if it might give you cause for regret later. Even more, before giving out your opinion ask yourself if what you send is helpful to your friend.



Facebook is a very powerful tool. It can be used powerfully for evil, to tear down and to destroy both yourself and others. But it can also be used powerfully for good, to bring together a closer unity and friendship among fellow saints. If there are any who can use such a tool powerfully *and properly*, it should be you and I. We are rooted and grounded in the truth of God's Word, by the grace of God. It is that truth that sanctifies us by the working of the Holy Spirit in our hearts. By that powerful working in our hearts and our lives, we should then be able to use all things for the glory of God, including Facebook. 

All Around Us

Rev. Audred Spriensma

Sexting: Cell Phone Smut

There are many wonderful new inventions that we enjoy today. One of them is the cell phone. I think that most people under the age of forty today, in our country or in any other developed nation, would be lost without their cell phones.

We can let our young daughters drive their car down the highway, not afraid of what might happen if their car had a breakdown. They would be able to call

us or other appropriate help to get them going again. We are able to stay in touch with our young people in the evenings. And we are able to conduct business and receive calls wherever we go. Just watch as you are driving down the road, and see how many drivers are busy on their cell phones while driving. And now our phones are cameras also. We can take pictures of what we see and where we are and share them with all whom we desire to!

But while a wonderful and helpful invention, this is also a tool that the devil is grabbing a hold of to ensnare and lure us and our children into sin. Hence the new word that is coined to-

day: "sexting." Blogger 'Gran-Diva' claims to have coined the term. You will not find it in Webster's dictionary. It is too new. But Wikipedia defines this term as "(a portmanteau of sex and texting) the act of sending sexually explicit photos electronically, primarily between cell phones. It is practiced primarily by young adults, though it is known to occur amongst children as young as middle-school age." Urban dictionary lists as a definition: "the act of text messaging someone in the hopes of having a sexual encounter with them later; initially casual, transitioning into highly suggestive and even sexually explicit...."

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CBS News on January 15, 2009 reported that three teenage girls who sent nude or semi-nude cell phone pictures of themselves and three male classmates in western Pennsylvania are charged with child pornography. CBS News analyst Lisa Bloom said, "This is a serious felony. They could be facing many years in prison." The teens involved were girls aged 14 and 15 years old and the boys were 16 and 17 years old. Most of those teens accepted lesser misdemeanor charges. In Fort Wayne, a teenage boy is facing felony obscenity charges for sending a photo of his private parts to several female classmates.

Sexting is shockingly common among teens. Twenty percent of teens admit to participating in sexting, according to a nationwide survey by National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy. Often the photos or messages are meant to be private. The teens naively think that their boyfriend or classmate will not share the message or picture with others, only to find out later the image has made its rounds or even been posted online!

Daniel James Devine, in an article in *World* magazine, March 28, 2009, entitled "Cell phone Smut," tells the story of Ben Hunt, a 14-year-old who attends a school in Falmouth, Massachusetts. One day he turned on his cell phone to discover someone had sent him a photo of a 13-year-old female classmate. It was explicit: the young girl lifting her shirt and revealing herself. But instead of deleting the photo and informing a teacher or parent, he did something foolish and sinful: He forwarded it to a friend. Now Hunt and five other boys from his middle school face charges for possession or dissemination of child pornography. If convicted, they could

have to provide DNA samples to the state and register as sex offenders. A Massachusetts juvenile court informed Hunt the charges against him would be dropped in August, but only if he wasn't caught sexting again.

Courts in at least five other states have handled similar cases over the past year. All involve indecent pictures of minors that were shared by sexting through email, text messaging, and web pages. While the vast majority of such photos go unreported, enough are caught to wake us up to realize that what is a wonderful invention and tool for mankind is also a powerful tool in the hands of the devil for sin and mischief. What has some especially worried are adult predators, who get hold of the pictures and either pursue the minor teen or use the pictures to blackmail the teen into doing sexual favors.

A funny picture or flirty message on your phone might seem innocent enough, but what is your teen really saying when he sends a text. He may think that he is only having fun, but in reality he is sending a functional invitation to more sexual activity.

This is a wakeup call. These are temptations that we of the older generation were never faced with. Many of us never have been on such sites as Facebook, Myspace, You Tube, Craigslist. While government agencies are trying to ensure that these sites curtail such pornographic pictures for minors, we cannot wait for the government, which indoctrinates the youth in its public schools to have 'safe sex,' to set the moralistic guidelines whereby our covenant youth live and flourish.

Parents! Parents, what are you doing? Be aware of the sin out there. Be aware of the activity of your children. Do any of

your teens or young adults have their own cell phone? (Yes, I know they do. I have even heard of a third grader who has his own cell phone!) Perhaps you say, "Well, my child would never do something like that!" Our children, teens, and young adults are curious, adventure-some, and impulsive! They, like us, have a sinful nature to wrestle with. Do your children really need their own cell phones or personal computers? Where are they using them, and what are they doing with them? What sites are they using on their computers? Where is your computer in the home located? You can call your cell phone provider and Internet provider and request a block on texting. It is free and fast!

Yes, with the important and useful invention of cell phones and Internet, we need to be warned of cell phone smut. 'Sexting.' We might wish we never had to hear of the term, but it is here and it is real. We need to discuss with our children this temptation and the sin of fornication. "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour..." (I Pet. 5:8). "For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication..." (I Thess. 4:3).

May we, with our children, as we use these modern inventions, be careful. "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God" (Rom. 12:2).



Forget It Not

Forgetfulness

Is it *sin* to forget? Or, when something escaped us, are we done with it by saying: I forgot it.

One would almost grant the latter. For, when you have simply not thought about a matter, when remembrance of it did not come to you, and nothing whatever reminded you of it, how in the world then could you help it, and how can you be held accountable for it?

In by far the most cases of neglect of domestic duty, pleasure is taken in that forgetfulness was least of all intentional—even though as a rule the person who suffered inconvenience thereby ends by saying: *You should not have forgotten it.*

To this latter remark the conscience involuntarily responds *yea and amen*, even though one is conscious that it cannot be altered. Something from which it is evident that, at least with respect to tender and serious matters, one regrets his forgetfulness, thus feels and acknowledges that to forget is something wrong, and thus truly sees guilt in it, and, at least where it concerns a forgetting with respect to the Lord our God, truly recognizes that, in *forgetting*, there is sin.

In God's Word forgetting is represented as sin. "If we have

forgotten the name of our God," says Psalm 44:21, "Shall not God search this out? He who knoweth the secrets of the heart?"

What is more, again and again in Holy Scripture the "*not forgetting*" is laid upon us as an indisputable *duty!* Something from which directly follows that "*forgetting*" undoubtedly is judged as a discarding of our sacred duty, and thus as *sin*.

For instance, it is bound upon our heart that we shall not forget the Lord our God, nor His name, nor His covenant. "Bless the Lord, O my soul," it is said in Psalm 103, "and forget not all his benefits."

To all Israel the duty is put, to take care that also the later generation shall not forget the *acts* of the Lord.

And what here we emphasize is that in Psalm 119 it is said repeatedly: *Thy word* I will not forget," "yet have I not forgotten *thy law*," "Thy statutes do I not forget," "I do not forget thy precepts," and so in verse 176: "I do not forget thy commandments."

The same sense in which Moses, after having placed before Israel the ordinances of God, closes his address with the solemn warning: *Thou shalt not forget it* (Deut. 25:19).



Yet distinguish here well.

When by pressure of business or by interruption, you have unintentionally forgotten a duty that was laid upon you, in your neglect of duty at that moment there is in itself no sin.

Were we responsible only for our temporal acts at a given moment, it might be maintained that forgetfulness is free from guilt.

But such is not the case.

We are by no means responsible merely for what at a given moment we do or do not do, but also very really for *the condition of our person*, from which such negligence springs.

Now forgetting by itself is a direct illness of our spirit, which is occasioned by our sinful state. Sin has not merely attacked our will and weakened it, but also darkened our understanding. And one of the most pitiful darkening of our understanding consists in this, that the defectiveness of forgetting is come upon us.

Adam in the state of righteousness could not forget. And when once, free from all sin, we shall dwell with the redeemed of God, forgetfulness will never be possible in us again.

Forgetting is a weakness, a defect, a disturbance in our human consciousness.

And insofar as we all stand guilty in Adam, we are also responsible for the sad fact that forgetting so oftentimes betrays the brokenness and weakness of our consciousness.



But there is more.

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

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offered us by which to remove this forgetfulness from ourselves and from our children, if not altogether, at least considerably to temper it.

Of course, here we do not [refer to] the gift of a specially strong memory, which it has pleased God to impart to some generations and persons. He who would boast of this, and by reason of this gift would look down upon those less favored, would rob God, who gave him this gift, of His honor.

But apart from this, the fact is undeniable that early training, even a good school education, can be a great means to confine this slovenliness of forgetting within certain limits, and that a lively sense of duty, also in later years, has no small power to resist this sinful forgetting.

The complaint is general that pressing business and mobility of the turbulent life of our days has perceptibly weakened the attention, i.e., the ability to focus one's mind upon a given matter. And this very lack of attention is a grave aid to forgetting.

Yet, conversely, it follows from this that we can do, not merely something, with respect to this ugly forgetting, but even a very great deal. And that the duty with all training, of our children as well as of ourselves, is with effort and perseverance to encourage the binding of our attention to what we must not forget.



Thinking about something and the *forgetting* of something have such a deep moral significance.

Just consider how rarely we forget something that can benefit our own selves, heighten our reputation, or advance our influence. And again, how easily we forget all sorts of things with respect to which love for God and for our neighbor must inspire us.

Back of that forgetting is re-

ally our selfishness and our lack of love.

Much love makes forgetting so much *less*. Orderly living, serious interpretation of one's task in life, and deep fear of God work continuous prejudice to forgetting. And he who knows the secret of God's hidden walk is least of all a stranger to that mindfulness-making operation of the Holy Ghost that has so often kept us from this sinful forgetting.

You see, there works a twofold power upon our memory, upon our remembrance. On one side a power that from without works in us, makes the terror of our sin to haunt us, renders it impossible for us to forget a suffered wrong, and incites certain weighty moments of our life continuously, as of itself, to loom up again in and before our spirit.

Under this we are *passive*.

But there is also a power of our own spirit that inworks upon our memory and our remembrances. And it is this power that renders us guilty when we do not use it, and which helps us to overcome forgetting if we apply it in the fear of the Lord.



But here also man has made straight things crooked, and, with respect to forgetting, it also applies: What we should forget, we continuously remember, and what we should never forget, escapes us constantly.

What wrongs others have done us should be forgotten, and these are continuously remembered and poison our mind. God's acts we forget, but what we ourselves have done continuously inspires our reins to pride. The love we enjoyed from others passes into forgetfulness. But what we ourselves did for others, in mind we continually charge up to their account. Our own trouble is constantly before our eyes, while other people's trouble scarcely ever moves us. Regard-

ing comforts for the body and the things that can afford us pleasure, we have wondrous memories, while the interests of our soul in view of eternity continuously escape us. In brief, what with a noble character would hide itself in the background, sin in our memory puts every time again to the fore. And what always should fill us with seriousness, we must be reminded of again and again.

Oh, this forgetting, which in the main is passed over so lightly, what sorrow does it not entail. A forgetting, like that of which Joseph became a victim in prison. A forgetting of the unfortunate in the land, who cry unto God. A forgetting of an act, which hung by a moment, but which brought irreparable loss. A forgetting of what we had promised, to have the deferred hope as a reproach work usury against us.

The bitter fruit of forgetting reaches so far. And why not acknowledge and confess that among the Lord's people this far-reaching sin is even as lightly dealt with as among the children of the world.

And yet the Lord our God does not let go of us—He, who never forgets, and holds in everlasting remembrance the hope of His needy ones.

Forget it not, He continuously calls out to us, deeply inculcating in us our sacred obligation.

Forget not My benefits to you, forget not the grace I showed you, forget not My holy covenant, but above all forget not the *high* and *holy* commandment I have given you.

Our forgetting helps Satan, and is cause that temptation to sin every time takes hold of us and temptation brings us to fall.

Then we are as Isaiah calls it: *Forgetters of the mountain of his holiness* (65:11). We do not think of God's commandment, and His ordinances do not stand before us as a mighty mountain that of

itself shows itself before our eye and by its position points out our way to us.


Therefore God calls out to those forgetters of His holiness: *Forget it not.*

That word He drives into our

soul, to rouse to awakesness what was asleep in us.

By that word He brings it to pass that we remember Him again, that His commandments assume forms for us again, that His statutes become again our rejoicings.

And the fruit of this His love is that less forgetting makes us climb the mountain of His holiness with firmer tread.

He does not forget us, that in us guilty forgetfulness might be broken. 

Sounding Our the Word

Rev. Carl Haak

The Risen Lord and the Gathered Church

Reformed Witness Hour

A distinctively Reformed radio ministry,
proclaiming the truth of the
sovereignty of God.

What a day that had been—the day in which Jesus rose from the dead—a day of wonder and joy, and a day also of perplexity and doubt! There had never been a day like that before, nor will there ever be a day like it again—until the end, when Jesus appears yet once more, in the clouds of glory.

Immortal life in the body stood upon this present earth of sin and death. For the Lord Jesus Christ, who arose from the dead on this day, had not simply made a journey to the grave and *back again*. He had gone *beyond* the grave. He *destroyed* the grave. He brought to the church on this day everlasting life, complete and perfect victory. He stood upon the earth in a greater splendor than Adam did when he was created on the day that God made him out of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and Adam stood

forth as a man without sin in Paradise. When Jesus arose from the dead on the first day of the week, He was far greater and more glorious than that. For He stood in the human body in everlasting life, in a body that cannot be corrupted, in a body that is not subject to death, in a body that will live forever before the face of God. What a day it was when Jesus arose from the dead!

On that day, one wonder after another happened, as slowly the cloud of doubt and unbelief was rolled away from the disciples. The day began with a great earthquake in the early morning hours. After this, angels came down from heaven to roll the stone away. And those who were watching His grave fainted and became as dead men. When the guards who had been appointed to watch His grave regained their senses, they ran back into the city and blurted out what had happened—that angels had come down and rolled away the stone from Jesus' grave.

Then there were the repeated testimonies, brought to the disciples throughout the day, of the empty tomb and of appearances of the risen Lord. Mary Magdalene burst in upon the

disciples that day, first saying, "They have taken away His body and I don't know where they have laid Him." Then, later in the day, later that very morning in fact, Jesus appears to her by the tomb and she worships Him.

Then there was the well-known race of Peter and John to the tomb. They entered into the tomb...and saw the undisturbed grave clothes. Throughout the day the Savior appeared to His followers to confirm to them that He was risen from the dead.

That is a very wonderful thing, is it not? That is the thing that we must see on this day on which we remember the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. What we must remember is that it was the great concern of the risen Lord on His resurrection day that His church know that He is risen. He appeared to them, and through these appearances He brought them to see the wonder of the resurrection gospel. It came to something of a climax when He appeared to His disciples who were gathered on the resurrection night in the upper room. That is the passage that we find in Luke 24:36-46.

But remember the thought. The thought is this: that the

Rev. Haak is pastor of Georgetown Protestant Reformed Church in Hudsonville, Michigan and radio pastor for the Reformed Witness Hour, on which this message was aired.

Lord's great concern was for His church. His church must have no doubt, no uncertainty, no misconception concerning the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the truth that you absolutely must know. And you must know what it means, that Jesus Christ is risen from the dead. If you do not know that, your life is vain. If you do not know that Jesus Christ is risen from the dead, you are yet in your sin. You are dead. If you do not know that Jesus Christ is risen, and if you do not know it in your heart, then in reality you are living your life only inches from the brink of hell.

This is the gospel: Christ is risen from the dead! And the call of the gospel is: Repent and believe. You as a teenager, you as a college student, you as an expectant mother, a husband or wife, a child—you need to know that Jesus Christ is risen. You must lay hold of that truth by faith.

I said, What a day that was when Jesus arose from the dead. But what a night it was, too, when Jesus' disciples were gathered in the upper room, behind locked doors. They were discussing the events of the day. And what a discussion it was. There must have been great amazement. And there must have been also great misconception. For it is very plain that the disciples in the upper room that night were thinking in terms of the resurrection of Lazarus. The Lord had raised Lazarus from the dead and Lazarus had come back to this life. The disciples were convinced at this point that Jesus was not dead, that He was indeed risen. But they did not understand the resurrection. They thought that perhaps the Lord had cheated death, and that He had robbed the grave. They had all kinds of questions. Was He now some kind of spirit? Was it truly the Lord? Somehow He was raised. Somehow, perhaps, He was go-

ing to come back to them, and things would be like they were before that terrible weekend of the cross.

And we read in the Scriptures that "as they thus spake, Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you." Suddenly the Lord Jesus Christ stood in their midst, the doors being locked. And there was a response of terror among them.

But before we go to that response of terror, I want to point out to you again this fact that Jesus stood in the midst of *them*. The Lord is concerned about His *church*. He has come—where? Well, He has come into the midst of His church. He has come into the midst of those who loved Him and were talking about Him—those who believed, by the grace of God, that He was the Messiah, those whose faith was all wrapped up in Him. The Lord does not come to the disinterested. The Lord does not come to the indifferent one, who sits in church and does not really care today about this gospel. The Lord does not come to them. But He comes to those in whom grace has provoked a profound living interest in Him, to those who on this day desire that the light of the resurrection shine upon their souls. The Lord comes into His church.

But the disciples were terrified that night. They supposed, we read, that they had seen a spirit. So the Lord says to them, "Peace be unto you. Don't be afraid. It is I." They could recognize His voice, the voice that they had heard so often before.

And the Lord now, in the

midst of His church, proclaims to them the resurrection—that death has been swallowed up in victory, that though He stands before them in the body, He has not returned to this physical life, He has not returned to this earth, but now He stands before them in immortal life, a life of the body that is not subject to death.

First of all, we are told, He confirms to them that He is not a spirit. He says, "Do you have something to eat?" And He eats in front of them a piece of fish and a honeycomb. He says to them, "Touch me. Handle me.

A spirit does not have flesh and bones as ye see that I have."

So the disciples came to see that it was the Lord. But yet, no one had let Him into the room. His body was real. It was a true human body. It was the body that was born of the virgin Mary,

the body that had suffered and died upon the cross. But it was a body that was no longer subject to the physical limitations of life on this earth.

We read that they believed not for joy. There was a joy among them, but they just could not take it all in.

So the Lord began to explain to them the real victory that He had attained. He began to explain to them from all of the Old Testament Scriptures, and from the words that He had before spoken to them, that His resurrection was not simply a blow dealt against the enemy. But now He had won the victory. The battle was over. The foes of sin and death have been vanquished. He does indeed stand before them in the same body that had been born and crucified, but now this body is glori-

...when God raises His Son on the third day, when God takes His Son out of the grave, God is declaring that the work that His Son performed on the cross was, in all points, perfect!

fied. It is not subject to death. It is no longer hindered by locked doors. He shall live in this body forever in the presence of God.

Jesus proclaimed to them that He had not come simply to fix up the mess that Adam had made, but that He had come to bring us to the eternal Paradise of God, to implant into our bodies by His power immortal life; that He had established peace between us and God; and that He had established everlasting life through His death and through His resurrection.

The Lord did this by speaking to the disciples from the Scriptures. He said to them, "These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me." He showed them from the same source that we have today—the holy Scriptures. The resurrection and all the truth of the Bible is revealed to us in Scripture. It is not something that you cannot understand. It is not a riddle book. It is the truth of our salvation by grace. And Jesus gave to His church a glorious explanation of the Scriptures. He opened their understanding that they might believe the Scriptures.

Do you have that same wonder performed upon your heart today—the risen Christ, by His Holy Spirit, opening your heart before the Scriptures, declaring to you that He is risen from the dead? Do you understand what

the resurrection means? It means this: We are justified. It means that our sins are indeed pardoned. That first of all. For, you see, if the Lord had been left in the grave, that would testify that His work upon the cross had been a failure. But when God raises His Son on the third day, when God takes His Son out of the grave, God is declaring that the work that His Son performed on the cross was, in all points, perfect!

What was that work? That work was to obtain the pardon for all the sins of God's chosen. That work was to grant unto us, through His obedience, a perfect and spotless righteousness. That work was, in one word, justification! The resurrection declares that we are justified. The work of Jesus was successful. Our sins are forgiven on the basis of the cross of Jesus Christ. The risen Savior stands in His church and He declares that to us today. You, who are burdened in your sins—is the resurrection gospel heard in your ears? You are pardoned.


But there is more. The resurrection gospel declares that we now are alive. We, too, are raised in newness of life. He is risen as Head of the church. By His Holy Spirit He implants into us His own resurrection, so that we too are born from above. We are given the principle of life eternal in our hearts.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ, therefore, in the second place, declares that by the power of His own grace He will come

to us who are dead in our sins, who cannot believe in Him, who will not believe in Him, and He will implant His own life in us, so that, with Himself in us, we might believe unto life eternal.

Still more. On this day He stands before us in His body and He declares that His salvation is full and complete, that it extends not only to our soul but also to our body, and that our bodies also shall be made like unto His glorious body. We shall someday be raised with Christ in the body, and we shall stand forever before God in immortal life.

Does this wonder fill your heart and soul: Jesus Christ is risen from the dead! I know He is risen! I know it the same way that the disciples knew it. The Lord opened their understanding and showed it all from the Scriptures. So also we today, on the basis of the Scriptures and on the basis of the Spirit's work in our hearts—we know that He is risen. He is our Lord. Our sins are forgiven. We shall live, body and soul, forever in Him. Ours is the victory. Then, let us rejoice. He is risen. There is no condemnation for us. Heaven's doors are open. The victory is sure and complete.

To Him who hath loved us and washed us in His blood, to Him be glory and praise in the church today, and forever and ever. To Him who was dead and is alive, and behold He lives forevermore, to Him be glory in the church, world without end, now and ever. 

Bring the books...



Divided by a Common Heritage: The Christian Reformed Church and the Reformed Church in America at the Beginning of the New Millennium,

Rev. Langerak is pastor of Southeast Protestant Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

by Corwin Smidt, Donald Luidens, James Penning, and Roger Nemeth. Eerdmans (2006). Paper. ISBN: 978-0802803856. Reviewed by Prof. David J. Engelsma.



Rev. William Langerak

The intelligentsia in the Reformed Church in America (RCA) and in the Christian Reformed Church (CRC) desire the reunion of the two denominations. Work goes on, mostly quietly and behind the scenes, to achieve the merger.

The issues that occasioned the split in 1857 have long since ceased to matter, as the CRC has largely adopted RCA ways: hymn-singing, choirs, open communion, neglect of Heidelberg Catechism preaching, and practical rejection of the doctrine of predestination as confessed in the Canons of Dordt, in favor of the Arminian decisionism ("the well-meant offer of the gospel") of popular American evangelism. Regarding this last, it is of interest, if not of some significance, that one survey conducted by the authors showed that "while a bare majority of CRC ministers (51 percent) report the Canons of Dort to be of importance, less than one-third of RCA respondents (30 percent) do so" (p. 79). Only 34% of the laity in the RCA have even heard of the Canons of Dordt (p. 78). Whether the CRC would still regard membership in the Masonic Lodge, approved by the RCA and widespread among the members of this denomination, as an obstacle to reunion is a question.

Four professors in the colleges of the RCA and CRC, two in Hope College in Holland, Michigan and two in Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan, explore the possibility of the reunion of their denominations. The authors are political scientists and sociologists. Their study is political and sociological. By means of surveys, they determine the current thinking in the two churches regarding doctrines, practices, secular politics, congregational life, and current issues.

Hot topics among current issues are women in church office and homosexuality. One of the informative surveys reveals that 60% of CRC ministers approve the ordination of women ministers, regardless of the apostle's prohibition, "I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man" (I Tim. 2:12). In the RCA, 82% of the ministers

approve women ministers. (In fact, 100% of the clergy in both denominations approve women in all the church offices: all are corporately responsible for the decisions of their churches' synods, and the resulting practices throughout the denominations.)

Another survey shows that 34% of the members of the CRC, and 51% of the members of the RCA, approve membership in the church of practicing homosexuals. Although this was not the purpose of the survey, and certainly is not the conclusion the authors draw from it, in fact this survey fairly screams the appalling apostasy of both denominations. More than one third of the one, and over half the other denomination, approve the practice that the apostle judges "vile affections," the behavior of a "reprobate mind," and due ultimately to the "wrath of God... revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who hold the truth in unrighteousness" (Rom. 1:18ff.). By responding to a survey, all of these members of Reformed, Christian churches are bold to express their "pleasure in them that do such things" (Rom. 1:32).

The conclusion of the authors is that, although merger would be an appealing marriage of convenience, if not of desperation, as both churches continually lose members, reunion would be difficult and costly. The difficulties would be practical: loss of still more members; meshing organizations and agencies; merging congregations in the same locale; and keeping the peace between those in the CRC who still support Christian schools and the membership of the RCA, which opposes Christian schools.

Ignored in this political and sociological treatment of the reunion of two Reformed denominations is the spiritual dimension. Church unity is intensely spiritual and, therefore, doctrinal.

The manifestation institutionally of the oneness of Christ's body is a solemn calling from Jesus Christ, the church's head. It is realized by the Spirit of Christ, who operates by the preaching and confessing of sound doctrine (the gospel of the Canons of Dordt!), effecting one godly life of obedience to the law of God. The Spirit does not create church unity by surveys, graphs, and shrewd, often anxious, calculations weighing the earthly advantages against the carnal disadvantages of unity.

The uninvolved but interested observer of the nervous mating dance of the RCA and CRC closes this book convinced that there is no reason why the two churches should not marry. Nothing doctrinal divides them. The authors themselves frankly acknowledge this.

Many RCA and CRC congregations have moved toward a more free-flowing approach to worship and ecclesiology as their institutional salvation. They have, in fact, de-emphasized the creeds and confessions of the Reformed tradition and joined the larger evangelical flow, adopting worship cadences and proclamation techniques that resound throughout contemporary Protestantism. In fact, so powerful has been this pull that one could posit that the adoption of this form of popular evangelicalism is doing more to undermine the rich confessional legacy of Reformed Christianity than all of the so-called "secularization" forces of modernity. Still, within both denominations there has been a driving force to eschew things that are seen as the most encumbering (*sic!*) elements of the Reformed legacy in favor of the expediency of contemporary, popular appeal (p. 184).

But the marriage, if it is consummated, will not be "made in heaven." Church marriages, like personal ones, must be in the Lord.



Mission Activities

Rev. A. denHartog, pastor of the Southwest PRC in Grandville, MI, joined a team including Rev. J. Laning and Mr. John VanBaren, to make a visit to the churches in Myanmar. This was done under the supervision of the Hope PRC of Grand Rapids, MI. Our Synod in 2007 made a decision to give a portion of funds collected over the years for assistance to the churches in India and Myanmar to three of our congregations for oversight and distribution. The funds being sent to Myanmar were placed under the oversight of Hope PRC. Since that time, more funds have been received by Hope in connection with relief being sent regularly to the Protestant Reformed Churches in Myanmar. The work of the delegation was not only to consider how the regular benevolent funds sent to Myanmar are being used, but also to consider the spiritual welfare of the churches in Myanmar and seek to encourage the saints there. The committee visited with Pastor Titus and took part in a seminar in Yangon with a number of leaders in the churches from various places in Myanmar. Both Revs. Laning and denHartog also had opportunity to preach in the churches of which Rev. Titus is the pastor. The delegation planned on stopping in Singapore and visiting the brethren there, both before and after their visit to Myanmar. The delegation left the States on March 10 and planned on returning March 27, D.V.

Rev. Dale Kuiper and his wife, Velerie, left March 11 for the Philippines, where Rev. Kuiper anticipated preaching in the Berean PRC in Manila for three Sundays, the Lord willing.

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

The delegates from our churches' Domestic Mission Committee made their annual visit to our mission in Pittsburgh, PA the weekend of March 15. In addition to the regular meetings with Pittsburgh's Steering Committee and Missionary Rev. W. Bruinsma, they also had opportunity to be part of the first celebration of the Lord's Supper at the Pittsburgh Mission. We can well imagine that the Supper was rightly being anticipated with great joy by our missionary and by the saints gathered at the mission. Two elders from the Southwest PRC in Grandville, MI also went to Pittsburgh for that weekend in March to represent the calling church and to be present at the time of the administration of the Supper. Rev. J. Slopsema preached the applicatory sermon on Sunday evening.

In a recent "Newsletter" from Rev. A. Brummel, missionary to the Heritage PR Fellowship of Sioux Falls, South Dakota, we learn that Rev. Brummel made a visit to Tucson and the Fellowship there at the end of February, to continue contact with the saints and to assess the work. The four families have been zealous in their witnessing to others and were thrilled to see two families and one individual from Tucson attend the services during the two Sundays Rev. Brummel was there. The Fellowship has also been greatly encouraged by the attendance of a number of our people at their services. A few of our families have been able to spend an entire month or more in Tucson and were able to get to know the local group very well. Pulpit supply will be provided from the DMC for approximately two Sundays per month for the coming months. Rev. C. Haak, pastor of the Georgetown PRC in Hudsonville, MI, was scheduled to be there March 22, D.V. More in-

formation regarding the times and places of worship can be found on their website www.tucsonprotestantreformed.org.

Thursday night, March 19, Rev. Richard Smit was installed as foreign missionary to the Philippines in a worship service held in Doon PRC, the calling church. The service was held in a full sanctuary, with Doon's congregation, as well as members from Hull, Calvary, Edgerton, and Sioux Falls, and even some visitors from Michigan, in attendance. Rev. David Overway, pastor of Doon, led the worship service, preaching from Luke 24:47. Rev. Steven Key, the president of the Foreign Mission Committee, read the Form of Installation. After the service a time of fellowship was held in the basement of Doon Church. Rev. Smit continues his preparations for his labors in the Philippines, and plans to move to Manila with his wife, Tricia, and their eight children, in July, God willing.

Denomination Activities

The regular meeting of Classis West convened on March 4. On March 3 there was an Office-bearers Conference on the subject "Catechizing Our Youth." Rev. S. Key gave the keynote address, "A Historical Emphasis on Catechetical Instruction," followed by Rev. N. Langerak on "Antithetical Catechetical Instruction in the 21st Century." In the afternoon Mr. J. Regnerus gave a speech on "The Involvement of the Elders in Catechism," and Rev. D. Overway on "Practical Applications of Catechism."

Young Adult Activities

The Young Adult Society of the Loveland, CO PRC sponsored the annual Spring Retreat on March 16-19 at the YMCA of the Rockies in Estes Park. The last word we

had was that 31 young adults from our denomination were scheduled to attend. In addition to the enjoyment of the Loveland congregation, and the surrounding Rocky Mountains, the young adults were privileged to hear two lectures on the theme, "The Mature Christian," focusing on I Corinthians 13:11-12. Revs. C. Haak and R. Miersma were the speakers.

Congregation Activities

A special program commemorating God's faithfulness to our Grandville, MI PRC as a congregation for 25 years was held after their evening worship service on March 15.

The Adult Bible Study of the Grandville Church invited their congregation to meet with them on March 17 to hear Prof. D. Engelsma speak on "Notable Men on My Theological Way."

Members of the Calvary PRC in Hull, IA were invited to the All Season Center in Sioux Center for an evening of both swimming and ice skating, plus pizza, on March 7.

Minister Activities

Rev. W. Langerak declined the call extended to him to serve as the next pastor of the Immanuel PRC in Lacombe, AB, Canada.



Announcements

NOTICE!!!

The Federation of Protestant Reformed Schools is offering the class, The Principles and Practices of Reformed Education, led by Mr. Jon Huisken. This class will be an intense two-week course offered during the weeks of June 8 and 15, 2009 at the Protestant Reformed Christian School in Dyer, IN. While this class is geared toward teachers, it is beneficial to school board members and all who support Reformed Christian education. For more information on this class, please contact Deb Kuiper at (616)531-6785 or sdkuiper@juno.com. Deadline to register is May 8, 2009.

NOTICE!!!

Classis East will meet in regular session on Wednesday, May 13, 2009 at the Faith Protestant Reformed Church.

Jon J. Huisken, Stated Clerk

NOTICE!!

Mark your calendars for a finance conference: "God's Unchanging Truth in a Changing Economy," held at Hudsonville PRC at 7:30 P.M. on the following dates: Friday, May 1, "Trusting the Sovereign God" (Rev. Eriks), and Friday, May 8, "Serving the Sovereign God" (Rev. Kleyn). Invite a neighbor or take a friend. Nursery will be provided and there will be refreshments afterward.

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

With thankfulness to God, we celebrated the 30th wedding anniversary of our parents,

GARY and MARILYN BYLSMA,

on March 30, 2009. We give thanks unto our heavenly Father for His constant faithfulness to our parents over the years. We are thankful to God for providing us parents who by His grace have raised us in the fear and love of His name, have brought us up in a Christian home, and have given us covenant instruction and guidance. We also express our thanks to our parents for the love, prayers, and sacrifices that they have made for us. It is our fervent prayer that the Lord will continue to bless them and keep them in His sovereign love and care. "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).

* David and Chris Linker

Jessica (in glory), Kathryn, Alexander (in glory), Elisabeth, Charlotte

* Steve and Rosie Bylsma

Joel, Nathan, Erika, Rebekah

* Dan and Jean Bylsma

Brittany, Nick, Braydan

* David and Amy Brands

Kylee, Seth

* Andy and Shannon Bylsma
Jayden

* Ryan and Courtney Bylsma

* Brett Bylsma

Jenison, Michigan

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The consistory and congregation of Calvary PRC express Christian sympathy to Mr. Kevin VanEngen and family in the death of their mother and grandmother,

MRS. JANICE VAN ENGEN.

"Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever" (Psalm 23:6).

Glenn Kooiman, Vice-president
Marv VanDenTop, Ass't. clerk

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The members of the Women's Wednesday Morning Bible Fellowship and the Mr. and Mrs. Bible Society of Southwest PRC express their Christian sympathy to Gord and Nancy Schipper and family, in the death of Nancy's father,

MR. ROMAN BLASKOWSKI.

May the Gord Schipper family find comfort and encouragement in the promises of Scripture: "Fear thou not; for I am with thee; be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness" (Isaiah 41:10).