

# Cremation

Schuyler

Recently I received a note from Mr. Ray Kikkert, member of the Protestant Reformed congregation in Wingham, Ontario, Canada. *Beacon Lights* thanks him for his interest and his comments.

He begins with two questions: “Who is Schuyler?” And: “Is it Mark Hoeksema, the editor?” My answer is also two-fold.

First, Schuyler’s identity is a deep, dark secret. There is a tiny handful of people who know who Schuyler is, but they are sworn to secrecy; not even all members of the staff know his identity, and we intend to keep it that way to protect the anonymity and objectivity of both the questioners and of Schuyler (who does not know who submits questions, and who therefore cannot tailor his replies to the person or the situation). Only one or two people know who sends in questions, one of whom is the editor, and he’s not talking.

Second, I have received multiple guesses as to his identity, none of which are even close. In this connection our readers require a little sense of humor (which they have exhibited), though the reasons for anonymity are serious, not frivolous. Allow me to assure Mr. Kikkert that Mark Hoeksema is not Schuyler, as many have supposed. This assertion reduces the number of possibilities by one. I hope this is helpful. More guesses are welcome, although they will likely be wrong. Hint: Schuyler is a scholar, as his name indicates.

Now to the essence of Mr. Kikkert’s missive.

He refers to the May 2016 Schuyler rubric of *Beacon Lights*, the subject of which was cremation. He writes the following: “The May 2016 installment of *Ask Schuyler* regarding cremation seemed to me to be a weak response from a conservative and Reformed Christian magazine to the question. For Christians under normal circumstances, burial ought to be the only answer to the question. Cremation seems to be the quick, easy, me/myself way of skirting what the Lord has to say favorably in 1 Corinthians 15:35–44. Christianity from its inception has always advocated burial, while pagan use cremation. While I agree with the other points presented, we ought to take a firm stance here. Too much of what calls itself Christian takes a neutered position on issues under the guise of Christian liberty. This brings me back to my first

question; anonymous responses are weak on accountability. It's the little things that get eaten away in our churches that lead to bigger problems.”

Mr. Kikkert concludes: “Thank you to those who write for *Beacon Lights* and provide thought-provoking articles for our children and for us as parents.”

Schuyler answers Mr. Kikkert's comments as follows:

I thank Mr Kikkert for his interest in *Beacon Lights* and his follow up question. Please note that I answer the questions as they are asked. In this case, I was asked "How do we respond to a relative who has decided on cremation?" My answer was not, "I would tell that person that burial is one hundred percent non-negotiable, that cremation is sinful and pagan, and I would absolutely forbid my relative to do such a wicked and ungodly thing." I cannot respond that way, although I share Mr Kikkert's conviction that burial *is* the preferred option over cremation. Certainly, I would seek to explain that to my relative, and perhaps find out why he/she is contemplating cremation. I am sorry that some might find the response "weak" or "neutered." I simply do not make a law where the scriptures give none. The scriptures give principles on the proper disposal of the dead, and it is indeed true that Christians have always advocated burial over cremation, which is what I stated in my response. It is, as Mr Kikkert indicates, an important testimony to our Christian hope in the resurrection of the body. I hope that the young readers of the BL (and their parents) continue to profit from this rubric and all the articles of the magazine.

—Schuyler