

# THE STANDARD BEARER

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A Reformed  
Semi-Monthly  
Magazine



*"He bringeth the wind out of His  
treasuries." -Psalm 135:7*

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Vol. 65, No. 8  
January 15, 1989

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## In This Issue . . .

In the November 1 issue Prof. Engelsma introduced a new column for the *Standard Bearer*, one which will carry "comment by our readers." The editor indicated too that he hoped that the column would be "a regular feature." However, if you were watching for the column since then, you watched in vain — until today. Look for it in this issue under the heading "Letters."

We like it. It seems to us that a column reserved for readers' response to issues raised or positions taken in the magazine, or assessment of the magazine itself, is an attractive feature of any periodical. The editors certainly appreciate hearing from readers; some readers, in turn, may also enjoy participating in the discussion of a matter of special interest to them; and all of us benefit from the different perspective, or additional insights, provided by another party.

So, by all means, keep the letters coming. Just be brief, be constructive, and address your correspondence to the Editor, c/o the Protestant Reformed Seminary, 4949 Ivanrest, Grandville, MI 49418.

Cover Picture: Ed Hekstra in a hurricane-damaged home in Jamaica.

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*Meditation*  
Prof. Robert Decker

# Suffering: A Gift of Grace

*For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake; Having the same conflict which ye saw in me, and now hear to be in me.*  
-Philippians 1:29, 30

What a marvelous comfort! Do you suffer? Of course you do. All God's people suffer. There's the suffering of persecution, afflictions of the body, of the mind and soul. For some, pain is a daily reality and there is only the prospect of imminent death. Some mourn the loss of a dear wife or husband or parent or child. Some are lonely. Others are anxious to the point of despair.

The text faces that reality and declares that all of this suffering, all of the pain and sorrow, all the doubt and fear, the anxiety and depression, all of it is given to us out of God's grace on the behalf of Christ.

Marvelous comfort!

The text says that "it is given in the behalf of Christ . . . to believe on him . . ." God grants us faith by which we are put into Jesus Christ. This is faith from the point of view of its saving activity, its expression in our lives.

But notice, the text says "it is given in the behalf of Christ, *not only* to believe on him, *but also* to suffer for his sake." Believing into Christ is a gift of grace; but there's something more. There's another benefit granted to us, and that is, suffering for Christ's sake. This has the emphasis. We know that faith is a gift of God; but what we must also know is that suffering for Christ's sake is a gift of God!

These two are inseparable! Whenever God gives believing He also gives suffering. The reference is to the suffering which we experience on account of our relationship to Christ. In one word it's persecution — all the suffering which we incur on account of the world's hatred of Christ and those who are in Him by faith (John 15:8ff.).

The apostle knows what he's talking about! He tells the Philippians it's the same struggle which they saw in him and now hear to be in him. Paul had suffered in Philippi. When he cast out an evil spirit from a slave girl, her masters falsely accused Paul of stirring up the city and causing

trouble. The result was that Paul and Silas had many stripes laid on them, were cast into prison, and their feet were put in stocks. This was suffering on account of Christ. The Philippians saw that. And now they were hearing of Paul's suffering in Rome.

This same suffering on account of Christ is given to the saints at Philippi, to the saints of all ages — to you and to me!

The New Testament is full of this. Jesus pronounced the persecuted blessed. He also told us that to be His disciples meant self-denial and cross-bearing. Peter exhorts Christians to arm themselves with the mind of the suffering Christ and not to think it strange concerning the fiery trial they are to endure (1 Peter 4).

Are you a believer in Christ? Then you must needs suffer on account of Christ.

Our calling as members of the Body of Christ, as believers, is not that of peaceful co-existence with unbelief. As Christians we are involved in the great conflict which we witnessed in Christ and His apostles. We are to fight for the faith of the gospel. The Christian life is a fierce battle, and in that battle we suffer for Jesus' sake. The suffering assumes many forms: we are cordially hated, scorned for the faith. Some Christians are forced to worship or read the Bible or sing

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*Prof. Decker is professor of Practical Theology in the Protestant Reformed Seminary.*



the hymns of faith in the dead of night, in secret. Others are tortured and imprisoned. Thousands have died and are still dying as martyrs. All of this suffering will intensify until it climaxes in the days of antichrist. This is the suffering of which the text speaks.

If this be true, and it is, then surely all of our suffering must be meant. To be sure! All of our sicknesses and pains, our disappointments, our fears and anxieties, all of the crushing burdens of life, our dying, the terrible loneliness of widows, widowers. These sufferings too have been given to us on behalf of Christ. Paul, when he emphasizes the suffering of persecution, certainly does not mean to exclude the suffering in which we all share to one degree or another.

This suffering is a gift of God's grace!

Notice how beautifully the text expresses this! "It is given" literally means to do something pleasant or agreeable, to do a favor, to gratify, and thus to show oneself kind, benevolent, gracious. What the text is saying is that "on account of Christ God gives to us graciously," or, "out of His gracious kindness God gives suffering to us." "On behalf of Christ" means on account of the merits of Christ it is graciously given to us to suffer for Him.

What a wonderful gospel! All of our suffering belongs to the gift of salvation! Not only believing but also suffering is graciously given to us. Suffering for Jesus' sake belongs to the blessings of the cross and resurrection of Christ.

Just think of that! The suffering of God's people! Your suffering! All of it! That suffering does not come by chance. God gives it graciously on behalf of Christ. Suffering is not a sign of God's

anger or disfavor. Never! It's grace! It's saving grace in the Lord Jesus Christ, who bore the guilt and shame of our sin, but also our sicknesses and pains, and who heals all our diseases. Suffering comes out of God's unchanging love, His merciful kindness, His gracious benevolence to His people.

How clearly the Scriptures teach this great truth! According to this very context the suffering of God's people who are contending for the faith is a sign to those opposing them of their destruction and a sign to God's people of their being saved.

Consider too that God sanctifies His people by means of suffering. When we suffer we are made conscious of our dependence on God. We learn to look to Him more and more. Our praying becomes more fervent. When we suffer we realize that we are really citizens of the kingdom of heaven. Through suffering God turns our attention away from perishing earthly things and we learn to seek those things above where Christ is.

Suffering serves as well to unite the members of Christ's body. When one member suffers, all the members suffer (I Cor. 12). We visit one another in our sicknesses and comfort one another in our sorrows. Increasingly the reality of the communion of the saints is experienced by us. This is God's grace to us!

Suffering brings the assurance of salvation to God's people. Jesus told us that when the world hates us we must know that it hated Him. We may be assured that we do not belong to the world, for the world loves its own (John 15:17ff.). Scripture assures us that when we suffer we are happy, full of joy, because then we know that the Spirit of God and of glory rests on us (I Peter 4:14ff.). This too is God's grace to us!

Finally, suffering brings glory. Suffering together with Christ means we will be glorified together with Him. Jesus told us to rejoice, when we suffer, for great is our reward in heaven. And in that beautiful passage, II Corinthians 4, Scripture says that our affliction is light, but for a moment, and it works for us a great and eternal weight of glory!

How true it is then that suffering is the gift of God's wonderful grace in Christ!

This affords marvelous comfort for us!

How we need this!

We and all God's children suffer — in different ways, and some more than others; but all of us suffer. In that suffering we are never destroyed. Why? Because we know that right along with the gift of believing on Christ, God gives us suffering for His sake.

This puts our suffering in an altogether new light! This means our suffering is not some unfortunate experience. It's not a bad thing. Rather, it's evidence of God's grace. It means God loves us for Jesus' sake.

Knowing this we can accept our suffering. This doesn't mean we just stoically bear the suffering as inevitable. We receive our suffering as out of God's hand. We rejoice in it. As James puts it, "We count it all joy!" No, this doesn't take away the suffering. The pain is still there and the last enemy must still be faced. And that means we sorrow — but not in the hopeless despair of unbelief. We sorrow as those who have the sure hope of salvation in their hearts. We shed our tears in the assurance that God will wipe them all away.

Nowhere is all this put more beautifully than in II Corinthians 4:8-11:



*We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we which live are always delivered unto*

*death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh.*

This is the confession of the child of God.

Is it yours?

O, it is, for you know that "it is given unto you in the behalf of

Christ not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake."

Perhaps you say, as I have heard it said so often, "That's easy for you to say, pastor, you aren't in it."

Yes, it is easy to say. But I didn't say it, God did! □

## Editorial

# Another Look at Nonresistance

There is good reason to take another, closer look at the Christian's duty to submit unconditionally to the authority of the civil state. (As to this duty and other aspects of the relationship of church and state, confer our special issue of December 1, 1988.) Reformed Christians everywhere in the world today must work out their salvation in a revolutionary environment. Many Reformed people in the United States have been taught from childhood on in the Christian schools (but not in Protestant Reformed Christian schools) that the Revolution in which this nation was born was justified, if it was not a Christian, indeed a Calvinistic, enterprise. The black revolutionary of the 1960s, H. Rap Brown, gleefully seized on this axiom of American political life to silence the critics of his incendiary behavior on behalf of freedom and justice for the blacks: "Revolution is as

American as apple pie!" Martin Luther King, Jr.'s tactics of "civil disobedience" find widespread approval in the Reformed community. Reformed churches join the world community of churches in vigorously supporting the very active resistance to the government of South Africa by a segment of that nation's population, one of whose leaders is the Reformed preacher, Allen Boesak. Influential Reformed theologians teach that revolution under certain circumstances is an option for Christians. In his essay, "Church and State," Karl Barth maintains that serious Christians must reckon "with the possibility of revolution, the possibility . . . that we may have to 'overthrow with God' those rulers who do not follow the lines laid down by Christ." Barth's disciple, the Lutheran pastor, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, followed Barth's advice by involving himself in a plot to assassinate Hitler, for which Bonhoeffer was executed by the Nazis.

The reference to South Africa calls to mind the fact that the issue of resistance or nonre-

sistance to governments regarded as unjust and oppressive is not an academic question for many Reformed saints. Rather, it is an agonizing question, involving not only the risk of earthly liberty and even physical life, but also, and much more importantly, a good conscience before God. What is the calling of the Reformed Christian in South Africa as regards the use of physical force to resist the laws of that nation and thus the government itself? What is the calling, let us say, of a black Reformed Christian in South Africa who is convinced that the laws of the land are unjust and oppressive?

Presbyterian Christians in Northern Ireland are under similar disobedience to certain laws, threats to make the nation "ungovernable," and other rebellious actions are the order of the day as tactics by which Ulster is to be saved for Protestantism and for God. The Presbyterian who refuses to countenance this political activism, much less participate in it, runs the risk of condemnation as a traitor to church and country. In the midst of the



turmoil of this passionate, volatile mixture of politics and religion, the Presbyterian Christian must know how to please God and must find his way, and the way of his family, to heaven.

Living in the same kind of turbulence, tugged at by the same kind of temptations, and writing with one eye on his beloved France and the persecution of the Reformed church there (a persecution unto death), John Calvin flatly and absolutely forbade resistance (revolution) on the part of Reformed Christians. Even though the civil rulers "perform not a whit of the princes' office," but are "intent upon their own business, put up for sale laws, privileges, judgments, and letters of favor . . . drain the common people of their money, and afterward lavish it on insane largesse . . . exercise sheer robbery, plundering houses, raping virgins and matrons, and slaughtering the innocent," they must be "held in the same reverence and esteem (as) . . . the best of kings," because in their office they possess God's "holy majesty" (*Institutes*, IV, XX, 24, 25). "If we are cruelly tormented by a savage prince, if we are greedily despoiled by one who is avaricious or wanton, if we are neglected by a slothful one, if finally we are vexed for piety's sake by one who is impious and sacrilegious," our only recourse is "to implore the Lord's help" (*Institutes*, IV, XX, 29). The duty of the citizen to submit is not conditioned by the rulers' faithfulness in carrying out their responsibilities. Rulers have responsibilities; and Calvin reminded them of those responsibilities sharply. "But if you conclude from this that service ought to be rendered only to just governors, you are reasoning foolishly" (*Institutes*,

IV, XX, 29). Under the most intolerable governments, private individuals may only "obey and suffer" (*Institutes*, IV, XX, 31).

The instruction of Calvin to the individual Christian is simple: "You must submit unconditionally to the civil rulers 'who, by whatever means, have got control of affairs,' which means that you may never, under any provocation whatever, actively resist; you must obey all laws that do not require you to disobey God; if you must disobey (and you must, if, e.g., the state forbids you to worship God according to the Reformed faith), you may not use the disobedience as a launching-pad for revolution, but rather patiently bear the consequences of suffering at the hands of the wicked rulers; and you must do all this, not as shrewd policy that knows that revolution is usually futile and results in worse misery (though this is true), but as faith's submission to the Lord Christ — you are willingly, joyfully, actively serving the Lord Jesus, even as every rebel is in reality resisting, not the state, but Christ."

Students of Calvin's theology do not take issue with this presentation of Calvin's teaching as to the political calling of the Christian. But they reject the teaching itself, as unworthy of the Reformed theologian. Writing in the recently issued book, *Calviniana: Ideas and Influence of Jean Calvin* (Kirksville, Missouri: Sixteenth Century Journal Publishers, Inc., 1988), the noted Calvin scholar, W. Fred Graham states:

*There is little doubt that the genius of Calvin did not extend to his analysis of political order, especially to his advice to Christians who labored under rule so unjust that their very lives were in jeopardy. Students (like myself) who appreciate his balanced, supple, and insightful work in Christian doctrine*

*and scripture exegesis are suddenly brought up short at his impoverished and traditional views of political order, and his injudicious use of the Bible as he tries to explicate hard cases, such as Huguenots who daily walked down the valley of death in his beloved France.*

Graham is displeased with Calvin's insistence on non-resistance.

There are at least three reasons why Calvin took the position that he did. None of them is that Calvin was unsympathetic towards Reformed saints suffering under tyranny, or that Calvin was a passive individual, or that Calvin had deep psychological problems. All of the reasons hold good today, as in every age, so that those who engage in resistance towards the state, or support those who are resisting, come under the judgment of these reasons for submitting. First, Calvin found nonresistance to be the teaching of the Bible. Jesus' command to Peter to "put up again thy sword into his place" in Matthew 26:52 and Jesus' declaration to Pilate in John 18:36 that the heavenly nature of His kingdom is evident in that His servants do not fight are law for Jesus' church, that she may not defend Jesus Christ from violent assault (which is what persecution for the truth's sake really is) nor promote His kingdom by physical force. The prohibition of Romans 13:17 against resisting the authorities, even when the authority is ungodly and antichristian Rome, and the command of I Peter 2:13ff. to submit to the civil rulers with explicit appeal to the example of Jesus Himself, "Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously," are the clear rule of the Word of God for the Christian personally, particularly for the Christian suffering injustice, and



even persecution, at the hands of the magistrates. We ask Reformed men and women who are revolting and we ask Reformed thinkers and churches that are encouraging such revolt, "What do you do with these scriptures?" and, "Produce your biblical basis for resistance!"

Second, Calvin's concern was to guide the believer on the way of a thankful, holy life which would bring honor to God here and which would bring the believer to eternal glory hereafter. Calvin was not interested to give a general political policy for all the citizens of a nation; nor was his purpose to change earthly nations so that earthly justice would prevail. The Christian has a calling from God with regard to government; and Calvin taught him what that calling is. We ask those who enthusiastically teach professing Christians to rebel, "Does your way honor the God and Father of Jesus Christ?" and, "Does this way lead men and women to eternal life in the Day of Christ?" "What if resistance, even though successful to overturn an unjust government and to gain some measure of physical relief for the citizens, defames Jesus as just another leader of a revolutionary band and brings down upon the rebels God's damnation, as Romans 13:2 warns is the case?"

Third, for Calvin this earthly life was secondary and relatively unimportant in comparison with the heavenly life to which it leads and for which it is the training-ground for the believer. Christians ought to be willing to bear all manner of injustice and oppression, indeed they ought to expect this, in the patient hope of the life to come. This was Calvin's encouragement of the cruelly persecuted Reformed saints in France in a letter in 1559:

*Let us not then suppose that we are forsaken of God when we suffer persecution for his truth, but rather than he so disposes matters for our greater good. If that is repugnant to our senses, it is so because we are always more inclined to seek for our rest here below than in the kingdom of heaven. Now since our triumph is in heaven, we must be prepared for the combat while we live here upon earth. (Letters of John Calvin, published by the Banner of Truth Trust, 1980)*

It is common for professing Christians to sneer at this spiritual philosophy today as "pie-in-the-sky Christianity"; but this only indicates the rarity of genuine Calvinism, i.e., true Christianity.

To dismiss nonresistance as mere passivity is the merest nonsense. Was Calvin then a theologian of passivity? Also, the doctrine of nonresistance allows the Reformed Christian a great deal of political activity within the law — activity to speak out; to petition; to vote; and even to form political organizations. But even as regards nonresistance itself, every believer knows from experience that the hardest work of all, a great and glorious activity of faith, is submitting to injustice for the Lord's sake. To strike back when abused, to join the howling mob on the streets of Belfast or Johannesburg, to take up arms and fight the persecuting state so that one sheds a little of their blood before he pours out his own — this is the easier way.

In his teaching on the Christian's political calling, as in so much else, Calvin learned from Luther. Our look at nonresistance ought to include the doctrine of Luther, if for no other reason than that it is outrageous that Reformed churches should be directed in their political action by Martin Luther King, Jr., while remaining ignorant of Martin Luther. □

-DJE

## Mystery

by Suzanne Looyenga

Beloved Bridegroom,  
I am come,  
Carried by Thee, my love, my life,  
Unto this house of banqueting, this  
house of wine,  
For Thou hast called me wife  
And I am Thine.

Here o'er me floats the banner of  
Thy love  
To all proclaiming that my place  
has been secured.  
Here as Thy pledge of love and  
faithfulness  
Thou bidst me take of wine that  
Thou hast poured:  
The vintage of Thy sacred press.

And so I deeply drink  
And find  
Within this cup dwells sacrificial  
love of Thine.  
And tasting of it, to my joy, I find I  
drink of Thee.  
O love that dwells within — that  
now is mine!  
This is too much to bear! — O  
comfort me!

*Suzanne Looyenga, wife, mother, and poet, is a member of the Protestant Reformed Church of South Holland, Illinois. The poem is based on a communion sermon that had the Song of Solomon 2:4 as its text: "He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love."*

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## Letters

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### ... of appreciation

I would like to subscribe to your excellent magazine. I have been receiving copies free of charge from a friend. After a steady diet of (another religious periodical) I find the S.B. more palatable. God bless your new staff.

I also agree people are not reading enough of the Reformed truth. It is not slipping away; no, it is being catapulted away.

Bob Knaack  
Holland, MI

We want to thank you for the *Standard Bearer*. Its strong and clear covenantal-Scriptural emphasis is deeply appreciated.

"Hang in there," in the Lord!

Enclosed is our check for \$25.00, as a gift to the cause, and as a token of appreciation.

A blessed Christmas to you and yours. May His glorious presence be very real to all.

Excuse my uneven writing. I've been having some visual trouble, but thank the Lord for the good sight I've had in one eye for 75 years. Love and prayers,

(the Rev.)  
Garrett Vande-Riet  
Wyoming, MI

I was disappointed to read in the most recent S.B. that your circulation is only 1900!!! AND that your goal is only 3000!!!!??? I would pray that your circulation would become 30 million! EVERYBODY should be reading the S.B. . . . .

Al Salmon  
Moorestown, NJ

### ... re Women Voting

Dear Sir,

This is in regard to the article "Our Obligation to Vote" in the December 1, 1988 issue.

The article defends women's suffrage on three grounds. The first is that "in Christ there is neither male nor female, bond nor free, but all are equal as believers." 1) This has reference to the church ("in Christ") not to the state. 2) The statement (in Galatians 3:26-29) makes the point that with respect to the blessings of salvation there is no difference between Jew and Greek, male and female, etc. It has nothing to do with civic duty. 3) It is also instructive to note that this same argument is used in defense of women's suffrage and women officers in the church.

The second ground is that all "share equally in the benefits of Christ's atonement." Is the right to vote a benefit of Christ's atonement?

The third ground is that women too hold the office of believer, and the author says, "They both [men and women] have the calling to exercise themselves in that threefold office." Is voting an exercise of the office of believer? If it is, does it follow that women have the right to vote? If the office of believer implies their right to vote in civil elections, why doesn't it imply the same with regard to church matters?

I happen to be of the opinion that women may not vote, but that is really beside the point here. Surely, even if we maintain that women may vote, we ought not to defend it on the grounds given in the article.

Fraternally,  
(the Rev) K. Hanco  
Norristown, PA □



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# The Vaunted Freedom of Speech

## The Creation Issue

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*All Around Us*  
Rev. Gise VanBaren

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### The Vaunted Freedom of Speech

We hear much about the freedom of speech we enjoy in the United States. It is true that we still have considerable leeway with respect to our freedom of speech. But the restrictions on free speech are growing. Though one is presumably "free" to curse God at will, and one is "free" to present the evils of pornography (within certain limits), the freedom to confess one's faith under some circumstances is forbidden. The following article from *The Crusader*, March, 1988, indicates the limits of "freedom of speech" when the contents are religious:

*MOSS BLUFF, La (RFC) — She was commended by President Reagan for a speech she didn't deliver. And because she couldn't deliver it, Sam Houston High School in Moss Bluff has a lawsuit on its hands.*

*Angela Kay Guidry was valedictorian of the 1987 class and she prepared her speech for presentation before the graduates. She explained her philosophy of life and what had been her principal source of motivation in excelling in her studies.*

*The young scholar presented a draft of her speech to the principal at Sam Houston, Kerry Durr. He seemed at first to approve. "You can't argue with that," he said at first.*

*Miss Guidry's speech was her honest evaluation of what had made her click in school and she unashamedly expressed the idea that as a rule, everything one does should be done as if it were being done to please God.*

*This is quite a common notion among Christians, running the gamut from fundamentalists and evangelicals to some of the more staid Calvinist groups which historically have put great stress on this doctrine which emerges from the Gospel.*

*"To me, the most important thing in your life is not whether you have a good education or a good job, but whether or not you have the Lord in your life . . . It doesn't matter how many years you go to school or how successful you are in this life, if you're not doing it all for the Lord."*

*She included in her speech that it was never to be an appeal for others to take to heart what she had said of relating their lives to God's will.*

*Even though Mr. Durr at first seemed to give verbal approval of her remarks, the school guidance counselor, Sylvia Seals, requested that the principal have her modify the speech. When it got down to the finality, the principal said that if she did not delete all references to religion in it, she would not be permitted to deliver it.*

*The student, seeing it as violating her true feelings in what she wanted to say to her colleagues, refused. She saw no necessity to compromise what she had to say simply because it was religious in nature.*

*She was confronted by the guidance counselor, and attorneys for the student said rude and unseemly remarks were made about Miss Guidry and her religion.*

*When the student tried to walk away, attorneys from the Rutherford Institute of Virginia, who are representing her, said the guidance counselor "grabbed her arm and continued making derogatory and slanderous remarks" about Miss Guidry's religious beliefs.*

*Mr. Durr wrote to the Rutherford Institute that he and others at the school were fearful that if she were permitted to express her religious views, it would be tantamount to the school endorsing those views.*

*Not so, the Rutherford Institute replied.*

*The attorneys said a "valedictorian address is, by its very nature, a personal bidding of farewell" by a graduating student, implying that its religious content was not subject to suppression by an outside influence.*

*The suit holds that the student was unconstitutionally deprived of "a meaningful opportunity to exercise her right of free speech and freely express her sincerely-held beliefs." . . .*

*So, "free speech" has its limitations. Perhaps one could not expect anything different from public schools. These are not*

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*Rev. VanBaren is pastor of the Protestant Reformed Church of Hudsonville, Michigan.*



"neutral," but actively involved in keeping any worship of God out of these schools. All of this must give Madalyn Murray O'Hair cause to rejoice. She has been celebrating the 25th anniversary of "prayer-free public schools," boastfully explaining how she used a bit of deception to accomplish her purpose (reported in *Christian Renewal*, Nov. 14, 1988):

*Members of American Atheists and their leader, Madalyn Murray O'Hair, munched cake and sipped champagne in Austin to celebrate 25 years of prayer-free public schools and the opening of the group's new headquarters. O'Hair, 69, conceded she used a bit of trickery in her campaign in the early 1960s to have prayer and Bible reading banned from the nation's public schools. She said she invented a non-existent public interest group so it would not appear that she was fighting the battle alone. "The public wasn't willing to listen to just one single woman along with two kids tugging at her . . . so what I did was invent the Maryland Committee for the Separation of Church and State, which really didn't exist."* □

### The Creation Issue

Many have written, and are writing, about the issue of "theistic" evolution as that has been taught by Dr. Howard Van Till at Calvin College. At issue too are the published views of Dr. Davis Young and Dr. Clarence Menninga, professors of geology at Calvin. Calvin College, understandably, has been trying to calm the waters. In the Calvin College *Spark* (Sept. 1988) an article appeared entitled, "Confronting the Creation Issue." This is condensed in the latest issue of *Calvin Today* (Fall, 1988). One of the questions addressed to the president of Calvin College, Anthony Diekema, was this: "Do the professors believe in Adam and Eve as historical people? Some people have said they don't." His answer was:

*Yes, indeed they do. Each of them has repeatedly affirmed Adam and Eve as historical persons — as does anyone who affirms the Belgic Confession. Some of their critics say they don't, but they apparently haven't asked them. That is really unfortunate and grossly unfair. For example, far too many people are speaking for Van Till rather than listening to him, or even reading carefully what he writes. So, yes, these professors do believe in Adam and Eve as the first humans and the progenitors of all human beings to follow. They also affirm the Fall — the choice of Adam and Eve to disobey God's call to obedience — as a real historical phenomenon.*

That answer, designed to reassure, nevertheless leaves some troubling questions to which I have not yet seen the answers. First, Van Till terms the first eleven chapters of Genesis as "primal history" which is the "packaging rather than the content itself"; but then how does the account of a literal Adam and Eve and a literal fall fit in with this? How is it that everything of the creation week is "packaging" except that section which speaks of Adam's creation and fall? Secondly, one must explain the existence of death during the millions of years before the fall — if death was the sentence of God against the sin committed by Adam when he fell as Genesis 1 and 2 claims. Thirdly, when Genesis speaks of Adam's creation from the "dust of the earth," was this also a literal and direct act of God — or is this part of the

packaging which is designed to explain that God caused Adam to arise from earlier life-forms in the process of evolution?

It is no wonder that many in the Christian Reformed Church are deeply concerned about what is taking place. It seems to me they have reason for great concern. □

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### GOD'S TRUE CHURCH

*The Church's one foundation  
Is Jesus Christ her Lord,  
She is His new creation  
By water and the word;  
From heaven He came and sought  
her  
To be His holy bride,  
With His own blood He bought  
her,  
And for her life He died.  
Elect from every nation,  
Yet one o'er all the earth,  
Her charter of salvation  
One Lord, one faith, one birth;  
One holy name she blesses,  
Partakes one holy food,  
And to one hope she presses,  
With every grace endued.  
'Mid toil and tribulation,  
And tumult of her war,  
She waits the consummation  
Of peace for evermore,  
Till with the vision glorious  
Her longing eyes are blest,  
And the great Church victorious  
Shall be the Church at rest.*

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*Take the time to read and study the Standard Bearer. It is an excellent source of devotional reading material for your daily use.*



# The Strength of Youth

Rev. Barrett L. Gritters

## Hard Questions for Young People

# "What Am I Worth?"

What do you think of yourself as a person? How is your self-esteem? In other words, in your eyes, how much are you worth?

This isn't a burning question just in the church world today. (It is that, too. I own and have read just two of the many books written about "self esteem" lately. Ray Burwick wrote one called, *Self Esteem: You're Better Than You Think*, and Robert Schuller, *Self Esteem: The New Reformation*. And, though Burwick's does not attack the basics of the Reformed faith as Schuller's does, it isn't very helpful, at least until the last two chapters. But the question — "what do you think you are worth?" — is a vital question in a practical way, for every young person. Even if you've never actually come out and asked yourself the question, surely you have had times when you felt worthless and wondered, "What use am I?"

\* \* \* \* \*

"Bob" came to school the other day with his hands hanging down and head low. Grades had come out just last week and his parents still were not treating him very kindly after having seen his "C"s and "D"s in every class but one — PE. Even though he had put a fair amount of effort into studying, he just couldn't "cut the

Rev. Gritters is pastor of the Protestant Reformed Church of Byron Center, Michigan.

*Dear Christian parents and young people,*

*This section of the Standard Bearer has always been written for the Young People. The Title "The Strength of Youth" emphasizes the unique strength that young people have in their teens and later.*

*Although there is a unique strength that young people have, in their lives there are many difficult questions to face and answer. My purpose in this rubric is to address some of those questions and try to give guidelines for answering them, so that their strengths may be used to the fullest.*

*If you have questions you would like to see addressed here, please write to me at 8360 Clyde Park SW, Byron Center, MI 49315.*

*God lead you and bless you as you face your many "hard questions."*

mustard." Now, to top it off, his teacher just added to his grief by using him as an example of what not to do in a homework assignment. "Doesn't he care a bit about how I feel?"

"Mary" was feeling blue because almost every other girl in the class had gotten a date for the Junior/Senior banquet; but she had not. She was not very good looking, so she wasn't on the top of the young men's list for whom to ask for a date. Not being very popular with the guys made her feel pretty low about herself.

"Greg" was the highest scoring basketball player his high school had ever had. A quick, accurate shot, he captured the headlines in just about every Saturday morning sports page. For him, to make the basketball team a winning team, and be the star, was the goal of his high school life.

But he didn't feel so hot about himself either. He didn't know why, but regardless how well he did with the ball team, he felt like nothing. He didn't know why; he simply felt as if he wasn't worth much . . . .

At the same time, the most popular girl in school, who had almost every young man asking or wishing to ask her out, was surely glad that everyone in school didn't know how she felt inside.

\* \* \* \* \*

What's the problem here? Why is it that some of God's people feel worthless about themselves? And how can it happen that not only those who are not so "popular" but also those who are "popular" can feel so poorly about themselves? The problem is what everyone calls low self esteem. The problem is old.



God's people are not immune to it. And young people often are most susceptible to it.

We need to have a solution to this problem. Some may have a twisted view of the Reformed faith and say, "That's OK; in order to avoid pride, we need to feel poorly about ourselves. We're totally depraved sinners who ought to feel like worms. Poor self esteem is proper. We don't need a solution." But this is a wrong-headed application of the truth of depravity. We **MUST** abhor and humble ourselves because of our sins, but God's people, being regenerated, are more than their old man. They have something to be happy with about themselves, even though it's nothing that they can take credit for. To say it differently, as sinful as we are, we have great worth. Every one of God's children can have a high "self esteem," if that's what we want to call our view of our own worth.

There are certainly wrong ways to try to gain some self esteem. Self esteem does not come from knowing you are "successful." True self esteem will not come when you have a lot of friends, or are good looking, rich, or smart. It won't appear when you can dunk a basketball or hit a home run. Just because your parents are influential or popular will not help.

The wrongness of these solutions is that they all base self esteem on what *other* people think of us, or on what *we* have achieved. If we do that, we're in deep trouble from both directions. From one direction, there are many people (right now) who are rich, successful, famous, esteemed by *others* as great people, but have the self esteem of a whipped dog. You may very well attain "Trump-like" wealth, may very well practice and practice until you're the best "Sky-

hooker" or point guard in the state, may very well work your tail off until you attain the honored place in society or government. What guarantee is there that this will bring you the needed feeling of peace in your heart?

From the other side, you may never be able to reach that status in looks, sports ability, riches or success, that attracts the attention and approval of others. Then the temptation will be to do whatever outrageous things you can think of to be accepted and approved of by someone — anyone. This is what happens to some young people when they find themselves out of the "in" crowd. Not having found acceptance and worth, they reach out just about anywhere for a feeling of acceptance, often in the "wild" crowd.

(In parentheses, if you parents, teachers, and pastors are dropping in on us here, let me ask, "Have you and I perpetuated this unbiblical lie that worth is based on what great things one can *do* for the church or school or family? Have we given our intelligent children [in our home or our classroom] the impression that they are intrinsically worth more because of their higher grade point average? Have we given our athletic children, because of their success on the basketball team, the impression that they are worth a great deal because of their success? If we have, then *we* may be to blame for the depression of some young people, for the permanent psychological scars of the "below-average" student and non-basketball star, and for the wild behavior of that teenager reaching out for approval and acceptance by someone else because he or she couldn't get it from us. Let's repent of this soul-destroying attitude and behavior with our children.)

What is it that makes us worth something? It certainly is nothing in ourselves. This is where so many books and counselors today go wrong. Failing to see or acknowledge the truth of total depravity, they misguide and thus hurt people more than they help. There is no worth in a totally depraved sinner. In addition, this points out that there is no true self esteem except through faith in Christ.

Then where is our self worth?

First, self esteem is rooted in this: We have been bought by the precious blood of the Son of God. That is how much we are worth. It cost the death of God's only Son to purchase you. You are precious because the blood of the only begotten Son of God was spilled for you, personally. You are precious because the Lord has determined to take you into the kingdom and restore in you the image of His Son. You are precious because God loves you and determined to send His Son to die for you. **THIS** is how much you are worth in the eyes of God!!! In love for you, Christ says, "You are mine and no one else's. You belong to me. I love you, care for you, and possess you as my own. You are precious to me." The same precious blood was spilled for you as for every other child of God in the world, smart or not so smart, athletic or clumsy, pretty or not.

Second, self esteem is enhanced by understanding that Christ Himself lives in us. We are temples of the Holy Spirit of Christ, of God Himself. This is the basis for the Lord's warning to us against all damaging or polluting of our bodies by ourselves — overeating, smoking, using drugs, committing fornication, etc. But this is also an encouragement for us in our spiritual life. The Holy Spirit has taken up residence in you! The Holy Spirit has "made His nest" in your heart. He's not



there because He found you to be a nice place to dwell; but you have some worth because the Holy Spirit is in you!!

Third, we are members of the body of Christ, needed and useful regardless of what anyone else may think. There is not room here to write out a most significant passage about this. But I hope you take the time to look up and read I Corinthians 12:12-27. Paul makes the point there that no member of the body ought to think himself insignificant, because no member of the body IS insignificant. The foot may not say to the hand, "Since I'm not a hand, I'm not worth anything." The ear may not say to the eye, "Since I'm not an eye, I'm not even a member of the body." Of course not. Each member, regardless of his place, is a member, and is an important member. Paul even said in verses 22, 23, "Nay, much more those members of the body which *seem to be* more feeble, are necessary: and those members of the body which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour . . . ." Your worth doesn't depend on what others think you are worth. When I ponder this truth, I'm always reminded of my appendix which the doctors had to remove some years ago. I'm doing just fine without it. The doctors all say it's not necessary — they don't even know what its function is. But when we get to heaven, I believe we'll find out what our appendix was for. It served a purpose. Well, each of you serves a purpose in the body of Christ. It may not be very evident to others. It may not be very evident to you; but it is true regardless. You are important to the body of Christ in your God-given position.

In sum, our self worth is based on what God thinks of us, and what God has done for us, not on what we can accomplish or on what others think of us.\*

This has something practical to say to you, young people, who may be down in the dumps because you feel yourself to be worthless. What is your worth? Is it what you can work and how much you can accomplish? If you base your self esteem on that, you will always feel worthless, because we can do nothing for God of ourselves. Your worth is established by God's love for you. After that is established, you are worthy, you are precious in God's eyes. THEN you can work — work as hard as you can, as God has given you the ability. Then, if you are great in the world and accomplish great things, to God be the glory. And if you are small (as most of us are small) and accomplish small things, to God be the glory, too. These small things, as do the large, done in the name of the Son of God, have eternal weight and significance! This is the icing on the cake.

\* \* \* \* \*

We have a member in our congregation who never will have anything that would make her honorable in the eyes of men. Linda won't ever win a beauty contest or get a date. She can't dunk a basketball, won't ever hit a home run, spike a volleyball, snow-ski or water-ski. She never got a report card, much less a good one. Linda can't talk. Linda can't walk. Or communicate. Or come to church. Since a little girl, her mind and body have been malformed from epilepsy and other ailments even her parents don't understand. But before God she is worth just as much as the winningest, best looking, smartest young person you have ever known. She's been bought with the precious blood

of Christ. Christ Himself dwells in her. She's a member of the body of Christ. She's precious in God's sight.

*\*(There are other things that contribute to an undermining of our self esteem, as well as things that help keep our head up and knees from becoming weak. We don't have room to talk about all that here. Why don't you send for one of the pamphlets that our church has published for distribution in our community, entitled "Christian Joy." Our address is, Byron Center Protestant Reformed Church, 1945 84th St., Byron Center, Mich. 49315). □*

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### HOLD THAT FAST WHICH THOU HAST

*"Should we gain the world's  
applause,  
Or to escape its harmless frown,  
Refuse to countenance thy cause,  
And make Thy people's lot our  
own?  
What shame should fill us in that  
day,  
When Thou Thy glory wilt display.  
"No, let the world cast out our  
name,  
And vile account us if it will;  
If to confess our Lord be shame,  
Oh, then would we be viler still.  
For thee, O Lord, we all resign,  
Content that Thou dost call us  
Thine.  
"What transports then will fill our  
heart  
When Thou our worthless names  
wilt own.  
When we shall see Thee as thou art  
And know as we ourselves are  
known,  
And then, from sin and sorrow  
free,  
Find our eternal rest with Thee."*



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# Peace Protestant Reformed Church of Lynwood, Illinois

## Jamaica: Hurricane Gilbert and Our Mission Field

### *Contributions*

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#### **Peace Protestant Reformed Church of Lynwood, Illinois**

On November 11, 1988 our denomination received the addition of a new church, with the organization of Peace Protestant Reformed Church. Peace Church is a daughter church of our South Holland Protestant Reformed Church.

The Friday evening organizational service was a solemn, joyous occasion. The service took place in the South Holland Church; and the sermon was preached fittingly by Professor David J. Engelsma. The text was I Timothy 3:15 & 16, with the topic being, "The Church as Pillar and Ground of the Truth." The sermon emphasized the high and lofty calling of the newly organized church, as the pillar and ground of the truth.

Following the sermon, the organizational committee ap-

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*Garret Flikkema and Don Terpstra.*

*Mr. Doezeema is secretary of the Domestic Missions Committee and of First Church's Jamaica Mission Committee.*



**Congregation, Peace Protestant Reformed Church, Lynwood, Illinois.**



**Office bearers (left to right): G. Flikkema, R. Poortinga, W. Bruinsma (Elders); W. De Jong, G. Eriks (Deacons).**



pointed by Classis West presided over the institutional session. This committee was comprised of the South Holland Council with Reverend Ronald J. Van Overloop as moderator. First in order was the announcing of the names of the families and individuals who were committed to be members of the new congregation. The names were read for verification and the membership certificates were thus transferred. Next, and most importantly, three elders and two deacons were elected by free election according to Article 38 of the Church Order. Following in order, the form for the Installation of Elders and Deacons was read; and the office bearers were installed in their respective offices. Proceeding further, the reading of the Formula of Subscription took place; and the signing of this most important documental pledge was performed by the office bearers.

Peace Church is comprised of 24 families and 7 individuals, 55 confessing members, and 56 baptized children, totaling 111 souls. The group was studying organization for over a year for two reasons: 1) to alleviate crowded conditions in the South Holland Church and 2) to locate a new church south of Lansing, Illinois in a closer proximity to its new members. Peace Church had its first Sunday worship services under the leadership of Reverend Wayne Bekkering on November 13, 1988. Its present temporary location is at Illiana Christian High School at 2261 Indiana Ave., Lansing, Illinois. The chapel of the high school is a very suitable place for worship. God willing, Peace Protestant Reformed Church will eventually locate south of South Holland and Lansing in the Lynwood, Illinois area. Very much work lies ahead for the new church and her council.

We pray that God will give us the grace and the means to carry it out faithfully.

"Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen." Ephesians 3:20 & 21. □

## **Jamaica: Hurricane Gilbert and Our Mission Field**

In looking back over the years they spent on the island of Jamaica, the Bruinsmas will undoubtedly be able to recall many good times. Just as surely, they'll remember times of stress. Ups and downs there were. In fact, Rev. Bruinsma himself has characterized his work in Jamaican missions as an "emotional roller coaster." Hurricane Gilbert, methinks, would have to be put on the down side. And the kind of stress which belonged to the days which followed must have energized the feeling of loneliness which for the missionary family must normally be just beneath the level of consciousness.

If there is one thing that Rev. Bruinsma brought repeatedly to the attention of the Mission Committee and the calling church it is this, that the need of a co-laborer in our Jamaican mission field is a critical one. Both the nature and the scope of the work are such that, for one thing, one man cannot alone do justice to it all, and, for another, the burden of it resting on a single pair of shoulders wears a man down. We have been afforded evidence for the truth of that . . . twice — i.e., from both of our missionaries to Jamaica.

Not that our churches have heretofore failed to recognize that. Our past two Synods have

in fact made provision for the calling of a second missionary to the island. And, prior to that, the Mission Committee and First Church were instructed to try to secure the service of "a retired minister or a minister loaned from one of our churches" as either a full-time or part-time assistant to the missionary. Except for a six-month period in '85-'86, when the calling church released her own pastor to labor for awhile in Jamaica, our efforts have thus far been to no avail. So, Rev. Bruinsma has labored on, for five and a half years, alone.

Maybe it takes a hurricane to impress on the minds of us on the homefront the reality of that aloneness. You will recall that Gilbert struck the island on Monday afternoon and evening, September 12. Telephone service was immediately disrupted, so there was no way to learn how the missionary family had fared. From the media we were able to learn only this much, that the devastation was great, and that it was island-wide. But how about the Bruinsmas? Had they suffered injury? Was their home still intact? Did they need help? And . . . who knows how long it would be before telephone communication would be restored to the island?

When the Mission Committee met on Thursday of that week, there was one consideration which outweighed any other, and that was this, that the Bruinsmas were on that island "alone." It seemed to us therefore that it was incumbent on us, not to sit and wait to learn from them whether or not they needed help, but rather to take the initiative ourselves, and go down there just as soon as we could get a flight to Montego Bay. Accordingly, Rev. Joostens and Mr. Clare Prince, both of whom would be well able to find their way through the island if main roads



# JAMAICA:



Many roofs were lost in the storm. Here Deacon Carr, in Dias, has replaced the pieces of zinc and, for lack of nails, simply weighted them down with cement blocks.



The carpenters took zinc nails with them from the States. Here they replace a roof on a house in Cave Mountain (with the help of local talent).



Rev. Bruinsma's Mitsubishi serves well as a cargo-carrier.



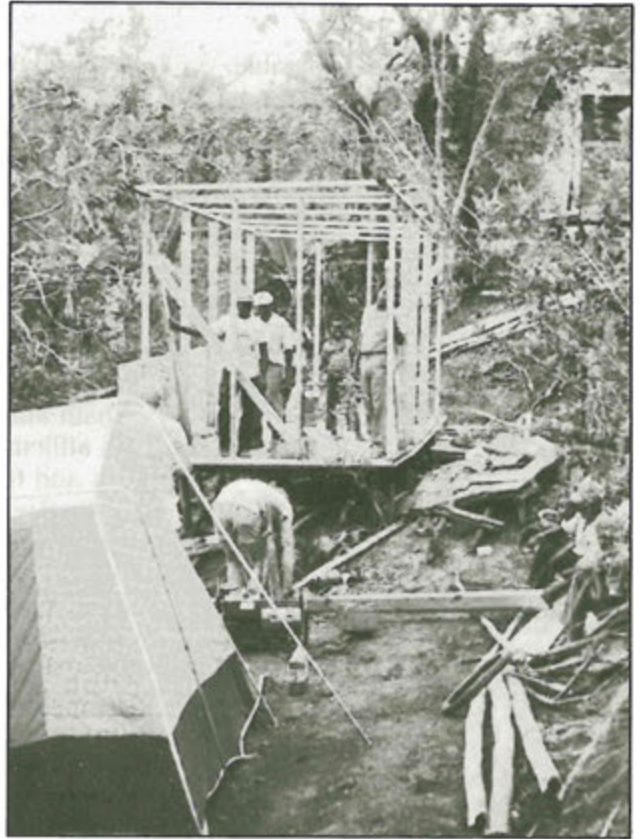
The work-crew, from left to right: Ed Hekstra, Doug Lubbers, Marve Faber.



# Hurricane Relief



Sister Swearing's house, in Dias, was demolished by the wind and by a falling tree.



The 6' x 8' tent in the foreground was provided by the Jamaican government, as it was for all those who lost their house in the hurricane and had no place to live.



Sister Swearing gets a new house.



Here Doug Lubbers installs a window in Belmont Church.



were not everywhere passable, headed for Jamaica the very next morning.

\* \* \* \* \*

It was on the strength of their report, updated later by telephone calls from Rev. Bruinsma, that we decided to ask our churches to take collections for "hurricane relief" for our people in Jamaica, and, further, to send three able-bodied men to the island to help with the necessary reconstruction.

For financial assistance, we did not have to ask twice; for our people responded quickly to the announcement of that need. Within a matter of days we had \$10,000 with which to begin working; and when it was all over, our churches, mission stations, sister-churches, and young people's organizations had contributed no less than \$28,610.21! We were, needless to say, overwhelmed.

The spirit which motivated that kind of generosity is perhaps best exemplified in a letter which accompanied the gift from one of the two Evangelical Reformed Churches of Singapore. We trust that our good friend Rev. Mahtani will not object to our use of it here:

7th November 1988

To the Protestant Reformed Churches of Jamaica.  
Through the First Protestant Reformed Church, Grand Rapids, Michigan

Dearly beloved brothers and sisters in the Lord Jesus Christ,

Greetings to you from the far-away island of Singapore. We greet you with love and with sympathy, in the name of our gracious Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ Who cares for His flock, and even gave His own life for His beloved people.

We heard about the disaster which you and your people are enduring after the hurricane that

swept your part of the world. We do not know exactly how much suffering you are undergoing, but we have reason to believe that you are in great need. Beloved, our greatest need is the Bread of Life which cometh from above, and when we have that need fulfilled, then we have comfort in life and in death, in peace and in prosperity. But especially in times of pain and death and sorrow and afflictions, we need to be patient and to look to our heavenly Father. He has allowed this "evil" to come upon you only because He has a good purpose for His beloved people in your land. We are confident that our faithful God will give you grace to endure and even to be thankful to Him through all this. "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal." Although our pain and our poverty is sometimes very great, it is incomparable to the glory that awaits us. Do remember that, and look for that.

Our Lord has taught us that in the body of Christ when one suffers, we all suffer together. We feel for you at this time, and we pray for you too. But the people have also expressed their willingness to help you, and therefore we are enclosing a gift which we hope will be of help to you at this time. Since we have never corresponded with you directly, we are sending this gift to you through the First Protestant Reformed Church, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Beloved in the Lord, the day will come when all our tears will be wiped away, and all sorrow,

all mourning, shall flee away. For that we must wait for the new heavens and the new earth. Let us all cry out: Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly. Let us have eyes to see Him coming, even in the disasters being sent all around the world as sure signs of His return. But until He comes, and His coming is as a thief in the night, we do not know when, let us be faithful, and let us contend for the faith once delivered unto the saints.

We will continue to pray for you, but we ask also that you remember us in your prayers. We also are a young church in Singapore and we continue to face many struggles and trials. But we know our God is with us and He will provide. Therefore we send this letter to encourage you and to remind you that there are knees bowing before God's throne of grace, and hands joining together to help you who are in need. God bless you.

In His love,  
w.s. Pastor Mahtani,  
Moderator of Session,  
Covenant Evangelical  
Reformed Church

\* \* \* \* \*

The relief effort has not yet been completed. That might seem at least passing strange, since the hurricane occurred already four months ago. But the fact that help remains yet to be given only illustrates the carefulness of Rev. Bruinsma's use of the funds available. He did not, for example, simply distribute money among the needy. In fact, he gave no money at all. He provided food — as it was needed. He bought materials — as they were needed. And, while the carpenters did build some houses, they left some of the work for the Jamaicans themselves. Further, since there were legal questions about the property of Cairn Curran (where the church was "blown flat") Rev. Bruinsma has



provided as yet nothing more than a tarp, to meet the minimum immediate need. Once the legal questions are resolved, provision will be made for construction of something more substantial. And the point is that there is money yet remaining to do that. When, at length, we finish, it seems that there will be neither surplus nor persisting, pressing need. That's truly remarkable. We cannot escape the conclusion that we are not dealing here simply with *our* money. Through the liberality of our people *the Lord* has provided for the needs in our Jamaican mission field.

\* \* \* \* \*

As far as manpower is concerned we really didn't have to ask even *once*. Offers to give freely, not now of one's money but of *time* and *expertise* in the field, came from various quarters, unsolicited. Two of the men who volunteered were carpenters by profession (Marve Faber, an elder from First Church, and Ed Hekstra, a deacon from Southeast), and another was a farmer who had had carpentry experience (Doug Lubbers, from Byron Center). As it turned out, a happier combination would have been hard to find. The three men left on October 24, with all of their gear, for two weeks of hard work in Jamaica.

Mr. Hekstra kept a daily diary. And he was willing also to share it with us, in order that we might in turn be able to pass on to you something of the flavor of the work that was done in Jamaica on our behalf. It seems that the typical day started at 6 AM or very shortly thereafter. After a hearty breakfast served by Mrs. Bruinsma, the four men would be on their way, hoping to get some work done before the sun was high in the sky. Not that they were stopped by the heat. Afternoon temperatures averaged in

the mid to upper nineties, and the humidity was high; but, when the men were on the job, they kept right on working — even in the rain, which was an almost daily occurrence, for about an hour in the afternoon. "The people, I think, thought we were a little crazy," writes Ed in his diary, "the way we worked and sang in the rain."

Apparently the men were often frustrated, in their attempt to get an early start, by the casual approach the Jamaicans take to service of customers. The fact that places of business didn't open till 9:00 AM was bad enough. But soon enough the three Americans learned that "the hardware store is no True Value, and the lumber yard is no Erb" (references, of course, to businesses in the U.S.). Going to the hardware store "to pick up louvers and glass for Sister Swearing's house (was) another experience in 'You're first in line' Jamaican style. 45 minutes!" And, of the window repairs in Dias church he writes, "What a joke. The window panes and glass are cut out of square and the putty we used to put it in was not very good. Even so, we replace 9 pieces . . . ." They found that "it takes time and patience to get daily needs in this country, and (that it's) not the way it is back home where we go to the appropriate store and quickly get something."

All was not frustration however. Once they got the materials they made short work of what the Jamaicans would have seen to be ambitious undertakings. In Beeston Spring, for example, a lady had lost her house in the storm. When the carpenters from the States arrived on the scene, "a crowd of 25 to 30 showed up to watch us build a Jamaican home American style. There was snickering and laughter going on

as we started, but their eyes got bigger and they showed us a little more respect when they saw the house put up in less than two hours' time, complete with siding, window openings, doorways, and rafters . . . . It was a fun job."

The crew started working on Tuesday. According to the diary, Saturday noon was "the first time we actually sit down and take a half-hour for lunch." They were all, by this time, "dragging and feeling tired." And they decided to share part of Mary's sandwiches of sardines on hard dough bread with "the pig tied up to the side of the church." They worked on for two and a half hours and then drove home to "pick up the kids and head for Bluefield Beach to swim and shower in the natural flowing spring. It feels good to be clean." Supper served by Mary that night was curried chicken with rice and peas. It was, according to the diary, delicious; but "we also tell her of our feeling toward sardine sandwiches." After supper "we sit on the veranda and look up at the stars. We see at least 10-15 falling stars. We talk about spiritual things mostly."

During their stay on the island the men did some work also at Cave Mountain. From Cave Mt., writes Ed, "looking down to the Caribbean and looking toward Sav-La-Mar are million dollar views." "It seems so ironic," he adds, "that people so poor and secluded have such a view for free, when we back home pay thousands of dollars for the view of a man-made lake and neighbors all around. It also hits me as to how little these people need to survive, and how much we think we need just to get by."

They also worked in Beeston Spring, where they received a good deal of help from men in the neighborhood. They built there another house. Ed observed that "the man whose house it



was, was very grateful for all that we had done for him and his wife. We could tell by the look in the eyes of the people, that they were very thankful for what we had done for them in the church. Each day we are here I feel more strongly that our mission field here is not a dead mission field. I really feel that they are brothers and sisters in Christ with us. And that the land they live in makes it hard for us back home, myself included, to understand why these people cannot fend for themselves."

When it came time, finally, to leave the island, Ed says, they were "anxious to get home, but grateful for the opportunity to do what we did for the people and the churches. Each of us I think would consider doing it again. We left with a better understanding of the people, our churches, mission work, and Jamaica. The work to be done here is great. And the mission field is legitimate. It will miss the work of Rev. Bruinsma when he leaves. The people, I feel, need a strong leader, a person they can come to. And they will miss him when he leaves. They love him and he loves them. You can see it when the people greet him. The mission will need the prayers of our people for them and Rev. Bruinsma as he prepares to leave."

To Mr. Marve Faber, Mr. Ed Hekstra, and Mr. Doug Lubbers we express our deep appreciation for an important work well done and a lasting impression left in the lives and the hearts of the Jamaican people among whom we have labored for these many years.

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Where do we go from here — that is the question, the question with which First Church and the Mission Committee must struggle in the months to come. We are of course duly cognizant of the

minister shortage in our churches. At the same time, we understand well that mission work is not optional for the church of Christ. It's an obligation assigned, personally, by the King of the church. Not, missions if and when it's convenient, or missions if and when there seems to be sufficient manpower and financial resources . . . but, simply, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations . . ." (Matt. 28:19).

The question therefore, for us, is not *whether*, but *where*? The legitimacy of Jamaica as a mission field can not be open to question. Further, that we have these many years been given an "open door" in Jamaica should also be beyond dispute — for the Lord gave us missionaries to serve there . . . with fruit.

#### CAN YOU?

*Can you put the spider's web back in its place that once has been swept away?*

*Can you put the apple again on the bough which fell at your feet today?*

*Can you put the lily-cup back on the stem and cause it to live and grow?*

*Can you mend the butterfly's broken wing that crushed with a hasty blow?*

*Can you put the petals back on the rose? If you could, would it smell as sweet?*

*Can you put the flour again in the husk and show me the ripened wheat?*

*Can you put the kernal back in the nut, or the broken egg in its shell?*

*Can you put the honey back in the comb, and cover with wax each cell?*

*Can your life return to its pure estate, when once it is cursed with sin?*

But, where do we go from here? There is without a doubt work to be done in Jamaica. There's work to be done in the little "Protestant Reformed Churches of Jamaica" in the hills. And, according to Rev. Bruinsma, the "possibility of expanded labor is great" — that is, outside of the hills, among the middle class, in the cities. But is the "door" remaining open there for us? At this point we do not know the leading of the Lord. Will He give us two missionaries for Jamaica? . . . a missionary with an assistant? . . . a missionary alone? . . . or no missionary at all? As Mission Committee and calling church we may continue to extend calls; but ultimately it is of course the *Lord* who assigns and who sends. The answers to our calls will therefore speak powerfully concerning the position of the "door" as it relates to our own continued involvement in Jamaican missions.

Meanwhile, Rev. James Slopsema and Mr. Dan Pastoor, chairmen of the Domestic Mission Committee and First Church's Jamaica Mission Committee, respectively, plan to leave for Jamaica, D.V., on January 18, to spend a couple of weeks with Rev. Bruinsma in Jamaica, evaluating the field in light of the changing circumstances. Difficult decisions will no doubt have to be made with regard to our continued labors on this little island. Our prayer is that the Lord will give us wisdom to make wise decisions — i.e., decisions that are in accord with His will and therefore in the best interests of our churches and of the cause of missions as we have been privileged to be busy in it. "Brethren, pray for us" (1 Thess. 5:25). □



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## Guided Into All Truth

Rev. Charles Terpstra

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# Athanasius and the Arian Heresy (1)

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*"Whosoever will be saved, before all things it is necessary that he hold the Catholic Faith; . . . And the Catholic Faith is this: That we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity; neither confounding the Persons, nor dividing the Essence. For there is one Person of the Father, another of the Son, and another of the Holy Spirit. But the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, is all one, the Glory equal, the Majesty co-eternal."*

So reads the opening statement concerning the truth of the Trinity as expressed by the early church in the so-called "Athanasian Creed" (cf. the newly reprinted *Psalter*, pp. 82ff.). This truth of the Trinity we know to be foundational for our Christian faith and necessary for our salvation. Yet it is a truth which we, the church of our Lord Jesus Christ in the twentieth century, simply assume and, therefore, usually take for granted. Little do we appreciate the fact that the early church struggled and battled for nearly two centuries to defend and develop this doctrine.

But let us then step back in time once more, and understand that it was again heresy that prompted the Spirit-guided church to a right understanding and creedal expression of this doctrine. The heresy this time was Arianism, named after the fourth century heretic Arius (died 336 A.D.). And the man whom the Spirit of truth chiefly used to battle this heretic and give us the pure doctrine of the Trinity was Athanasius (born c. 296; died 373 A.D.). This heresy and this valiant church father we want to examine in our next two articles.

### THE BACKGROUND

While the church in the second century was called to contend earnestly for the doctrine of God in a general way, the church of the third and fourth centuries had to contend for it in a specific way. As we learned in our last two articles, Gnosticism was a general attack upon the biblical truth concerning God, especially God the Father and God the Son. Hence, the truth concerning God was defended and developed on the part of the church only in general terms. Nothing definite was set forth concerning the doctrine of the Trinity. Although Tertullian began to steer the church in the right direction, there were many questions which remained unanswered. Arianism, however, was a specific attack upon the truth of the Triune God.

Through this controversy therefore the church came to speak clearly on the truth of the Trinity.

The early church of course accepted the plain Trinitarian statements of the Bible (e.g., the Baptism formula, Matt. 28:19, and the apostolic benediction, II Cor. 13:14), as well as the simple faith of the Apostles' Creed concerning the Triune God. Yet she struggled when it came to defining exactly what it means that God is one yet three. This should not surprise us, since the truth of the Trinity concerns the very essence of our transcendent God. It is a mystery the depths of which no man with his finite mind can fathom. But because it is a *revealed* truth, it can be understood and must be set forth as best it can be. Conscious of these things, the church labored carefully to explain this doctrine.

In attempting to explain the doctrine of the Trinity, the church fathers experienced a strong tension. On the one hand, they were afraid of denying the unity of God and falling into polytheism by speaking of three Persons. And on the other hand, they were fearful of denying the full deity of Jesus Christ and thus salvation in Him by not speaking of Him as a divine Person but rather as an impersonal creature subordinate to the Father. The focus of the problem was on the

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Son's relationship to the Father. The doctrine of the Holy Spirit was involved too, but was not on the foreground initially.

The result of this tension was that in the third century certain churchmen fell into the heresy known as Monarchianism, so named because its adherents stressed the unity of God — God is one Monarch. Of this heresy there were two types. There were first of all DYNAMIC Monarchians, who held that God is not only one in Being but also one in Person. Christ and the Holy Spirit are only impersonal attributes or powers of God (hence the name "dynamic"). In this way they denied the deity of Jesus and the Holy Spirit. Christ, they taught, is called "Son" only because He is adopted by God after He came in the flesh. He is not the Son essentially, i.e., by nature, but only by adoption. For this reason this heresy was also known as "Adoptionism."

Secondly, there were the MODALISTIC Monarchians. These too held that God is one in Being as well as in Person. But they tried to maintain the deity of Christ and the Holy Spirit by teaching that God manifests Himself in three different modes (hence its name). Sometimes God acts as Father, sometimes as Son, and still other times as Spirit. In whatever mode God acts and reveals Himself, He is always fully God. But what they did was to deny the Personhood of Christ and the Holy Spirit, and thus the truth of the Trinity.

Monarchianism, therefore, could not be the solution to the proper formulation of the doctrine of the Trinity. Its errors were rejected in the third century. The question was: Now what? How should the church understand and formulate this truth? She knew what was wrong, but what should she say positively? Enter the Arian con-

troversy. For the sovereign Spirit of truth determined that the heresy of Arianism would be the instrument to spur the church on and lead her to define carefully this cardinal truth.

#### **ARIUS AND HIS HERESY**

Whereas Tertullian was from the Western segment of the church, this churchman grew up and was trained in the great Eastern city of Alexandria, Egypt. Strikingly, this city was known as the home for the doctrine of the deity of Christ, the very doctrine Arius denied and attacked. Arius was an ascetic and a man of no mean ability. G. Fisher states concerning him: "Arius was possessed of logical acumen, was skilful as a disputant, and his austere life helped to draw to him respect and sympathy" (*History of Christian Doctrine*, p. 135).

He became a presbyter in the church at Alexandria around 311. It was only shortly thereafter, in 318, that the controversy over his views broke out, so that already in 321 he was deposed and excommunicated from the church. This was not the end of Arius and his views, however, for he was restored, and his error continued in the church for many years (he died in 336 but his heresy went on until 381). Thus was the stage set for the lengthy battle between Athanasius and Arianism. The Arian controversy has a long and complicated history, one which we cannot explore. If you are interested in this, you may consult almost any church history book.

Arius' heresy centered on his view of Christ and His relation to the Father, but it included also the Person of the Holy Spirit. While attempting to uphold the unity of God as the Monarchians had done, he went beyond them and said that the Son was not merely a mode of the Father but an altogether different being. He

is in fact a *creature* of God, the first and highest creature, made before the worlds were formed, and the one through whom God made all else. The Gnostic notion of an intermediary between God and the creation was still present in Arius' teaching.

He arrived at this position by equating "begotten" with "created." He would speak of the Father's generation of the Son, not in the eternal sense as taking place within the divine Being, but in the sense that the Father by an act of His will brought the Son into existence before time.

This "perfect creature" he termed the Word, Wisdom, or Image of God, following Scripture. This is the Word that became flesh. He assumed a human body not a human soul, and so suffered. And, in the way of His being glorified, Christ, the Word, became divine, i.e., God-like. Hence, He is called "Son," and is worthy of veneration, though not, strictly speaking, of worship.

It was in this way that Arius denied the deity of Christ. According to him the Son is not of the same essence as the Father (consubstantial), and therefore cannot be very God. He is not co-eternal; there was a time when He was not. He is not co-equal; He is rather subordinate to the Father. But in speaking of Christ in this fashion, Arius also denied the Father. If there was a time when God was without His Son, then clearly there was a time when He was not Father.

Furthermore, in undercutting the truth of the deity of Christ, Arius also fundamentally destroyed the doctrine of salvation. If Christ is not God, then what can He do to save men from sin? He can at best only be an example to show men the way to some general moral goodness. Harold O.J. Brown makes this very point in his book *Heresies*,



"The Image of Christ in the Mirror of Heresy and Orthodoxy from the Apostles to the Present":

*"The spiritual-moral motif (of Arius' theology — CJT) was Arius' conviction that Christ does not possess deity by nature, but develops into it by virtue of his constant and growing moral unity with God. He is our Saviour in that he presents us with divine truth and furnishes the perfect example of commitment to the good. This view hardly differs from adoptionism; its practical consequence is the imitation of Christ, with the implicit hope that other human beings can attain perfection and partake of divinity even as Christ did" (p. 115).*

This is precisely what salvation has become to today's modernists who also deny Christ as the Son of God.

Finally, this denial of Christ's deity Arius also applied to the Holy Spirit. Though he did not speak as directly on the Spirit as he did on the Son, he taught that the Spirit too was a creature of God, less important than the Son. Hence, also the Spirit was a different being from the Father, and was subordinate to Him.

In response to these errors of Arius it was not first of all Athanasius who arose, but Alexander, the bishop of Alexandria. He strongly opposed this heresy

by way of letters to other church leaders, and vigorously stated the truth of Christ's divinity. He also called Arius and his followers to renounce his heresy and submit to the true faith of the church. When Arius persisted in his errors, a synod was convened by Alexander, and he was deposed. At the bottom of a letter addressed to all the ministers of the church, in which Alexander explained the reasons for Arius' deposition, we find the signature of a significant deacon — Athanasius. To this man and his work of combatting Arianism we will turn in our next article. □

## News From Our Churches

Mr. Benjamin Wigger

January 15, 1989

### CALLS

The Council of our First Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan did not at once place a trio before their congregation for election of one to serve as a second missionary to Jamaica. Their Jamaica Mission Committee was instructed to review the gross list of possible candidates, and to research Synodical decisions which may pertain to calling a "second" missionary when the "first" missionary is leaving.

The Council of our Holland, Michigan church has granted Missionary Bruinsma's request that he remain in Jamaica for four to six more months.

The Hope P.R.C. of Isabel, S.D. has called Rev. R. Cammenga.

From a trio consisting of the Revs. W. Bekkering, B. Gritters, and S. Houck, the Peace P.R.C. of Lynwood, Illinois has called Rev. S. Houck.

Rev. B. Gritters is considering two calls at this time: one from the congregation of our South Holland, Illinois church and another from our Faith congregation in Jenison, Michigan.

### CONGREGATIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

"I was glad when they said unto me, let us go into the house of the Lord" (Ps. 122:1). These

words are ours every Sunday; but can you imagine the joy in the hearts of the saints in our Covenant P.R.C. in Wyckoff, N.J. when they entered into the sanctuary of their new church building for the first time on Sunday, November 20. Many prayers were both offered and answered on that Lord's Day.

A dedication program for their church building was held on December 9. Covenant's two former pastors, the Revs. A. denHartog and R. Hanko, along with Revs. J. Heys and C. Hanko, were also able to attend.

Part of the program included an address by Rev. denHartog on I Samuel 7:12: "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us." A slide presentation of the building of the church was given by Revs. R. Hanko and R. Flikkema.

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



## ACTIVITIES OF MISSIONARY HOUCK

Since his return from California last September, Rev. Houck has been busy in the work of missions. In October he went back to California for three weeks and preached to about a hundred and forty people in Alameda (on the east side of San Francisco bay). These people have come to the Reformed faith through Family Radio and the ministry of Harold Camping. They received the preaching with great enthusiasm.

In December the mission committee sent Rev. Houck to Bradenton, Florida for two weeks to investigate the possibility of doing mission work there. Rev. Houck found that the worship services are attended by many visitors who are very interested in the Reformed faith. He believes that much mission work could be done there and that our churches could have an extensive ministry of the gospel which reaches many places in North America through a work in this area.

In January Rev. Houck plans to return to Alameda, California for two more weeks of preaching to the Reformed Bible Church, as they call themselves. This will be a time of appraising the progress which has been made since he was last there. In between these trips the Mission Committee has been sending other of our ministers as pulpit supply.

In addition to these labors Rev. Houck has been busy keeping in contact with many people scattered throughout the country

who are interested in the Reformed faith. He works with these contacts with a view to the development of future mission fields. According to Rev. Houck the Lord is opening many doors for us to present the gospel of sovereign grace. There is much mission work for us to do.

## CHURCH ACTIVITIES

The Sunday School of the Trinity P.R.C. in Houston, Texas invited everyone to come for a fun time of bowling on a recent Saturday afternoon.

The ladies of Trinity Church also planned a Thanksgiving Day dinner for the families and friends of their congregation. After the meal there were plans to enjoy a good game of volleyball along with other activities and plenty of good Christian fellowship.

The congregation of our Loveland Church in Loveland, Colorado was also invited to a combination Thanksgiving hot lunch/chapel exercise put on by the students of our Loveland Christian School. The dinner consisted of turkey, gravy on potatoes, corn, apple crisp with whipped topping, and drink, all for just \$1.50 for adults and 75¢ for preschoolers! Chapel exercises were held afterward in the church auditorium.

The Covenant P.R.C. in Wyckoff also held a Thanksgiving/Christmas dinner in mid-December. Along with the meal, an enjoyable evening of fellowship was planned.

The congregation of our church in Hudsonville, Michigan held a special combined Societies Christmas meeting in December.

The Bible study that night was from the familiar passage of Luke 2. Afterwards Prof. H. Hanco spoke on his recent trip to Australia.

On Thanksgiving Day the young people of our South Holland, Illinois congregation met at the P.R. Christian School at 7 AM to play football. Afterward they went out for breakfast and then on to church. □

## WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On January 6, 1989, our parents, JAKE AND JEANNE JABAAY, celebrated their 30th wedding anniversary. We are thankful to our Heavenly Father for giving us God-fearing parents, and for the love and instruction they have given us.

"From everlasting to everlasting the Lord's love is with those who fear Him and His righteousness with their children's children." (Psalm 103:17)

Berend and Janine Meelker  
Chad, Brent, Deanna  
Jim and Laurie Jabaay  
David, Michael, Matthew  
Rick and Jill Elzinga  
Jason Jabaay

## RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Consistory of the Grandville Protestant Reformed Church expresses its Christian sympathy to Mr. and Mrs. Paul Harbach in the death of her sister, MARION KAUFMAN.

"The Lord will give strength unto His people; the Lord will bless His people with peace." (Psalm 29:11)

Rev. J. Kortering, Pres.  
Tom Bodbyl, Ass't. Clerk