

The Standard Bearer

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The “Delay” of the Promised Coming

But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

II Peter 3: 8, 9

The apostle Paul declares that the grace of God that brings salvation in Jesus means three things: full and free redemption from all iniquity; a people purified unto God who are zealous of good works; and having the blessed hope of the appearing of the glory of the great God and Savior Jesus Christ (Titus 2:11ff.). Our text speaks of this hope of Jesus' return. The coming again of Jesus is the hope of every believer. Our hope is not a rapture, nor a better life on this improved earth. As the saints of the old dispensation longed for Jesus' first coming, so believers in the new longingly anticipate His coming again, which will bring completed salvation in a glorious new heaven and earth.

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

That is our hope. That is why we often sing, “And in God’s house forevermore my dwelling place shall be.”

The devil knows this. Therefore he frequently uses false teachers and scoffers to deny the promise of Jesus' coming again. This can occasion doubts or fears, especially when Jesus does not come as soon as we anticipated or expected. Then we think His coming is “delayed.” Peter gives instruction concerning God’s apparent “slackness” in fulfilling His promise to come again to deliver the righteous and to judge the wicked.

“The Lord is not slack concerning His promise.” There is no reason for the fear that God has forgotten to fulfill His promise or that God’s timing for when He fulfills His promise is not accurate.

The expression “promise” is used in the widest sense to refer to the covenant that God establishes in Christ. Our text clearly refers to one aspect of that covenant, namely, to God’s promise that Jesus would come again. This is evident from verse 4: “the promise of his coming.” Verses 10 and 12 speak about the coming of the day of the Lord. And verse 13 declares that “we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.”

There is essentially only one promise of God, and that is salvation in Jesus Christ. It is the second coming

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of Jesus on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory that brings the fullness of salvation to the whole of the elect church. In His second coming Jesus will realize full deliverance from sin and death and all unrighteousness, and then He will bring the enjoyment of life with God in both body and soul for every elect.

The promise of God has already had some fulfillment. Jesus came once. In this coming He lived a life of perfect obedience and He died the accursed death. The promise is also realized in the outpouring of the Spirit of Christ. There is still the promise of this salvation being realized in complete fullness in the new heavens and earth, where there is only righteousness. This not-yet-fulfilled promise is the desire and hope of every believer.

Now there seems to be a delay in the realization of this promise. John declared that he was in “the last time” (I John 2:18). The saints at Thessalonica also were convinced that the return of Jesus was imminent (II Thess. 3:5ff.). Also the saints to whom Peter is writing seemed to think that Jesus’ return was delayed. If they who lived forty years after Jesus ascended thought so, it is not surprising that there are some today, 2,000 years later, who also wonder.

This feeling of a “delay” is intensified by the mockery of the scoffers. Severe tribulations and persecution also make it seem as if there is a “delay.” And when believers are constantly conscious of their unending battle with the old man of sin, then they can wearily cry out, “How long, O Lord? How long?”

God explains the seeming “delay.” He does so from a few perspectives.

First, God’s perspective is that of eternity. He is eternal. Moses wrote, “A thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night” (Ps. 90:4). This means that God is not bound to and by time, as are all of His creatures. In fact, time is one of God’s creatures. Two thousand years may be long to us, but it does not have that meaning with God. Time and the passage of time do not mean the same to Him as they do to us. It is our duty to

know God’s viewpoint and to keep it before us at all times. To Him the return of Jesus is very near at hand, because it has been the “next” redemptive work (after Jesus’ ascension). God is bringing Christ’s return as quickly as possible, with everything serving that return.

It is important that we know this. “Be not ignorant of this one thing.” Know God and His character! There is no reason ever to doubt His truthfulness and faithfulness. Therefore it is good and right for us to live in the hope of His return—as an event that is *at hand*.

Second, God “is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness.” With these words Peter teaches us of God’s love and care for His distressed people in the world. God does not loiter. He is not careless or forgetful in bringing us the promise. If He were, then there would be a weakness in His love. When humans neglect their promises, there is a failure in their love, which results in hurting the neighbor. But this is not true with God. He

always remembers His promise; He is always determined to fulfill it; and He is fulfilling it as fast as He can. His perfect wisdom is determining the speed of its fulfillment.

The explanation for Jesus’ not returning any sooner is exactly His love. It is not a lack of love, as our sinful natures suppose! Do not overlook the word “beloved.” We are loved of God. Always. Also in His timing of all things, God is governed by His love for His own.

An aspect of God’s love is His virtue of “longsuffering to us-ward.” This attribute of God is the perfection of His love and mercy according to which He constantly and unchangeably wills the final perfection of glory in Christ for His elect people, which comes in the way of their suffering. This will of God determines that they suffer as a necessary means unto this final perfection in all its fullness. God, as it were, burns with love to rescue His people from their sin, death, and sorrows. But He restrains Himself because their good (both salvation and glory) calls for the sufferings of this present time to shape and mold them into conformity to the image of His Son.

God also restrains Himself because our good de-

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mands that more happen. What is the more that must happen? Specifically, God's love wills that none "should perish, but that all should come to repentance." If God fulfilled His promise of Jesus' return right *now*, then some of the elect would perish (those not yet converted), and the church would be missing members (those not yet conceived and born). The church would be deficient and deformed, because it would not have all its members. This is impossible—because of God's love.

The expression "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" has been horribly misunderstood to mean that God wants every human to be saved. If this interpretation is true, then God failed, for some do perish. Also consider the conclusion that Jesus would never come if God waited for everyone to repent. Further, such an interpretation is contrary to the rest of Scripture, which teaches that God willed some humans to perish, being appointed to stumble at the word (I Pet. 2:8).

Let us instead see this expression in the context. God is longsuffering "to us-ward." He is concerned to speak to His "beloved." These are those who share the "like precious faith" (1:1). It is these that He wills not to perish, but to come to repentance. Time is needed for the conversion of all of the elect. Some are not converted and some are not yet born. So for the sake of all the other beloved of us (we are saved as part of a whole), we must know (and not ignore) that God's love is working in a perfect way and with perfect timing to save all and each of His own.

Having this knowledge, let us patiently endure. Do not let the scoffing of the wicked occasion any doubts about God and His promises. Rather, let us, "according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness" (13, 14). Let us pray, "Come, Lord Jesus. Come quickly!" And let us trust His love and wisdom to lead Him to come at just the right time. 

EDITORIAL

REV. KENNETH KOOLE

Apostasy Revisited— Reflections on an Analysis of the Apostasy of the CRC in the Last Half-Century (1)

From a certain point of view the 'reflections' of this editorial are a bit tardy. They are reflections not just on the history of the apostasy that has overrun the CRC in the last 50-60 years (one cannot be tardy on that), but because they are reflections prompted by another man's *analysis* of that apostasy, namely, that of a Robert P. Swierenga. That analysis was given some ten years ago in a rather lengthy paper (in South Africa, no less), at the University

of Stellenbosch Conference, for the International Society for the Study of Reformed Communities.

Our justification for an editorial a decade later is, first, that the paper was only recently brought to our attention; second, the subject matter, the present grievous state of affairs in the CRC and what led her to this spiritual ruin, is as relevant today as it was ten short years ago; and third, a reflection on the apostasy of our mother church has its own lessons for ourselves, as well as for other Reformed and Presbyterian

denominations that express resolve to remain creedally orthodox.

Swierenga's paper is insightfully entitled "Burn the Wooden Shoes: Modernity and Division in the Christian Reformed Church in North America." As the title indicates, his presentation focuses on a generation that became increasingly embarrassed about being identified with its Dutch spiritual heritage, that is, being identified with what is Reformed and Calvinistic (at least, an increasingly large percentage of

its members did), and so set out to divest itself of that stigma in the interests of having greater recognition in the academic world and in society at large.

That being the goal, I suppose one could say, “Mission Accomplished!”

But at what spiritual cost?

It is not overstating things to say that, due to the doctrinal errors that infected the CRC over the last century but were never remedied or removed, now written over the portals of the CRC denomination is the word “Ichabod” (The Glory Has Departed).

Swierenga’s paper is a fascinating summation of the main events and names that dominated the CRC from WWII until 2000, a summary of the controversies and decisions that marked the CRC’s ever accelerating apostasy from the Reformed and biblical faith. Along the way Swierenga offers his own shrewd analysis of what enabled the liberal element in the denomination to win the day, in time dominating the seminary and the synod, making sure their errors were never decisively dealt with, nor those who taught them dismissed or deposed—and, in the end, able to see to it that their errors were approved and were firmly established as the new ‘truth’ and polity.

The paper can be found in its entirety online—www.swierenga.com—under the title given above. We recommend it to our readers.

As my good friend said as he handed me a copy of the paper (he himself having finally left the CRC in the 1980s, unable to stomach

what was going on any longer) “I am warning you Reverend, once you start reading it, you won’t be able to put it down.”

Swierenga opens his paper noting the steady decline in membership of the CRC in recent years, a membership that reached its high-water mark at 316,000 in the early 1990s, but has been falling steadily ever since. In the words of one of her loyal sons, J.C. Schaap, writing in 2007, “In the last thirty years [she] has hemorrhaged from every possible orifice.” The CRC lost an

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estimated 50,000 members in the late 1990s alone, and the decline continues up to the present.

What accounts for that decline?

It is Swierenga’s contention that the primary cause is the CRC’s doctrinal ‘declension’ (or departure). In

this he is surely correct. But what is of interest to us is what he identifies as the primary cause of the CRC’s openness to this declension and apostasy with its numerical decline, namely, the social and ecclesiastical upheaval resulting from WWII, the fruit of thousands of soldiers returning home with a broader affinity for the ‘world-out-there,’ and tens of thousands of immigrants from the “old country” arriving with their new theological ideas.

In Swierenga’s own words:

It is the thesis of this paper that the seeds of secession in the CRC [in the 1990s] were planted at least 50 years ago. After the Second World War this immigrant church experienced a generational change, both at the top, in the pulpits and the denominational schools—Calvin College and Theological Seminary—and at the bottom, in the pews. The immediate cause was the return of the soldiers. Thousands of second and third generation Hollanders served with American military forces in the far corners of the world, and more than twenty ministers in the CRCNA served as chaplains.

The experience changed many, and on their return they called for the church to open up to the American scene and become more culturally diverse and contemporary. “We ought to abhor a narrow isolationism as the very plague of death to our Church,” declared George Stob. “Our people were *afraid* of America—*afraid* of the corrupting influences that might weaken our Reformed character and rob us of our heritage.” It was time, added

Harry Boer, to leave our Dutchness behind and become a truly “American Church” by reaching out to all races and peoples.

A few paragraphs down, he makes reference to the influence of the influx of the post-war Dutch Reformed immigrants, many with ‘progressive’ theological ideas.

It is on this thesis that we intend to reflect in our next editorial. This is not to deny there is truth to Swierenga’s thesis. WW II was an earth-shaking, society-shaking, and ecclesiastical-shaking event, punctuated by the two atomic bombs that brought it to its conclusion. But the seeds for what happened to the CRC during the second half of the twentieth century go back a few decades prior to the events of the 1940s, whether Swierenga is aware of it or not.

But before we speak to that, a few comments are in order.

The recitation of the CRC’s history is a reminder of how the liberal element works; first, through subtlety of speech persuading a denomination to tolerate their presence early on, and then, when the charges are brought to the broader assemblies against their false doctrines, resorting to the strategy of delay of action, thus keeping the leaven of false doctrines (and of the presence of the false teacher) alive in a church.

Theological liberals are the most cordial of colleagues as they plead for toleration in the name of academic freedom—that is, until they are numerous enough to take over. Then watch out. They make up for lost time. Toleration is for fools (and conservatives).

Whereas, when they are the minority party, liberals plead for academic freedom and the need for dialogue, and especially for LOVE that does not silence the ‘brother’ who has a different perspective, once in power, liberals define LOVE in a much different way. Now it means you are to be silent when it comes to challenging present ‘company’ policy; now it means putting the unity of the body of Christ before one’s own theological preferences. And now all those who

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dare question or voice opposition to new doctrines are labeled as guilty of schism, as disturbers of the precious peace of the church!

The names mentioned in Swierenga’s paper are familiar to those of us born in the 1950s and before. H.J. Kuiper, R.B. Kuiper, Henry Van Til, John Vander Ploeg, P.Y. DeJong, and Clarence Bouma are names listed on the conservative side. Names such

as Henry and George Stob, Harry Boer, Harold Dekker, James Daane, John Kromminga, Howard Van Til, and Lewis Smedes are listed on the liberal, ‘progressive’ side of the ledger. These are the names that loomed large in the doctrinal battles that took place in the mid to late 1900s for the orthodoxy and soul of the CRC.

These names are not unknown to many of us in the PRC. You can find them sprinkled throughout the pages of our own *SB* volumes covering those years, as the *SB* editors read the various CRC publications and followed (as well as offered their own color commentary on) the battle taking place and what all was at stake. Predictions were made about what the outcome almost certainly was to be, and for the most part they proved right-on.

Interestingly, the names of Hubert De Wolf and a few other ministers who left the PRC in 1953, and then in the late 50s re-affiliated with the CRC, are mentioned as well. We are informed that “[R.B.] Kuiper was pleased to see the bulwarks of the CRCNA strengthened in 1959 by the accession of churches belonging to the ‘De Wolf group’ of the Protestant Reformed Church [sic].” I suppose that could be construed as a compliment of sorts to the PRC, namely, men coming from the PRC and trained under Hoeksema and Ophoff could be counted on as being conservative and knowledgeable.

Regardless, their joining the CRC did little to slow down its accelerating apostasy.

The issues of controversy that Swierenga enumerates are worth recalling.

Swierenga makes reference to the infallibility question that came to the surface in the late 1950s. It began with a seminarian's paper that proposed "limiting the doctrine [of infallibility] to matters of faith and conduct, but not to biblical statements dealing with natural science [read: creation], grammar, and history." But the 'question' ended with the faculty and the President of the Seminary, John Kromminga, defending the student's perspective as "moving quite within the boundaries of the Creeds." In other words, the student's paper gave evidence of what was being taught within the classroom.

It was a creation controversy that would come to a head a few decades later when a Calvin physics professor, Howard Van Til, would write a book, *The Fourth Day*, challenging the reliability of the Genesis 1-11 account, an account that separates the creation of light on the first day from that of the Sun and stars three days later, and then explains our present world in terms of a worldwide flood.

Obviously, therefore, a rather 'primitive' and unscientific account!

And then came the controversy of the 1960s that revolved around the denial of the doctrine of Limited Atonement, stirred up by Prof. Harold Dekker in an article in the *Reformed Journal* entitled "God So Loved—All Men." As a perusal of the SB volumes of the mid-1960s indicates, the PRC membership was kept well informed about this controversy and its implications for the Canons, namely, one of disregard.

Swierenga adroitly sums up the outcome of the controversy as follows:

Synod ultimately "admonished" Dekker for the "ambiguous and abstract way in which he expressed himself on the love of God and the atonement," but it also turned away on technical grounds an overture of protest.... After four years of synodical committee work, the "mountain (of reports, articles, and meetings), has given birth to a mouse," said Andrew Kuyvenhoven about the decision of Synod 1967. Thus, the professor, despite a "scent of protoliberalism," kept his honored position but under "the shadow of ambiguity." Synod's proclivity in dealing with the teachings of Dekker and Kromminga was to keep the peace at the expense of making definitive pronouncements. This mentality of unity at the expense of clarity set the pattern for all future cases and was a radical departure from the pre-1945 years when heads rolled.

Ah yes, the pre-1945 years—when heads rolled! A couple of men by the names of Hoeksema and Ophoff could vouch for that. To challenge the non-confessional doctrine (theory) of common grace meant deposition and disgrace for them and their followers. Forty years later, to challenge the heart of the gospel, the effectual atonement of Christ and by implication the doctrines of election and particular grace, merited little more than a slap on the wrist, a charge of being ambiguous and lacking clarity.

Poor Dekker, for all his education, unable to make clear what it

was with which he disagreed in the Canons.

That something had changed is to put it mildly.

In the 1970s came the infamous 'Report 44' controversy. In 1972 a special committee delivered to Synod its report entitled "The Nature and Extent of Biblical Authority." Its thesis was that the truthfulness of the Bible rested ultimately on its testimony to the redemptive work of God in Christ, and not on the accuracy [sic! -kk] of its statements in the domain of history and science. The report gained synodical approval.

Thus the doors to theistic evolution and higher criticism were thrown open, as the conservatives plainly saw.

And then came the watershed controversy about women in office that stretched from the mid-1970s to the 1990s. First came the decision of 1978, opening only the office of deacon to women (whether it is the 'sincere' dishonesty of the liberals or the gullibility of the conservatives that is most remarkable in these controversies is always difficult to say), and then a decade of fierce controversy following, leading to the Synod of 1990 approving the opening of all the offices to women. And in 1996, the last gasp of the conservatives to overturn those prior decisions was decisively choked off and silenced.

By watching liberals work when in power (having the majority), conservatives could learn much about what it means to be decisive, and what it means to use sanctions. The trouble is, it was by then a decade or two too late.

Swierenga ends his review of the

issues of controversy that bedeviled the CRC over the past half century by referring to what has become the hot issue in the CRC today, namely, the approval of homosexuals and their lifestyle, that is, as long as they have committed themselves to a monogamous relationship. So wrote Lewis Smedes already in 1999. And he argued for that on “the precedent set by the earlier embrace of divorced and remarried people [by our people].”

Which, when you think of it, is a very clever argument indeed. Because if one is free to divorce and remarry as one wills, then one is free to enter into one ‘monogamous’ relationship after the other, staying with another for as long as it pleases one, and then ending that relationship to begin another one perhaps as early as next week or so, and so on, from bed to bed. Just so

one is in only *one* other person’s bed at a time. What a wonderful definition of monogamy. If the Mormons had been as shrewd as these Reformed theologians, they would not have had to call what they for so long practiced “polygamy.” Just call it “successive monogamy.” And then claim such is consistent with scriptural faithfulness.

Isn’t a way with words a wonderful thing!

And all this nonsense argued with great seriousness before the face of the Lord Jesus. Let no man be mistaken, it is a serious thing to make the Lord Christ Himself party to one’s immoral follies and Scripture-rending dishonesty. Is He really that simple?

But to such a state of affairs the CRC, at least what is left of it, has come.

How did she come so far? So far down the road of apostasy that she is now in the process of cutting herself

completely loose from the moorings of the Reformed creeds by ending any binding of her officebearers to the Formula of Subscription?

Swierenga suggests it goes back to WWII and its aftermath. We are convinced he does not go back quite far enough.

We contend that the death rattle now in the throat of the CRC goes back a couple of decades before that, to the one controversy Swierenga overlooks, the common grace controversy of the 1920s, an issue over which some faithful men’s heads rolled.

At that time a seed was broadcast that has brought forth the full harvest of noxious weeds that today has all but completely choked out the good seed of the Word in the field of the CRC.

This we intend to reflect on next time, D. V. 

ALL AROUND US

REV. CLAY SPRONK

How Many Interpretations of Genesis Should a Denomination Allow?

Members of the United Reformed Churches (URC) have held a variety of views on creation since the organization of the URC as a federation of churches in 1996. The main issue is the interpretation of Genesis, especially chapters 1 and 2. Some in the URC interpret these opening chapters of the Bible literally. Others interpret these chapters figuratively. The difference centers mainly on the days of Genesis 1. Those who interpret Genesis 1 literally view the days as ordinary 24-hour

days. Those who interpret the chapter figuratively view the days as long periods of time. This raises the important question, should a variety of interpretations of Genesis be allowed within a Reformed denomination?

In the September 23, 2009 issue of *Christian Renewal*, Rev. Doug Barnes gives an explanation for why the URC have determined to allow a variety of interpretations of Genesis 1 and 2. This issue, he explains, was dealt with by the URC Synod of 2001. He writes,

Rev. Spronk is pastor of Peace Protestant Reformed Church in Lansing, Illinois.

Several overtures to Synod 2001 made it clear that there was concern about the disagreement our churches

have concerning this issue. So, in answer, the synodical delegates summarized what we already confessed regarding creation, effectively highlighting the boundaries of orthodoxy. By means of this simple summary, it became evident that what we already confess protects us against theistic evolution, views that question Adam's historicity, any interpretation that regards the events in the garden as allegory, and similarly dangerous views. The synod then affirmed that we, as churches, have agreed to discipline anyone who transgresses these bounds; and that we have a church orderly manner in which to do so.

Rev. Barnes' point is that the URC does not allow just any interpretation of Genesis but only those that are in harmony with the Three Forms of Unity. The position taken by the URC Synod in 2001 is that the literal interpretation of Genesis and at least some figurative interpretations are in harmony with the confessions.

The minutes of the URC Synod 2001 demonstrate that synod deliberately determined to allow both the literal and figurative interpretation of Genesis 1 and 2.¹ According to the minutes of this meeting, synod treated this motion: "That synod affirm that the Bible teaches that God created all things good and in six historical days defined as evenings and mornings (Genesis 1 and 2 and Exodus 20:11)." It seems the intent of this motion was to interpret Genesis 1 and 2 literally, to the exclusion of any figurative interpretation. However, a historical day defined as evening and morning is not necessarily a 24-hour day, which means that some wiggle room could possibly be found for viewing the days of Genesis as long periods of time. It seems that some delegates of synod recognized the possible ambiguity of this motion and proposed to amend it "by replacing the 'historical' with 'ordinary days as we know them.'" If this amendment passed, the motion would very clearly establish the literal interpretation of Genesis 1 as the only correct interpretation. This amendment failed. Another amendment was proposed to elide the word "historical." This amendment passed, and so did the final motion, which reads: "Synod affirms that the Bible teaches that God created all things good in six days defined as evenings and mornings (Gen. 1 and 2 and Ex. 20:11)." Though the word "historical" did not necessarily exclude figurative interpretations

¹ See the "Minutes of the Fourth Synod of the United Reformed Churches in North America": <http://www.covenant-urc.org/urcna/SynodMinutes04.pdf>.

of Genesis 1 and 2 by itself, its removal does seem to be a deliberate action by synod to avoid casting a negative light on such interpretations.

Synod 2001 did not explain why it wanted to allow room for both literal and figurative interpretations of Genesis 1 and 2. Rev. Barnes' opinion is that synod went as far as the URC confessions (The Belgic Confession, Heidelberg Catechism, and Canons of Dordt) would allow it. In Rev. Barnes' opinion synod would have gone beyond the confessions and made an "extra confessional [statement]" had it determined that only a literal interpretation of Genesis 1 and 2 is allowed.

On the surface, the argument that the confessions do not speak definitively on the literal or figurative interpretation of Genesis 1 and 2 seems plausible. The days of Genesis 1 are the main issue here, and it is true that the confessions do not make an explicit statement about those days, as they do about other issues. For example the confessions are very clear that Matthew 26:26, where Jesus says "this is my body," cannot be interpreted as teaching the doctrine of transubstantiation, since the Heidelberg Catechism in Q/A 78 explicitly denies that doctrine by teaching that the bread and wine do not become the very body and blood of Christ in the Lord's Supper. There is no comparable statement in the confessions that the days of Genesis 1 were 24-hour days or "ordinary days as we know them."

However, what the confessions allow cannot be determined only on the basis of explicit confessional statements; for there are things the confessions teach by clear implication if not by explicit statements. Synod 2001 and Rev. Barnes do not deny that the deeper implications must be considered, but with regard to the interpretation of Genesis 1 and 2 it seems there was an unwillingness to go beyond the explicit statements of the confessions. The question is, do the confessions, by what they explicitly teach, demand (by implication) a literal interpretation of Genesis 1 and 2? This question can be answered in light of the handy summary of what the confessions teach adopted by the URC Synod of 2001. I will not quote the summary in full but here are some of the relevant points:

Synod affirms that Scripture teaches, as summarized by the Creeds and the Three Forms of Unity:

- The authority and perspicuity of Scripture (Belgic Confession VII; Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day VII)
- The necessity and sufficiency of Scripture (Belgic Confession VII; Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day VII) ...
- The Father created the heavens and the earth out of nothing (Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day IX)
- God gave every creature its shape and being (Belgic Confession XII)
- The creation and fall of man. "God made man of the dust of the earth; man gave ear to the devil" (Belgic Confession XIV)...
- The historicity of Adam (Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day VII, 20; Canons of Dort III, IV. 1)

The first two points establish the divine inspiration and authority of Scripture. The confessions bind Reformed believers to accept Scripture's account of how God created the heavens and the earth. While the confessions do not explicitly state "Genesis 1 and 2 must be interpreted literally," this is the necessary implication of the fact that the confessions assume that many of the events recorded in Genesis 1 and 2 are historical events. God literally created the heavens and the earth out of nothing. God literally created each creature. God literally made Adam from the dust of the ground. In fact, the synod even goes so far as to establish as fact that God created in "six days defined as evenings and mornings." Were these literal days—24-hour days? Since the confessions clearly interpret Genesis as literal history, the necessary implication is that the days of Genesis 1 are 24-hour days.

What the confessions say or imply about the doctrine of creation is not the only important issue. What the confessions have to say about Scripture is also important. The URC Synod recognized the importance of this issue as is evidenced by its two statements (quoted above) on Scripture. God's work of creation is a miracle, as recorded in Genesis 1 and 2. God's act of creating all things out of nothing is a miracle. God's act of making all creatures in six 24-hour days is a miracle. The confessions bind us to believe all the miracles of Scripture, including the miracle of God's creation of the world in six 24-hour days, because the Bible is the *inspired* and *infallible* Word of God. The question is, do not figurative interpretations that deny that God created all things in six 24-hour days, cast doubt on one of the miracles recorded in Scripture and thereby deny the Reformed doctrine of Scripture?

In his September 23 article, Rev. Barnes explains that he does not believe that figurative interpretations of Genesis 1 and 2 are necessarily a denial of Scripture's inspiration and infallibility.

I myself hold to a literal (six-day) view of creation. It is exegetically clear to me...that this is the conclusion Scripture teaches. However, there are a couple of other views which can be exegetically defended in a way that is responsible. I heartily disagree with them and believe their conclusions are flawed—but I do respect the care with which they handle God's Word and their intention to take that Word seriously.

Rev. Barnes' view is that, while it can lead to positions that contradict the Bible, a figurative interpretation of Genesis 1 and 2 is not inherently unbiblical.

However, when responding to more questions about creation in the January 13, 2010 issue of *Christian Renewal*, Rev. Barnes indicates that it is not so easy for him to respect the views of those who interpret Genesis 1 and 2 figuratively (especially the views of those who hold to the Framework Hypothesis). Rev. Barnes was asked by a reader to provide details about the Framework Hypothesis. Rev. Barnes is very critical of this figurative method of interpreting Genesis. He is especially critical of Meredith G. Kline, one of the earliest proponents of the Framework Hypothesis (whose views have been adopted by many in the URC). He criticizes one of Kline's arguments for why Genesis 1 cannot be taken literally as "flawed." He also ridicules Kline's explanation of the days of Genesis 1 as absurdly difficult writing, "Kline...alleges that the days of Genesis 1 reflect the passage of time in 'upper register' days. If you want to try understanding that idea...well, have fun—but you are on your own!" At the end of this article Rev. Barnes lands one last blow against the Framework Hypothesis, telling the questioner, "I encourage you to ask those who advocate a non-literal view to explain why they hold their belief. Perhaps they can explain why God made the start of His revelation so complex that it took until the mid-1900s to figure it out." In this last statement Rev. Barnes is not simply referring to Dr. Kline, but he is consciously referring to and ridiculing the views of United Reformed men, colleagues of his in the ministry, who hold to non-literal views of Genesis 1 and 2.

If Rev. Barnes truly believes there can be unity between those who hold to different interpretations of Genesis 1 and 2, it would seem he owes some of his colleagues an apology for holding their views up to public ridicule. The actual course to be followed is for Rev. Barnes and the URC to recognize that figurative interpretations of Genesis 1 and 2 are inherently an attack on the Reformed doctrine of Scripture and repudiate them.

Figurative interpretations are an attack on Genesis 1 and 2, and the danger is that, if Genesis 1 and 2 can be attacked, soon other passages of Scripture that record miracles will also be attacked. The reality of this danger in the URC was revealed in the January 27 issue of *Christian Renewal*. In response to Rev. Barnes' January 13, 2010 column, Professor Tony Jelsma, a biology professor at Dordt College in Sioux Center, Iowa, took issue with Rev. Barnes' dismissal of the Framework Hypothesis. Professor Jelsma explains that he is "not a proponent of the Framework Interpretation." However, he proceeds to defend the Framework Hypothesis. Proponents of the literal interpretation of Genesis, especially those in the URC, need to take note that Prof. Jelsma asserted he can tolerate and defend the Framework Hypothesis but attacks the literal interpretation of Genesis as "neither warranted from Scripture nor...supported by science." Prof. Jelsma is prepared to allow the Framework Hypothesis as biblically defensible but utterly rejects as unbiblical the traditional interpretation of Genesis. Perhaps Prof. Jelsma has no intention of seeking the censure of those who hold what he calls an unbiblical position, but this is what he would do if he were consistent. At the very least, by calling the literal interpretation of Genesis 1 and 2 unbiblical he shows that he believes that only one view should really be allowed in the church, the non-literal view of Genesis.

But the main significance of Prof. Jelsma's letter is that he admits to denying that the flood in Noah's day was a worldwide flood. While Prof. Jelsma does not himself make a connection between his denial of a literal interpretation of Genesis 1 and his denial of a literal interpretation of Genesis 7 (especially verses 19-20), it is not hard to see the connection. If the miraculous work of God in creating in six 24-hour days can be explained away, then His miraculous work of destroying the whole world with a flood can be explained away too. Professor

Jelsma is a prime example of what critics of figurative interpretations have warned about for a long time: a denial of Genesis 1 and 2 as history will soon lead to a denial of historical facts recorded in other parts of Scripture. Soon the floodgates will be opened, and many other miracles recorded as historical facts in the Bible will be denied.

This is all significant because Prof. Jelsma is a member of the URC. It will be interesting to see if the URC will argue that, just as it can tolerate different views on creation, it can also tolerate different views on the flood. Will Prof. Jelsma's unbelieving attitude toward the Bible be rejected, or will he, like those who hold to figurative views of Genesis 1 and 2, be defended as "within the bounds" of the confessions?

Prof. Jelsma has laid down the challenge for action to be taken against him. He did not appreciate Rev. Barnes' response to his first letter. Rev. Barnes noted Prof. Jelsma's position at Dordt and wrote, "We all should become well-aware of how 'Reformed' colleges today are teaching our children to interpret the Bible that we might direct our support and our students accordingly." Prof. Jelsma wrote a second letter (*Christian Renewal*, February 24) complaining that Rev. Barnes did not deal with his arguments and suggests Rev. Barnes should perhaps "warn the Sioux Center URC (which is well aware of my position) to prevent me from leading its Adult Sunday School, which I have done since the church's inception."

It certainly would be appropriate to prevent Prof. Jelsma from teaching any class in a church as long as he holds to his Scripture-denying views. But more must be done. The root of the problem must be addressed. The figurative interpretation of Genesis 1 and 2 must be seen for what it is—an attack upon the confessional view of creation and upon the inspiration and authority of Scripture. Therefore, the figurative interpretation of Genesis must be rejected. If this heresy is allowed to coexist with the simple truth of Scripture, it will not rest until it has rooted the truth out of the church and finally opened up the dam to a multitude of errors. We must insist upon one interpretation of Genesis 1 and 2—the literal interpretation. By faith we must embrace and confess the truth of Scripture and the confessions that God created all things in six 24-hour days. 

Extremely Long “Days” & Death Before the Fall

When witnessing to those who profess to be Christians, we come across a variety of views on the subject of creation. Some will admit that they believe in evolution, even though it blatantly contradicts the teaching of Scripture. Others will say that they reject the theory of evolution, yet they will still insist that the six days of creation may have lasted for an extremely long period of time.

This latter group, though denying evolution, is still falling into a very serious error. Even if they confess the truth concerning the historicity of the creation and fall of man, they are still maintaining an error that has serious consequences. The long-day theory obviously involves a denial of the principle of interpretation that we are to interpret a word like “day” to refer to a normal day unless Scripture clearly indicates that it is to be taken differently. But in addition to that, this false teaching often leads a person to deny that death was the punishment for sin, and that therefore there was no death in the world until Adam sinned.

No Death in the World before the Fall

Most of those who hold to the long-day theory also hold to the error that animals died before there was a man on this earth. In their view, animals must have died, because the science of this world has “proven” that animals walked on this earth for many thousands of years before Adam was created. And, so it is thought, these animals certainly must have died, just as animals do today.

But there is a problem with this. Scripture says there was no death in this creation until Adam sinned: “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned” (Rom. 5:12). It was “by sin” that death entered the world. It entered the world as the punishment for sin.

Some will respond to this and claim that Romans 5:12 is speaking of the death of human beings, but not of animals. But Isaiah 65:25 speaks of how the animals one day will be delivered from death.

The wolf and the lamb shall feed together; and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock: and dust shall be the serpent’s meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the LORD.

In the new earth, the lion shall not hurt in God’s holy mountain. It will not hurt man, nor will it hurt other animals. This implies that it was because of man’s *fall* that it hurts today. It was not like this originally.

Adam: The Head of the Earthly Creation

Adam was set by God over the earthly creation, as is shown by the fact that he was given dominion over it:

And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth (Gen. 1:26).

That Adam was to rule “over all the earth” means that he was the head of the earthly creation. So when God’s judgment came upon Adam the head, it came also upon the creation over which God had set him.

When God created the world, He said that it was “very good.” In this good world there was no death. This first paradise was a picture of the heavenly one. Just as there will be no death in the future paradise, so there was no death in the first one. John Calvin, in his commentary on Isaiah 11:7, was correct when he wrote:

For this reason, he says, that straw will be the food of the lion as well as of the ox; for if the stain of sin had not polluted the world, no animal would have been addicted to prey on blood, but the fruits of the earth would have sufficed for all, according to the method which God had appointed.

The long-day theory may seem harmless, but it almost inevitably leads one to deny that death entered the world by sin. Some who hold to this theory may not be aware of this. So it is very important in our witnessing that we point this out to them. Indeed, it is important for all of us to see and to confess that the whole truth of God hangs together. If we deny one point, it will lead to a denial of others. We must never be so deceived by the world that we deny even one point of what our Lord has taught us. ☺

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Previous article in this series: March 15, 2010, p. 272.

Devil

Of all our perennial, lifelong enemies, we seem most oblivious to the devil. Foolish, because he is the worst and most powerful. He is Beelzebub—lord of devils, prince of the world, ruler of dark powers, principalities, and spiritual wickedness in high places (John 12:31; Matt. 12:24; Eph. 6:12). He has power over death (Heb. 2:14). As to our own flesh that assaults us, all its sin is of the devil (LD 52; I John 3:8). Of all enemies, the devil is Satan, i.e., the Adversary, who sits in God's temple as God, opposing and exalting himself over all that is called God (II Thess. 2:4).

Our ignorance is partly because the devil is a spirit who works sight unseen. An angel of glorious excellence, he kept not his first estate but rebelled against his Creator, taking legions of angels into perdition (Rev. 12:4). Arrogant, selfish, the devil loves no one (Is. 14:13). There is no grace, mercy, or peace in him, only hatred. The Murderer, he stalks earth, seeking whom he may devour (I Pet. 5:8). Maliciously and without pity, he provokes, oppresses, renders senseless, silences, throws down, vexes, torments, and takes captive at will (Matt. 17:15; Luke 9:42; Acts 10:38; II Tim. 2:26). Unable to procreate, he begets children by corruption, a brood of vipers in his image—self-lovers, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, trucebreakers, fierce, despisers of good, and false accusers—which is what “devil” means (John 3:8-10, 8:44; II Tim. 3:3). When finished, he will have defiled and killed every human being, and condemned countless angels, men, women, and children as devils with him to hell (Rev. 19:20).

Our other problem is that the devil works by deceit. He doesn't fight fair. Serpent, he ambushes with subtlety, wiles, reproaches, and snares (Rev. 20:2; I Tim. 3:7). Hypocrite, he transforms himself into an angel of light (II Cor. 11:14). Idolaters unwittingly serve him (I Cor. 10:19-21). As a spirit, he uses many mediums, often those closest to us—the snake to beguile Eve, Eve to defile Adam, Adam to corrupt humanity, Peter to contradict Jesus, His own familiar friend to betray, and world and false church to slay Him. In the end the devil uses the Antichrist, his hand-

picked false prophet, priest, and king to deceive the whole world (Rev. 12:9). The Liar, there is no truth in him (John 8:44). In this war, he is surrounded by a bodyguard of lies, the doctrines of devils (I Tim. 4:1)—God loves and desires to save all men; God hates sin but loves the sinner; mankind has the right to life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness; bodily exercise profits much; life consists in an abundance of things; the world created itself over billions of years (so no Adam or Eve, death is natural, and God is the author of sin), etc. As the Wicked, he perverts every way and word of the Lord (Acts 13:10).

Cast out of heaven by Jesus, the devil is come down to earth having great wrath because he knows he has but a short time. Knowing Christ and hating God, the devil expends his fury on the church, which bears His name and image, and gave birth to His Son (Rev. 12:12-13). He wreaks havoc in the church. He snatches the word from hard hearts lest some should be saved (Luke 8:12), sows tares among the wheat (Matt. 13:38, 39), slanders God (Gen. 3), uses world and false church to try the faith of the righteous (Rev. 2:10), stands at their right hand to resist them (Zech. 3), and accuses devilishly the saints before God day and night (Rev. 12:10).

There is certain hope in Jesus and victory through His grace. Christ has power and authority over the devil, manifest when He resisted him 40 days and cast out devils by His Spirit (Luke 4:2, 4:36, 11:20; Matt. 17:18). In death, He crushed the head of the Serpent (Gen. 3:15). The devil is judged, bound in hell, his power subject to Christ, soon to be cast into the lake of fire to be tormented forever (John 16:11; Jude 1:6; Rev. 20:10). But like all mortally wounded snakes, he still thrashes dangerously. So we must submit to God, be sober and vigilant (I Pet. 5:8), give no place to the devil (Eph. 4:27), and put on the armor of God to withstand his wiles (Eph. 6:11). Although devious and powerful, the devil is detected by the Word and flees from it (Matt. 17:21; Jam. 4:7). Because for this purpose Christ was manifest, that He might destroy the works of the devil (I John 3:8). And through prayer, preserves and strengthens us by the Spirit so that we are not overcome in this warfare, but constantly and strenuously resist our foe until at last we obtain a complete victory (LD 52). ☞

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One Nation, Under God

On March 11, 2010, the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals filed opinions in two separate cases that considered whether government-sponsored references to God violated the Establishment Clause of the United States Constitution. One was a challenge to the use of the phrase “In God We Trust” on United States currency. The other was a challenge to the inclusion of the phrase “under God” in the Pledge of Allegiance. In both cases, the court found that the references to God did not violate the Establishment Clause.

These rulings are interesting in a couple of different respects. First, the Ninth Circuit, headquartered in San Francisco, California, is considered to be one of the more “liberal” federal circuit courts. If the Ninth Circuit did not find the language in the Pledge to violate the Establishment Clause, it seems unlikely that any of the other circuits would. Second, the Ninth Circuit itself had previously ruled that the phrase “under God” in the Pledge *did* violate the Establishment Clause. In this article, we will examine these cases and their implication for our religious freedoms.

In 2002, many were stunned when an atheist named Michael Newdow succeeded in obtaining a ruling from the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals that found that the phrase “under God” in the Pledge of Allegiance was unconstitutional as a violation of the Establishment Clause of the United States Constitution.¹ The Establishment Clause is a clause in the First Amendment to the United States Constitution that provides that Congress may not pass a law establishing one religion as the favored religion of the government. He had argued that a belief in God was forced upon his daughter when she and other children were led in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance at the beginning of the school day. The case was appealed to the

United States Supreme Court, which reversed the decision of the Ninth Circuit. The Supreme Court’s ruling denied Dr. Newdow his requested injunction against the schools’ use of the Pledge, but not by saying that the reference to God in the Pledge was constitutional. Instead, the Court found that Dr. Newdow did not have standing to bring the challenge. A lack of standing means that a litigant is not directly involved in or impacted by the subject matter of the lawsuit, and therefore has no right to bring a challenge. If a party does not have standing, the court will not reach the merits of the case. In this case, the Court found Newdow did not have standing because he was not the custodial parent of his child.

Undaunted, Dr. Newdow found new plaintiffs to bring the action, and again challenged the constitutionality of the Pledge. He also brought a new action challenging the constitutionality of the national motto “In God We Trust” on the currency. The district court dismissed Newdow’s suit concerning the national motto, and he appealed to the Ninth Circuit.² The district court in Newdow’s new Pledge case, on the other hand, relied on the Ninth Circuit’s original decision in the first Newdow case, and ruled in his favor. This ruling was also again appealed to the Ninth Circuit.³ We will consider the Ninth Circuit decision in the Pledge case first.

While the Ninth Circuit acknowledged that it had considered the same issue before and come to a different conclusion, it did not distinguish the prior case or otherwise explain why it now reached a different conclusion.⁴ In considering whether the Pledge violated the Establishment Clause, the majority first discussed Congress’ own explanation for why the phrase “one nation under God” was added to the pledge. Two basic reasons were cited: 1) to underscore the political philosophy of the Founding

¹ *Newdow v. United States Congress*, 292 F.3d 597 (9th Cir. 2002).

² *Newdow v. Lefevre*, 9th Cir., March 11, 2010.

³ *Newdow v. Rio Linda USD*, 9th Cir., March 11, 2010.

⁴ It should be noted that decisions of the federal courts of appeals are typically made by three judge panels which change from case to case, and Judge Reinhardt, who filed a lengthy dissenting opinion, was the only judge who sat on the original panel.

Mr. VanEngen, a member of the Protestant Reformed Church of Hull, Iowa, is a practicing attorney.

Fathers that God granted certain inalienable rights to the people, which the government cannot take away; and 2) to add the note of importance which a Pledge to our Nation ought to have and which ceremonial references to God invoke.

The court also quoted from the Declaration of Independence, and noted that the Founding Fathers had stated that men “are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights.” The court reasoned that the Founders themselves obviously did not see this statement as an endorsement of religion, but an acknowledgment of the “inalienable rights.” The court also noted Supreme Court precedent, which indicated that questioned government activity must be reviewed in context, without focusing solely on whether religious terms or symbols are used.

Newdow’s challenge was not simply to the language of the Pledge, but to a school district policy providing for the voluntary recitation of the pledge in compliance with a California state statute requiring patriotic activities to be conducted in the classroom. The court noted that the purpose of the recitation of the Pledge was to promote patriotism, and that the reference to God was incidental to that purpose, to impress the importance of the Pledge to those reciting it.

The court then applied the *Lemon* test, which provides that for a challenged activity to be constitutional it must 1) have a secular purpose, 2) have a principal or primary effect that neither advances nor inhibits religion, and 3) must not foster an excessive government entanglement with religion.¹ The court found that, focusing on the *use* of the questioned language, rather than the questioned words themselves, the language in the Pledge passed the *Lemon* test.

One judge of the three-judge panel disagreed, and filed a dissenting opinion. The dissent focused on the fact that the words “under God” were not in the original Pledge, and had been added in 1954. The dissent argued that while the Pledge as a whole might be fine, Congress’ act of adding “under God” did not pass the *Lemon* test, and should be invalidated on those grounds. The dissent also argued that the inclusion of these words was tantamount to an endorsement of monotheistic religion, and violated the Endorsement Test, which basically says that

government action cannot have the effect of endorsing one religion over another.

In the case challenging the inclusion of the national motto “In God We Trust” on our national currency, Dr. Newdow argued that this motto violated the Establishment Clause. He argued that the motto “unconstitutionally places the government’s imprimatur on a belief in a monotheistic God.” Although the Ninth Circuit had ruled already back in 1970 that the national motto does not constitute an establishment of religion, Newdow argued that subsequent Supreme Court decisions and the Religious Freedom Restoration Act of 1993 (RFRA) required a different outcome.

The majority ruled that the same reasoning from 1970 held true today, quoting:

It is quite obvious that the national motto and the slogan on coinage and currency ‘In God We Trust’ has nothing whatsoever to do with the establishment of religion. Its use is of a patriotic or ceremonial character and bears no true resemblance to a government sponsorship of a religious exercise.

With regard to the RFRA claim, the majority noted that Newdow admitted that his claim was dependent on his contention that the motto represents a religious dogma and constitutes government sponsorship of religion. Since the court maintained the motto was merely of patriotic or ceremonial character, this claim also failed. Judge Reinhardt filed a concurring opinion, noting that since the decision in the Pledge case, *Newdow v. Rio Linda USD*, was now binding precedent, he had to concur in the outcome.

At first blush, it would seem that these decisions are somewhat of a victory for believers. For years, an ever rising tide of jurisprudence seems to have been slowly erasing any reference to God from our public discourse. For example, the story of creation can no longer be taught in public schools. Instead, it is replaced with the teaching of the theory of evolution, which directly contradicts the biblical account. Any decision that even allows for an acknowledgment of the existence of God seems like an improvement.

However, the reasoning under which the references to God were allowed to stand are troublesome. With regard to the Pledge, the reasoning was basically that

¹ *Lemon v. Kurtzman*, 403 U.S. 602 (1971).

the phrase “under God” was allowed to stand because it promotes patriotism, ceremoniously impresses the importance of the Pledge, and brings to mind the Founders’ belief in the rights of man. It is true that God in His wisdom established this country as a place where His people could enjoy magnificent religious freedom, free from government intervention in the affairs of the church, and with tremendous freedom to assemble to worship Him. But the words “under God” in the Pledge should remind us that this nation was formed in subjection to a sovereign God, and that we owe our allegiance first of all to Him. Similarly, the words “In God We Trust” should remind us of exactly that. Especially on our national currency, the phrase should remind us that we place our trust in God to provide our needs, and not in any amount of money that we or anyone else may accumulate.

The difficulty with the court’s ruling is that it allowed the references to God to stand by saying that they were meaningless, only of “ceremonial or patriotic character.” The reference to God in the Pledge, in the view of the court, seems to be merely for emphasis, almost like the situation when individuals take God’s name in vain to emphasize a point.

If our references to our heavenly Father in public discourse are allowed only if the focus is on the “rights” of man while invoking God’s name for emphasis, we would do better not to make such references at all. On the posi-

tive side, in an age when churches apostatize and become increasingly focused on man rather than God, we can be thankful that the law still takes great efforts to ensure that no one religion is given priority over others.

While we may not be able to use public office or institutions to voice our faith, we are still allowed to do so in the private sector. At the same time, those who disagree with us on religious grounds are similarly not allowed to use public office or institutions to limit the private expressions of our faith. The government is a very poor medium through which to spread the gospel anyway, so we can be thankful that we are freely allowed to do so privately, for as long as the Lord guides the rulers of our country to maintain this “right.”

As has been pointed out previously in articles under this rubric, the trend instead seems to be to use indirect attacks to limit our ability to proclaim the truth of Scripture. In the September 15, 2009 article, we pointed out measures such as the “anti-bullying” laws, which keep schools from saying things against “sexual orientation” that might harm a student’s education. The First Amendment protections for the Free Exercise and against the Establishment of Religion are still the best line of legal defense against encroachment by such legislation on our freedom to state scriptural truths. From this perspective, it is good that the courts do not allow substantive use of religious or anti-religious tenets in the public realm. ☞

Conviction

Convictions are getting more and more difficult to maintain. Convictions are more and more difficult to practice. Convictions are more and more difficult to remember.

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Look first at conviction in the broadest possible sense. Conviction, broadly speaking, is a determined, tightly held judgment on a matter or subject. Conviction is rooted in the heart and declared with strong emotion. Conviction is opinion cherished and deeply valued. People of conviction are willing to devote themselves to their stand, even at great cost.

In days past, you did not need to look far to find

people of conviction. They had definite, sharp, clearly laid out opinions. They held steadfastly to those opinions. They were always ready vigorously to argue their opinions. Even if you disagreed with them, you could respect them for their mastery of the subject discussed and the strength of their opinion.

There were three important areas of life where you would always expect to run into men and women of conviction. Morality and ethics, politics, and religion. Presently, of these three, only one area survives: politics. Even with respect to politics, most will go out of their way to avoid debate. In the spheres of morality and religion, argument is banned.

That is not to say, however, that you will not find an argument at all in the areas of morality and religion. You will. But more and more you will find only one argument, an argument that you find most difficult to answer. That argument is against conviction, and for tolerance. That argument is not based on reason, fact, or any kind of authority. In fact, it is meant to banish all reason, fact, and authority. Its only ground is niceness and civility. To have an argument is said to be mean-spirited and harsh. To argue about ethics becomes unethical. To argue about truth becomes pointless.

This one argument, a plea for tolerance based on civility, is meant to push every kind of conviction back to the individual himself. It recedes into a form of individualism, where convictions may be held, but they must be held privately and never expressed outwardly. Such individualism is extreme. These convictions are not to be expressed in the domain of the church or even of the individual family. They are not to be shared. Husbands and wives are expected to disagree and not try to influence one another's convictions. Parents are not expected to pass on their convictions to their children, but to help them to have an open mind about everything.

You must see behind this change the strategy of the devil.

On the one hand, Satan attacks the Word of God. His method is to make that Word wholly irrelevant to the church of Jesus Christ. So he works to create a breach between the church and the Word of God. Where there is love, he seeks to bring hate. He works to drive the church from its foundation of the truth of God's Word. He labors to keep the church from being the pillar and

ground of the truth, pushing the truth away and letting it fall to the ground. His goal is to make the church so tolerant and so broad-minded that it cannot tolerate the Book that is filled with judgments and that was given to be the ground of its conviction. Having gained the world to his scheme along the way of toleration (political correctness), he works on the church through society. The church hastens to make itself relevant to the world (via common grace as one of the ways), and hides its convictions behind its back. With those convictions in back, and not in front, the church forgets about them and lets them fall from her hand.

That attack on the Word of God is Satan's strategy. But the goal of that strategy, driving conviction out of the church, is separation between the heart and the truth. The church no longer teaches any conviction, but only tolerance. The teaching and preaching of tolerance seems at first to leave individual conviction alone. But where individual conviction is not permitted any practice or expression, it cannot long survive in the heart either. The devil will make use of the church to dry up and kill every conviction in the heart of God's people.

How do you deal with these attacks?

Remember that your convictions stem simply from the antithesis and your place in that antithesis. The antithesis involves a contrast between right and wrong, between the truth and the lie. The antithesis means that you must expect disagreement with your convictions. If there is no disagreement, then something is wrong. Perhaps you ought to check to see whether your convictions have not been already swept away by the flood of toleration. Remember, God's grace has separated you from the lie in your mind and heart. By faith, the gift of God to you, you believe the truth and reject the lie.

These convictions are precious to you. By His precious blood, Christ has purchased your place in this antithesis. He has bought for you a place in His kingdom, to stand for the cause of God and His truth over against the lies of the devil and the world. Your convictions are an important part of that antithesis, born in your mind and heart by the power of the Holy Spirit. By the Spirit's work, those convictions really are not your own, to deny or discard at your pleasure.

But how can you keep your convictions?

First, know what they are. Your convictions must

have their source in God's Word. They must not come merely from the way that you have been brought up, or what you have been taught by your parents. According to God's covenant, He has used your parents to give you the right convictions, the very same that are found in His Word. But in the process of your education (by parents, by the church, by your Christian school), you have come by God's covenant grace to see the truth that these convictions are rooted in God's Word. Through the knowledge of God's Word, they become *proper* convictions.

To keep your convictions requires a continuous practice. Attacks will tend to weaken them. Required is a constant exposure to the source of your true convictions. Read and study the Word of God. Find its truth precious to you. Remember that the truth shall make you free (John 8:32). Remember that Christ, your precious Savior, is the way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6). Make that truth of God's Word your joy and happiness. Devote yourself to the Word. Turn your affections toward it (Ps. 119:35, 47, 48). Required also are diligent and frequent attendance at and attention to the preaching of God's Word. The importance of attendance on the preaching should go without saying. It is not only your opportunity to hear the Word of God explained and applied to you, but it is also your opportunity to gather with your fellow-saints before that Word to strengthen one another in your convictions. Confession of faith is also an important means. By it you take a conscious, deliberate stand with God's people for the Word of God and its truth.

In that strength, rooted in God's Word, your convictions concerning that Word and its truth will be completely different from other convictions of a political or practical nature. It is fine to hold convictions in these areas, but they must not carry in your heart and soul the same weight. You may hold the tenets of capitalism and free enterprise ever so strongly. You may be able to argue many of their finer points. But you must not be expected to die for those convictions. On the other hand, you will be convinced more and more that the truth of God's Word is not only worth promoting, but also worth your very life. You will be willing to stand alone, bearing all kinds of ridicule and shame for the sake of your convictions.

You must realize that your convictions are under increasing attack. Therefore you need to know how to

maintain them and even strengthen them. We draw your attention to two convictions of the most practical nature, two that are coming more and more under attack. The first is your conviction of God's everlasting covenant of grace, that it is without any conditions and therefore altogether gracious. The second is your conviction on divorce and remarriage, namely that divorce is forbidden except in cases of fornication and that remarriage of divorced persons is forbidden in all cases.

Your conviction on divorce and remarriage of divorced persons is of a practical nature. Your conviction is contrary to the standards both of the world and nearly all of the church world. Because of that stand, you will have something to say about the remarriage of divorced persons. In some instances you will simply confess that stand. In other instances you will admonish and rebuke. In still other instances you will not attend certain weddings at which your presence is expected. You explain your convictions behind your actions, but those convictions are not honored. You are admonished and you are shunned, not on the basis of Scripture, but often on the basis of mere emotion. Men may say, "Fine! You may have your convictions, but do not allow them to shape your behavior! Keep them to yourself!"

Next look at your conviction that God's covenant is sovereign and unconditional. You know that your conviction of this truth causes you to be separate from others that are considered near you. You can think of the churches that confess, preach, and teach a conditional covenant. Some minimize that difference in doctrine. They will even classify it among things indifferent. "We have so much in common," it is said, "why must we quibble over such minor differences?" Or a sharper attack is made through accusation. "Are you saying nobody in those churches is saved?!"

How must you answer these accusations? Keeping your convictions, are you able to speak them?

First, know your obligation to speak up for what you believe. Do you believe it? Then you must speak! Speak clearly of your convictions. After all, they are *your* convictions. Popular opinion notwithstanding, convictions are meant to be held, to be spoken, and to have an influence on actions and behavior. By their very nature, convictions meet with opposition, even forceful opposition. It is folly to drop your convictions simply because they

are opposed, either by error or by the spirit of toleration. Scripture bears widespread testimony of that opposition, and of the saints' standing against all opposition (Gal. 5:1; Phil. 4:1; II Thess. 2:15; Jude 3; Rev. 2:2).

Second, remember the nature of your convictions. You confess them by faith, which is the working of the Holy Spirit in your heart according to the truth of God's Word. Faith is not merely your opinion, independent of facts or truth. The word that you speak out of faith is not your "spin" on the truth of Scripture. It is not your guess or best interpretation. It is the truth from God's Word. You have the Spirit in you. By that Spirit, speak!

Third, understand that when you speak the truth, you must always bring glory to God. He is glorified when His truth is declared. It makes no difference whether your audience is one or a thousand. It makes no difference whether they agree or disagree with you. How helpful it is to keep in your mind and heart the glory of God and the glory of His truth. The truth does not begin with you, but with God. In circumstances in which your convictions are attacked, place yourself consciously

before God's presence. Hear Him ask of you, "Where will you stand? Will you stand with Me and with My truth, even if it makes you stand against these other people? Will you bring glory to Me, or will you give that glory to the men who speak against My truth?"

Fourth, know how wonderful convictions are. They are your freedom. It is simply bondage to live in fear of men, shaping your words and actions according to their opinions and practices. You do not need to try to figure out what they will say and do, so that you say and do what is pleasing to them and avoid offending them. You will not need to change your words and behavior as you move from one group to another. You will not need to wonder where the line of compromise might be as you actually compromise more and more.

Your convictions are wonderful gifts of God to you. Keep them living, healthy, and strong. Feed them by a steady diet of the Word of God. Exercise them by your speech. Above all, do not abandon them. When those convictions are strong, then you know that you are strong, strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. 

The High Calling of Husbands to Love Their Wives (2)

Important for the demonstration of love for one's wife is the fact that the husband honors his wife as the weaker vessel. See I Peter 2:7. The husband must control his own sinful nature and the temptation to use his superior strength to crush her not only physi-

cally but in her spirit. The husband must not be guilty of demeaning behavior and harsh, insensitive, and cruel criticism of his wife. He must not use fear tactics to intimidate her. He must not treat his wife as though she is nothing more than his slave in the home, ready to serve his every demand. The love of the husband is revealed by the honor and appreciation he shows her in daily life. In love, the husband must support his wife with his God-given strength, not only physically but also emotionally, psychologically, and, above all, spiritually.

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

Previous article in this series: April 1, 2010, p. 303.

She depends on him, and he must not despise her weaknesses and need.

The husband must show his love for his wife by truly living in fellowship with her. He must share with her his own joys and sorrows, his own successes and failures, the interests of his life, and the great concerns of his life. The husband may not keep a large part of his life secret from his wife. He must share with her the most intimate secrets of his life, talking to her about things that he often would not talk about with anyone else. He seeks her advice and input and encouragement for his own life.

In most ordinary situations in marriage, the husband must go out every day to accomplish his earthly occupation. He is therefore away from his wife for long periods of time every day. He considers this a matter of necessity, not of escape. When a husband orders his life for the carrying out of his daily occupation, he must always take his wife into consideration. He certainly does not use the times away from his wife to cultivate interest and excitement in relationships with other women that may lead him into secret extra-marital affairs, which are so common in our modern-day evil world. When the husband is away from his wife, she must be able to trust him. She must be kept fully informed of his schedule of activities.

The calling of the husband to dwell with his wife means that he takes great interest in the daily events that take place in her life as well. When he comes home at the end of the day, he wants to hear about the struggles and hardships she faced in her household duties, the care of the family, the maintaining of the household finances, and maintaining of order and discipline of the family. He realizes that the care of the family is a joint venture. The husband must be the head of his family as well, and he needs from day to day the help and support of his wife.

The role of the wife in the home usually limits her social life and opportunities for companionship and fellowship with others. This is especially true when there are numerous children that must be cared for and watched day and night by the wife. The husband who loves his wife is sympathetic to this. He realizes that he must provide the friendship and social life that his wife deeply needs. He also realizes that she has need for fellowship with others outside of the home, and he tries to give her the opportunity for this by being ready sometimes to take over the watching of the home and the special care of the

children. He is not wrongly jealous and overly demanding so that his wife never has time for social life outside of the home.

In Colossians 3: 10 Paul exhorts husbands: "Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them." The bitterness of the husband will result in the bitterness of the wife. Though the sins of the husband do not excuse the sins of the wife, the husband must behave himself towards his wife in such a way that this behavior does not become the cause of her bitterness.

There are several obvious patterns of behavior on the part of the husband in relationship to his wife that will be the cause of bitterness. The first one is when the husband treats his wife in a demeaning way. He treats her as though she is a creature of lower dignity than himself, failing to appreciate the truth that she was in fact created in the image God. The husband breeds bitterness in his wife when he exalts himself in pride over her, demeaning her by harping criticism and harshness, treating her with contempt, and sometimes even mocking her before others. Such behavior will cause the heart of his wife to wither within her, and will make her calling to submit to him and serve him grievous.

A second reason for much bitterness in marriage is when the husband neglects his wife. He does not dwell with her in friendship and companionship. He shows in the course of daily life that he would rather spend his time with others or with selfish pursuits in life than with his wife. He sometimes even treats other women with whom he interacts in the course of daily life with greater deference and excitement than he does his own wife. The husband deeply hurts his relationship with his wife and gives her cause for bitterness when in his behavior he acts as though other women are more desirable or attractive to him than his God-given wife.

A third reason for bitterness by the wife towards her husband is when he is overbearing and unreasonable in his demands and in the way that he exercises authority over her.

One of the greatest occasions for bitterness in his wife is when he lives carelessly and foolishly and he does not show himself worthy of her respect and honor. The husband who is lazy and careless and irresponsible in his daily occupation and does not care for and provide for his wife makes it very difficult for his wife to honor him.

According to the Word of God, such a man is worse than an infidel. The husband must be a strong spiritual leader and protector of his wife and family. A husband who is himself spiritually negligent, irresponsible, ungodly, and scandalous in his behavior not only brings shame on himself but hurts his wife and family as well. The husband must be self-sacrificing, self-denying, and noble in the care of his wife and family. The husband's godly behavior must inspire the respect and confidence and love of his wife and family.

The ideal for the whole calling of the husband to love his God-given wife is the Lord's own amazing example for His blood-bought church. "Husbands, love your wives, *even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it.*" The love of Christ for the church involved an immense sacrifice for her on His part. The husband must be willing also to give himself for the happiness and well-being and protection of his wife.

This is a high calling. It is a calling that involves great devotion and self sacrifice. It is a calling that is impossible to fulfill without the grace and Spirit of Christ in the heart of man. The best husband falls far short of this calling, sometimes even grievously. When the husband has allowed a sinful pattern of behavior to hurt and even ruin his relationship with his wife, he must repent before God and at the cross of Jesus Christ. He must confess

his own sin to his wife and sincerely ask for her forgiveness. Renewal of love, true love, in marriage can come only from the power and Spirit of Christ. In the love of Christ the husband must seek the highest good of his wife and lead her in sanctification and obedience to the common Lord and Savior who rules over and cares for both husband and wife.

The love of Christ for His church caused Him to give Himself for her to sanctify and cleanse her and to prepare to present her to Himself as a glorious church. The husband cannot save his wife. He cannot sanctify and cleanse her as the Lord does His church. Only the Lord can save her. But the husband is called in the love of Christ to be the instrument and servant of the Lord for his wife for this high purpose and end.

Both husband and wife are to serve each other for the purer and better life that is to come, the heavenly life. Both parties in marriage must seek to influence each other, to improve each other, to be a sanctifying influence on each other. Together the Christian husband and wife, by the grace of God, must prepare each other for a better life to come. In heaven we will experience the blessed reality of the marriage of Christ and His church. Our earthly marriages can never be more than a very imperfect reflection of that blessed reality. 

Report of Classis West

March 3-4, 2010

Classis West convened in regular session on March 3-4, 2010 in the Loveland PRC of Loveland, CO. Rev. Douglas Kuiper chaired this session. Classis welcomed back Rev. T. Miersma, recently installed pastor of Immanuel PRC, who had not been a delegate to Classis

West for the past 15 years, while he served our churches as missionary. Absent was our newest minister, Rev. C. Griess, who was unable to attend because his wife's pregnancy was near term.

Loveland PRC requested Classis to declare Rev. R. Miersma emeritus for reasons of health, and to make his emeritation retroactive to Janu-

ary 1, 2010. This request Classis granted, and with Classis' decision the synodical deputies from Classis East concurred.

First Edgerton PRC requested Classis to approve the organization of the Heritage Protestant Reformed Fellowship of Sioux Falls, SD into an instituted congregation. Fourteen families and two individu-

als from the HPRF signed a paper stating this to be their desire. Classis approved this request, and again the synodical deputies from Classis East concurred. Classis appointed First Edgerton PRC as the body to carry out this organization, and Rev. D. Lee was appointed moderator of the congregation that will be established in Sioux Falls.

Southeast PRC, host of Synod 2010, asked Classis West to approve delaying the starting date of Synod 2010 from June 8 to June 15. The motion to grant this request failed.

In closed session, Classis dealt with matters of discipline. After hearing reports from two consistories regarding baptized members living impenitently in sin, and after hearing of the labors of these consistories regarding the erring members, Classis advised both consistories to proceed with erasure.

Classis was also informed by a consistory that it had, with the concurrence of a neighboring consistory, suspended its pastor from exercising his office, and that it sought Classis' approval to proceed with his deposition. After deliberation, Classis did advise the consistory to proceed with this deposition. With this

decision the synodical deputies from Classis East also concurred.

Members of two congregations brought appeals to Classis, asking that Classis declare that certain decisions of their respective consistories were in error. Due to the nature of these decisions and the related appeals, Classis also treated these in closed session. After deliberation, Classis rejected both appeals.

Classis approved a classical appointment schedule for the vacant congregations of Bethel and Hull, appointed Rev. Cory Griess as moderator of Hull PRC during its vacancy, and also committed to supply the pulpit of Cornerstone PRC for four Sundays in April and May.

Classis approved subsidy requests for Lynden PRC for 2010. Classis also approved subsidy requests from Bethel PRC, Covenant of Grace PRC, First Edmonton PRC, Immanuel PRC, and Lynden PRC for 2011. These requests were then forwarded to Synod 2010, which must give final approval to them.

At the close of its meeting, Classis conducted its annual elections. As minister delegates to Synod, Classis chose Revs. Key, R. Kleyn, Kuiper, N. Langerak, and Spronk. As their alternates, Classis chose Revs. Griess, Lee,

Marcus, Overway, and VanderWal. Elder delegates are Elders Robert Brands (Loveland), Alvin Bylsma (Calvary), Henry Ferguson (First Edmonton), Michael Gritters (Redlands), and Dewey VanDerNoord (South Holland), with Elders Jim Andringa (Hull), Glenn Feenstra (Redlands), Chester Hunter (Edgerton), Rick Span (Immanuel), and Edward Stouwie Jr. (South Holland) chosen as alternates. In other elections, Rev. Kuiper was elected to a three-year *primus* term as synodical deputy, and Rev. Kleyn to a three-year *secundus* term. Rev. Key was appointed to a three-year term on the classical committee. Revs. Key, Kleyn, Kuiper, and Marcus were chosen to be church visitors for the upcoming year, with Revs. Overway and VanderWal as alternates.

The expenses of Classis totaled \$12,017.27.

God willing, the September 2010 meeting of Classis will be held in the Hull PRC of Hull, IA, and the March 2011 meeting in the South Holland PRC of South Holland, IL.

Rev. Douglas Kuiper,
Stated Clerk 

NEWS FROM OUR CHURCHES

MR. BENJAMIN WIGGER

Congregation Activities

We pass along some exciting news from the Calvary PRC in Hull, IA. At a congregational

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

meeting held on March 1, their congregation approved a proposal from their Council to purchase a plot of land on which to build a church building. This property is in the town of Hull proper, but on the other side of town from the Hull PRC, so the two congregations will not be right on

top of one another. Calvary hopes to begin building sometime in 2011, the Lord willing. We thank God for His provision for Calvary. Their congregation is no doubt already looking forward to the day when they will have their own place to meet.

The Third Biennial PR Women's Conference, "Women in Fellowship," hosted by the ladies of the Byron Center, MI PRC, was held March 12 and 13 at First Byron CRC. This year's conference had a slightly different format than the first two, in that discussion groups, rather than sectionals, were scheduled after each speech. Byron Center hoped this change would better promote the idea of fellowship, the theme of the conference. Mrs. Lori Gritters spoke on Friday evening addressing the ladies on the subject, "Walking in Fellowship with God." This was followed Saturday morning with Rev. A. Lanning speaking on the idea of fellowship under the theme, "Walking with Fellow Believers." Rev. A. Spriensma closed the conference by exhorting the ladies to the calling of "Walking in Fellowship with the Church Universal."

The Southeast PRC in Grand Rapids, MI was able to enjoy a Talent Program after their evening service on March 14. The program featured many wonderful musical pieces performed by various members of their congregation. Immediately after their evening service, prior to the program, a light supper was provided. A collection was taken to help the young people of Southeast attend this year's convention.

The Hull, IA PRC said goodbye to their pastor of the past ten years, Rev. S. Key, and his wife, Nancy, with a farewell program Sunday evening, March 14. Rev. and Mrs. Key planned to move to Loveland, CO that week, with

installation following as their next pastor on March 21, D.V.

The Young Adults Society of the Hope PRC in Redlands, CA planned a society outing including children, for Saturday, March 13 at Ford Park in Redlands. Hamburgers, hot dogs, and dessert were provided. Ford Park offered a Frisbee golf course, so society members were encouraged to bring a Frisbee if they were interested in playing.

The Young Singles of the Grandville, MI PRC sponsored a game night with the seniors of their congregation, on Friday evening, March 19. In addition to games, the singles also provided a light supper for their guests.

While filling a classical appointment at the Loveland, CO PRC, Rev. R. Kleyn, pastor of the Covenant of Grace PRC in Spokane, WA, also presented a slide show on the ongoing work in the Spokane area after Loveland's evening service on March 7.

The Calvary PRC in Hull, IA enjoyed an evening of fellowship on March 6, made possible through the efforts of their Activities Committee at the All-Seasons Center. Pizza was served around 5:30, followed by either swimming or ice skating, we assume in different areas of the center, with dessert pizza served at the close of the evening.

School Activities

On March 19, Genesis PR School in Lacombe, AB, Canada, had their last day of swimming for those students taking swimming lessons. It was a time for fun and games from 1:00 until 2:30 P.M., and any parents

and children of the Immanuel PRC congregation were invited to come and enjoy a swim as well.

The congregation of the Edgerton, MN PRC was invited to the Northwest Iowa PR All-School program on March 19 at Edgerton PRC. A fifteen-minute prelude by the band started the evening's program, followed by the program itself. Those attending the event were also invited back to the school for refreshments following the program.

Sister-Church Activities

The Covenant PRC in Ballymena, NI now has a Facebook account providing updates on their church building, photos, website audios, YouTube videos, CR News, upcoming lectures, and any other important information. A link to the CPRC Facebook is in the top left corner of Covenant's main website—www.cprc.co.uk.

Rev. A. Stewart, pastor of the Covenant PRC in NI, accompanied by his wife, Mary, traveled to Limerick on March 11. Rev. Stewart led a Bible study in Shannon, Co. Clare on Thursday night and gave a lecture on St. Patrick on Friday.

Mission Activities

A delegation from the Council of the Southwest PRC in Grandville, MI, consisting of elders Tom De Vries and Les Kamps and deacon Eric Lubbers, visited our denomination's mission field in Pittsburgh, PA the weekend of March 12-14. As calling church they visited with our missionary, Rev. W. Bruinsma, conducted some

family visitation, and conducted the celebration of the Lord's Supper.

Recently Rev. Bruinsma and Mr. Keith Bauman went to WORD FM and recorded eight one-minute ads to be aired on that station. These ads have attracted many calls and visits to the Pittsburgh Fellowship. While at the radio station, Rev. Bruinsma also recorded four live segments for "Bibleburgh," a radio show aired on Sunday evenings.

He spoke on several subjects that included the signs of Christ's coming and Christ as the only mediator between God and man.

Minister Activities

The "News" extends its congratulations to Rev. C. Griess and his wife, Lael, serving the Calvary PRC in Hull, IA, on the occasion of the birth of a daughter, Salem Joy, born on March 9, weighing 6 lbs. and 15 oz.

Rev. A. Spriensma accepted the call he received from the Byron Center, MI PRC to serve as their next pastor. As a result of that decision, Rev. Spriensma also declined the call to serve as pastor of the Cornerstone PRC in Dyer, IN.

Rev. W. Langerak declined the call to serve as the next pastor of the Hull, IA PRC. ∞

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Wedding Anniversary

■ The Lord willing, our parents, **KEN AND MARY VELHOUSE**, will celebrate their 40th anniversary on April 24, 2010. We give thanks to God for their testimony of a godly walk and commitment to the faith, and for their example of a loving marriage.

Psalm 100:5: "For the LORD is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations."

- ★ Mike Velhouse
Erika, Samantha, Kayla
- ★ Stefan and Kris Engelsma
- ★ Matt and Amanda Velhouse
Cassidy, Ashley, Kaitlyn, Grace
- ★ Marc and Andrea Velhouse
Maya

Byron Center, Michigan

Classis East

■ Classis East will meet in regular session on Wednesday, May 12, 2010 at the Hope Protestant Reformed Church.

Jon J. Huisken,
Stated Clerk

Wedding Anniversary

■ On April 6, 2010, our parents and grandparents,

HENRY and JANE HOKSBERGEN, celebrated their 50th Wedding Anniversary. We give thanks to our heavenly Father for the covenantal instruction given to us. "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth" (III John 1:4).

- ★ Todd and Lorna Goeldner
Isaiah and Ashley Hoegh,
Courtney, Stephanie
- ★ Marv and LaDonna VanDenTop,
Kyle and Jessica Lems,
Tyler and Krista VanDerBrink,
Kelsey, Trevor, Vanessa
- ★ Kevin and Bonnie Van Engen,
Meagan, Brandon, Tyler, Caitlin
- ★ David and Lisa DeBoer
Austin, Adam, Andrew, Alec
- ★ Josh and Shawn Visser
Jacob, Anna, Sylvie

Hull, Iowa

Mission Awareness Day

■ The Domestic Mission Committee will present Mission Awareness Day on Saturday, June 12 at Georgetown PRC. Sectionals highlighting various aspects of Protestant Reformed mission work will be presented throughout the day by missionaries and others familiar with the work.

Resolution of Sympathy

■ The council and congregation of Peace Protestant Reformed Church express Christian sympathy to the many relatives grieving the recent loss of

MISS KATHERYN POORTINGA.

May they find comfort in the words of our Lord, "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live:" John 11:25.

Rev. Clayton Spronk, President
Barry Warner, Clerk