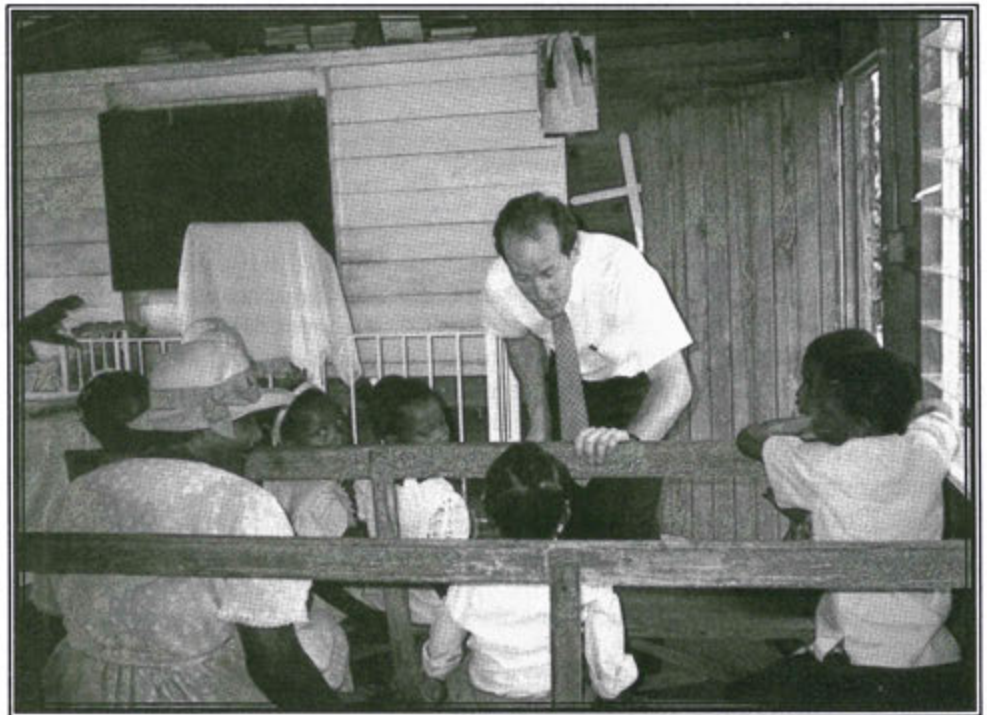


THE **STANDARD BEARER**

**A Reformed
Semi-Monthly
Magazine**



**PRC pastor, Rev. Barry Gritters,
teaching Sunday School in Cave Mountain,
Jamaica**

*Vol. 68, No. 16
May 15, 1992*

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In This Issue ...

Mission work is the calling of the local church. Accordingly, the various congregations which make up the Protestant Reformed Churches are busy, to one degree or another, in church extension efforts. Even beyond that, however, mission work which becomes the concern of the "churches in common" is also carried out by a local church. Synod regulates and supervises those labors through its two mission committees, but the actual performing of the mission work falls to the congregation which has been appointed by Synod to serve as the "calling church."

The Protestant Reformed Churches have at present no "foreign" fields. The activities of the Foreign Mission Committee have therefore been limited this year to investigatory work, notably in Ghana and Singapore. Two members of the FMC have in fact visited Ghana earlier this year. A report of that experience appears in this issue.

The Domestic Mission Committee has been privileged to work with three consistories in supervising the labors in as many declared fields. Hudsonville continues to extend calls for a missionary to labor in its field in the British Isles, and has done a creditable job of making provision for the needs of the field in the absence of a missionary on the field. First Church (G.R.) continues also to call for a missionary to Jamaica, and, in the interim, has conducted several conferences in Jamaica in order to maintain a presence on the island and to give continued guidance for the leaders in the indigenous Protestant Reformed Churches of Jamaica. Rev. Gritters was involved in the most recent such conference, and he has graciously provided, for this issue, an account of the work which he and his father did in Jamaica during January and February of this year. And, finally, Kalamazoo continues to do what it can to promote the work in Venice, Florida. Additional information about that, and about the other fields, is provided in this issue in a report from the Domestic Mission Committee.

D.D.

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Meditation

Rev. James Slopsema

The Willing and Unwilling Sons

But what think ye? A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work today in my vineyard.

He answered and said, I will not: but afterward he repented, and went.

And he came to the second and said likewise. And he answered and said, I go, sir: and went not.

Whether of them twain did the will of his father? They say unto him, The first. Jesus saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That the publicans and harlots go into the kingdom of God before you.

For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not: but the publicans and the harlots believed him: and ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him.

Matthew 21:28-32

On Monday of Passion Week Jesus had for the second time in His ministry cleansed the temple, driving out those who bought and sold animals. The next day the chief priests and elders approached Jesus and challenged Him, "By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority?"

Jesus responded with His own question, "The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven, or of men?"

The leaders declined to answer. They knew that, should their response be that the baptism of John was from heaven, Jesus would ask them why they had not believed John. And should their response be that it was of men, the people would be angry.

Hence, they respond, "We cannot tell."

Well, neither then did Jesus answer their question. "Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things."

In response to this, Jesus related what is commonly called the parable of the two sons. Jesus also gave the point of the parable: The publicans and harlots go into the kingdom of God before the chief priests and elders of the people. For John the Baptist came unto the chief priests and elders in the way of righteousness, but they believed him not. However, the publicans and the harlots did believe.

* * * * *

Jesus described the situation of a man and his two sons.

The man instructed both his sons to go for the day into his vineyard and work. The first son initially refused. But upon reflection he repented and went to do as his father commanded. The second son indicated very emphatically that he would go to work in his father's vineyard. To indicate his willingness to do his father's will he even called his father, "Sir" (i.e., lord). But in fact he did not go.

Jesus asked the chief priests and elders, "Whether of the twain did the will of his father?"

Correctly, they responded that the first son did the will of his father: he who said, "I will not," but afterward repented and went.

From Jesus' explanation of this parable we learn who these two sons represent.

The first son, who initially refused to do the will of his father but then repented, represents the

publicans and harlots of Jesus' day. The publicans and harlots were the scum of society. The publicans were tax collectors in the employ of the Roman government, and they were notorious for their graft. The harlots were street prostitutes, who sold themselves for carnal pleasure.

Neither of these groups had had any concern to do the will of God the Father. Instead they had daily trampled the will of the Father under their feet openly and without shame. However, the publicans and harlots believed on John the Baptist.

According to Jesus, John came in the way of righteousness.

The way of righteousness is the way of obedience to God's law. In Jesus' day, that law was the Mosaic law, the law God had given to Israel at Mount Sinai through Moses. This law included not only the Ten Commandments but also the ceremonial laws, which governed Israel's worship in the tabernacle, and the civil laws, which organized Israel into a nation. This law taught Israel to live in daily repentance and confession of their sins before God. This law taught Israel to cling by faith to the blood of atonement pictured and promised in the sacrifices at the altar of the tabernacle. This law taught Israel to live a life of service to God in humble gratitude for His redemption. This is the way of righteousness.

In this way John came to Israel. This means not only that John himself personally walked this way of righteousness, but that in his preaching he also proclaimed this way of righteousness to Israel. John came to Israel preaching the nearness of the kingdom. In fact, said John, the great King

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

was about to show Himself. However, warned John, the people could have no part of this kingdom, unless they turned back to the law and to the way of righteousness which Israel had long ago abandoned. John's message was one of repentance.

The publicans and harlots believed John. They not only believed what He taught to be true, they also heeded his call to faith and repentance. In obedience to God's law they repented of their wicked lives, clung to the blood of atonement promised by God, and lived grateful lives before God.

As a sign of their repentance and new-found way of righteousness, they were baptized by John. And when Jesus came to them, these same publicans and (former) harlots also adhered to Him.

Certainly these are represented by the son who, although he initially refused to do the will of his father, repented and did this father's will.

The second son, who initially agreed to do his father's will but did it not, represents the chief priests and elders of the people. The chief priests and elders were predominately Pharisees. The Pharisees were very religious in keeping the law, at least in its externals. In fact, they went to extremes, doing and requiring of others much more than God spoke in the law. They were also self-righteous. They expected to receive the reward of eternal life on the basis of their own superabundant righteousness.

However, when John came to them in the way of righteousness, they believed him not.

According to Jesus' own words, the chief priests and elders were hypocrites. They were hypocritical in that their rigorous obedience to the law was only a show. As is clear from the many rebukes Jesus hurled their way, their inner thoughts and desires were contrary to the law. Their thoughts were filled with murder, adultery, and thievery. Nor did they have any regard for the law in its essence: to love God and the neighbor, to show mercy to the needy, to cling to the blood of atonement....

In his preaching, John exposed the hypocrisy of the chief priests and elders. John also called them to repentance. But they did not believe. They did not believe that John spoke the truth. Neither would they repent and look for the coming Savior to take away their sins before God. Nor did they believe, when they saw the publicans and harlots believe.

Obviously the chief priests and elders of the people are represented in Jesus' parable by the son who with great enthusiasm promised to do the will of his father but did it not.

* * * * *

The publicans and harlots will enter the kingdom of God before the chief priests and elders.

Both John and Jesus proclaimed the nearness of the kingdom of God.

About this kingdom we may say the following. It was pictured in the Old Testament kingdom of Israel in Canaan. On the basis of His atoning death on the cross Jesus established this kingdom in heaven at His ascension. Although established at the ascension, this kingdom will be complete only when Jesus comes again to destroy this present world and make all things new. This kingdom is not earthly in nature but heavenly and spiritual. Finally, it is in this kingdom that God's people find the joys of an eternal life with God.

According to Jesus' explanation of the parable of the two sons, the publicans and harlots would go into the kingdom before the chief priests and elders.

The meaning of Jesus is not that, while both groups would enter into the kingdom one day, the publicans and harlots would have priority over the chief priests and elders. The meaning is rather that the publicans and harlots would enter into the kingdom whereas the chief priests and elders would not, except they repent with the publicans and harlots.

What a shocking statement this was. For the prevailing opinion in Israel was just the opposite of that expressed by Jesus. This was undoubtedly due to the fact that the nation as a whole was given over to

the works-righteousness error of the Pharisees.

And why would the publicans and harlots go into the kingdom before the chief priests and elders? The answer is obvious. The one did the will of the Father, whereas the other did not. In response to the preaching of John and Jesus they turned to the way of righteousness, confessing their sins in godly sorrow, clinging to the blood of atonement, living grateful lives of service. This is the only way into the kingdom.

And so, when the kingdom did come at Jesus' ascension, the Spirit of the kingdom was poured out without measure. The Spirit came not upon the chief priests and elders of the Jews. For they had no part of the kingdom and its blessings. The Spirit of Pentecost came rather upon the publicans and harlots and all those who did the will of the Father. Through the indwelling Spirit of Pentecost these were very really brought into the kingdom to enjoy the wonderful life of the kingdom, eternal life with God.

* * * * *

It ought to be obvious which of these two groups we must resemble.

Certainly we are not to be like the chief priests and the elders, who in a spirit of self-righteousness claim to do the will of God but in pride refuse to acknowledge their sins, cling to the cross, or live out of Jesus Christ. For then we would be like the son who agreed to do the will of his father, but did it not. Neither would we find entrance into the kingdom.

Rather we must humble ourselves to acknowledge that we repeatedly stumble into sin as the publicans and harlots. And, embracing the way of righteousness proclaimed by John and Jesus, we must sorrow after our sin, cling to the cross for forgiveness, and live grateful lives in the power of Jesus Christ. Then we are the son who initially refused to do the will of the father but repented and did it.

Then too we will daily enter into the kingdom to enjoy a rich life in God's fellowship. □

Did It Happen? As Revealed?

One of the most important developments in evangelical and Reformed churches and schools in recent times is the denial of the historicity of Genesis 1-11. The churches and schools either teach or accept the teaching that the events recorded in these chapters never happened.

The worlds were not framed by the Word of God in seven successive commands over six days of one evening and one morning each. The human race did not originate by a man's being formed from the dust and by a woman's being made from a rib of the man. The Adam and Eve of Genesis 2 and 3 never existed. Sin and death did not enter the world by the tempting of the woman by a speaking serpent and by the eating of forbidden fruit by the man. There has never been a time when there was no death and when all the animals ate plants. A universal flood never occurred. Mankind is not now divided into nations because God once confounded the language of the race at a Tower of Babel.

Nothing, absolutely nothing, in the first eleven chapters of Holy Scripture is historical.

Genesis 1-11 is myth.

Myth is stories that are presented as history but that never happened. The myth concerns some aspect of human life that is of great importance to men and women. One can learn valuable truths from myths. Usually the myth involves the gods and their relationships with mankind. The Greek story of the entrance of misery into the world of humanity by Pandora's opening the box contrary

to the command of the gods is a myth.

The myth did not happen. It may be based on something (we know not what) that happened once in the distant past. It may serve as the basis for a people's religious and social practices. But the myth itself did not actually take place. It has no reality in time and space. It is not truth. The gods and persons of the myth are fictitious. The actions are fabulous.

The story of the myth is not divine revelation but the invention of men. The mythmakers were clever, religious, and profound men, but only men. The author of the myth was Hesiod or Homer, not Zeus.

The denial of the historicity of Genesis 1-11 is monumental error with enormous consequences for the Christian faith.

The view that Genesis 1-11 is myth is widespread and prominent in Reformed and evangelical churches, seminaries, colleges, and Christian high schools and grade schools. Where it is not approved, it is permitted.

The reason for doubt about the historical reality of Genesis 1-11 is the testimony of modern science about origins. Modern science's explanation of origins is evolution. This contradicts Genesis 1-11 at every point. The evangelical and Reformed churches and schools are bowing to the authority of modern science. Evolution is reality and truth. Genesis 1-11 is myth.

Referring to the account of the fall in Genesis 3, the influential Paul Ricoeur has written:

Every effort to save the letter of the story as a true history is vain and hopeless. What we know, as men of science, about the beginnings of mankind leaves no place for such a primordial event (quoted in Henri Blocher, *In the Beginning: The Opening Chapters of Genesis*, Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 1984, pp. 157, 158).

Accordingly, the evangelical Henri Blocher concludes that nothing in Genesis 2 and 3 is to be taken literally — not the trees; not the creation of Eve from Adam's rib; not the speaking serpent.

The denial of the historicity of Genesis 1-11 is monumental error with enormous consequences for the Christian faith. It is far, far more serious an issue than some that receive much more attention from concerned Reformed church members, e.g., women in church office. Denial that Genesis 1-11 is history means the loss of the doctrine of the inspiration of the Bible. If it is myth in its opening, foundational chapters, Scripture is exposed as the literary production of men, rather than being divine revelation as it claims. With the denial of the historicity of Genesis 1-11 is lost every cardinal doctrine of the gospel. Ricoeur is happy to draw out the implication of his denial of the historicity of Genesis 3 for the doctrine of original sin:

The harm that has been done to souls,

during the centuries of Christianity, first by literal interpretation of the story of Adam, and then by the confusion of this myth, treated as history, with later speculations, principally Augustinian, about original sin, will never adequately be told (quoted in Blocher, *In the Beginning*, pp. 157, 158).

Denial of the historicity of Genesis 1-11 is the destruction of the foundations of the Christian religion, and, therefore, of Christianity. The religion that must, and will, take form in those churches where Genesis 1-11 is interpreted figuratively as myth will be another religion from historic, creedal Christianity. Christianity rests on the foundation of the events—the historical events—recorded in Genesis 1-11. The Son of God took on

*If biblical creation
and the biblical fall
are mythical,
biblical redemption
is mythical also.*

human flesh to redeem men and women who have fallen into sin and death by the disobedience of one whom God had created good (Rom. 5:12-21; I Cor. 15:21, 22). The work of Jesus Christ is the raising of the creation of God, subjected to curse and vanity by Adam's sin, into the glorious liberty of the children of God (Rom. 8:19-22).

If biblical creation and the biblical fall are mythical, biblical redemption is mythical also. If the Adam and Eve of Genesis 1-3 are mythical, the Jesus Christ of the gospels is also mythical. "As by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin ..." (Rom. 5:12).

The evangelical and Reformed theologians who deny the historicity of Genesis 1-11 realize the importance of the historicity of these chapters. Such is the importance of "the historicity of the content of Genesis 3," according to Henri Blocher (who

denies that Genesis 3 actually happened), that "along with ethical monotheism and the doctrine of sin ... nothing less than the gospel is at stake" (*In the Beginning*, p. 170). Therefore, these theologians, and the churches that follow them, still speak of the "event-character" of the chapters and still affirm that the chapters are "history."

This is confusing to the people of God. How can the theologians or the church's study committee affirm the "event-character" of Genesis 1-11 when they do not believe that anything set forth in the chapters actually happened? How can myth be history?

Exactly this, nevertheless, is the position of these theologians and study committees. They have an explanation. The events recorded in Genesis 1-11—creation, fall, flood, and Tower of Babel—may very well be based on real happenings in the hoary past, although these "real happenings" were not the same as the stories in Genesis 1-11 and although we know nothing about these "real happenings." Therefore, we may speak of the "event-character" of Genesis 1-11. Because the stories in Genesis 1-11 derive, ultimately, from some historical facts or other and because the Christian church lets these stories function in the life of the members to influence their history, we may call these stories "history."

Such is the tortuous defense of the deceptive reference to Genesis 1-11 as historical by those who do not believe that anything recorded in the chapters actually happened. This is the sense of Henri Blocher's distinction between "a historical account of the fall" (which, according to him, Genesis 3 emphatically is *not*) and "the account of a historical fall" (which, according to him, Genesis 3 equally emphatically *is*).

The question that the Christian faith puts to these theologians and study committees about Genesis 1-11 is simply this: Did it happen? Not, did *something* happen, or even, did something *like* Genesis 1-11 happen? But, did *Genesis 1-11* happen? Did

God, by speaking, create light on the first day of one evening and one morning, prior to creating the sun? The question is not whether a woman eventually appeared in an evolutionary process superintended by God. But the question is, did God make the woman Eve from a rib of the man Adam on the sixth day of one evening and one morning?

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truly, in the gospels.*

Did it happen?

And then, because the proponents of myth as history and the advocates of the event-character of fictitious stories are hard to pin down (and because the stakes are high—Christianity itself is at stake), the Christian faith presses its simple question by asking, "as revealed in Genesis 1-11?" Not, did a fall once take place?, or, did a significant flood once happen? But, did the fall take place *exactly as revealed in Genesis 3?*, and did the flood occur *exactly as revealed in Genesis 6-8?* For, of course, the fall and flood revealed in Scripture are the only fall and flood we can ever know, the only fall and flood that the Christian faith is interested in, and the only fall and flood there are. The Christian faith is as little interested in unsubstantial falls and floods behind the fall and flood of the Bible as it is in a vague and shadowy Jesus somewhere behind the Jesus made known, truly, in the gospels.

Did it happen? As revealed?

Only then is Genesis 1-11 history.

Only then is it the foundation of the Christian religion.

Only then is Christianity truth.

Only then is Jesus Christ Savior and Lord by His death and resurrection.

Did He Arise? As Revealed?

In the *Grand Rapids Press* of April 18, 1992, the religion editor describes the faith of the preacher in Grand Rapids' notoriously liberal Fountain Street Church as regards the "Easter event." The avowedly liberal preacher "doesn't profess to

believe in Jesus' *literal, bodily* resurrection, at least not as it's commonly understood." For him, "the dusty remains" of Jesus' body are still in the grave.

The reason why this liberal cannot believe a literal, bodily resurrection is the testimony of modern science to modern man: "The modern mind 'cannot believe in the literal resurrection of the body, no matter which god you think it happened to.'"

Nevertheless, the liberal preacher "doesn't discount the essential reality of the Easter story."

Why not?

"For him it is not the literal, but

the symbolic, mythical and metaphorical meaning of Easter that holds such transforming power."

The question of the Christian faith to this unbeliever, concerning the resurrection of Jesus Christ, is simply this: Did it happen? As revealed in Matthew 28, Mark 16, Luke 24, and John 20.

Where in evangelical and Reformed churches the question, "Did it happen? as revealed?" has to be asked now concerning Genesis 1-11, the same question will have to be asked in only a few years concerning the resurrection of Jesus as revealed in the gospels. □

— DJE

Letters

The Causes of AIDS

Your editorial in the April 1, 1992 *Standard Bearer* entitled "The Gospel-Truth about AIDS" gave an apt analogy concerning the death of immune-deficient churches.

Although AIDS is, indeed, caused by sin and disobedience to the law of God, the blame is not to be put exclusively at the feet of homosexuality. The population of drug addicts in the USA, for instance, has been decimated by AIDS, and many of that group were heterosexuals.

In some parts of the world, as sections of Africa, the ravages of AIDS show up most among heterosexuals, their lifestyle in general being promiscuous, with little virtue attached to monogamy or respect of marriage vows.

It was stated in a *New York Times* article that appeared early in the public's awareness of AIDS (sorry, I

didn't save the article and reference) that one theory as to the origin of AIDS is that on the African continent, one person's act of bestiality (breaking another of God's laws) may have transferred a virus that an animal could live with to a human in whom it became the deadly AIDS virus, but not before that individual had infected other human beings.

The fact that the wealthy, American, jet-set, homosexual crowd, who will travel far to get their sexual thrills in exotic places, happened to pick up this virus and bring it back to our shores; the fact that homosexual sex is often in multiple "bathhouse"-type encounters, even many within a single evening; the fact that such sex practices make depository of sperm against membranes not designed for the sex act and consequently, which easily rupture and transfer to the blood many diseases (not just AIDS); and the fact that the effects of the AIDS virus

don't show up for years, which meant that the disease was disseminated for a long time without homosexuals even knowing a deadly killer was among them — all these factors made AIDS appear, when at last it broke out amongst them in severe sickness and death, as if the disease were the fault of the homosexuals. The truth is that the virus in bodily fluids can be spread through any type of sex, through contaminated hypodermic needles, through exchange of saliva, through a cut in the skin, and even from an infected mother to her unborn child.

The "lifestyle" of sin, in general, brings us not only AIDS, but a host of other horrible effects from the time of the Fall. Eventually all of us will experience physical death as a result, whether it's sooner, because we have AIDS, or later, because we die of "old age." □

N.P. Jefferson
Hawthorne, New Jersey

Contributions

Don Doezema

News from the Domestic Mission Committee

The truth of Jesus' words that laborers are "few," in the face of a "plenteous" harvest, is driven home to the Mission Committee by nearly every report it receives from ministers who have been released by their consistories for a couple of weeks of service in one of our mission fields. Nearly every attempt on their part to evaluate the state of affairs in those fields, as they perceived it, would end in a common refrain: "The simple fact is, there is a crying need for a full-time missionary in...."

It happens that that quote came from the report of a minister who had just returned from a three-week classical appointment to Larne, Northern Ireland. During the two years since Larne was declared a field, Hudsonville has extended ten calls, all of which have been declined. The three-week appointments by Classis East have made it possible for Hudsonville, during that time, to provide at least for the pulpit of the Covenant Reformed Fellowship, on an approximately half-time basis. On Sundays when no minister is present,



John Clarke family

the Fellowship makes use of a videotaped sermon sent by the calling church.

The Fellowship meets every Sunday in Ballymena, in a small "hall" which has for 150 years been used as a Sunday School room. Since the room has the appearance of a church auditorium, it has served the purposes of the Fellowship very well, and at a reasonable price.



meeting place of the CRF in Ballymena

The reports of the men who have gone to Larne have been uniformly positive. It seems that one who visits the CRF cannot help but be impressed by their commitment to the Reformed faith and life as set forth in the Scriptures. "These people," wrote one minister, "are well-read and solidly grounded. They know the Reformed Faith and are zealous for a Reformed witness in Northern Ireland. The group is spiritually mature." And he adds, "I was impressed with the godliness of their homes. The marriages seem to be solid marriages. Husbands function responsibly as the heads of their homes. Mothers are devoted to caring for their children. There are regular, family devotions. Home life is well structured. The older young people are serious-minded and godly. All these are outstanding commendations of the CRF. All of these also provide a solid basis for a witness in their communities."

It seems, too, that, with regard

to that "witness in their community," the CRF is as active as can be expected, in the absence of a missionary. Concerning their distribution of literature, one of our ministers noted that, "the last Saturday of my stay, a large ad was placed in the *Belfast Telegraph*, the paper with the largest circulation in Northern Ireland, advertising a free sample of the *Standard Bearer*. The Fellowship requested that 20 sample copies be airmailed to them as soon as I returned so that they could fill requests. Last Friday John Clarke called to tell me that they already had 50 requests. They urgently asked for 50 additional copies of the *SB* to be mailed to them."

The members of the Fellowship remain enthusiastic and very interested. "Their one great disappointment," writes Rev. VanBaren, pastor of the calling church, "is that there is not as yet a missionary to serve them." And, from another report: "In every home I visited and in numerous conversations this came up. They earnestly want and need a man to labor permanently among them. This, too, is the request oft repeated in their prayers."

The harvest truly is plenteous, but....

* * * * *

In view of the fact that Rev. Gritters' account of his four-week effort in Jamaica appears elsewhere in this issue, we need not say much about the work currently being done in this mission field. Perhaps it would be helpful, however, were we to lift from the Mission Committee's report to Synod a short section giving our perception of Rev. denHartog's report, submitted after he conducted the one-month conferences in Jamaica last fall.

It would not be overstating the case to say that we awaited Rev. denHartog's report with bated breath. Rev. denHartog had himself served for a number of years as a missionary in another culture. We were eager therefore to learn what would be his perception of our prospects for continued labors in the Jamaican field. For, there were always those nag-

ging questions: Were First Church and the Mission Committee perhaps too "close" to the work, and therefore unable to be objective in their judging that the Lord still had work for our churches in this place? Should we rather conclude that four years of fruitless calling for a missionary was objective evidence that our work in Jamaica was in fact finished?

We were gratified, however, to learn that Rev. denHartog's advice was in effect to press on with renewed zeal and confidence. He wrote that he saw "abundant evidence that even though we see many problems in the churches of Jamaica there is a real spirituality in many of the leaders." And, further, that there is "good evidence of fruit of past work done in Jamaica by our missionaries and our churches. There is a measure of knowledge of the truth of God's Word to the extent that the men can converse well on the precious doctrines of God's Word. There were times in the discussions when I was deeply moved by the evident knowledge and love for the Reformed doctrines." And, again, "There is no evidence at all that people are coming to our churches in Jamaica for carnal reasons or financial gain.... If anything it is pretty obvious that, though it might be financially advantageous to belong to some other church in Jamaica, there is nothing to be gained financially from being member of the PR churches." And he concludes that he is "convinced that we as churches must continue to labor in Jamaica. Without a doubt there are many problems in the Jamaican churches. These problems ought not cause us to give up our work there, but rather we should see that these problems are in themselves more urgent reason for us to continue to work in the churches. They need us. God has sent us to Jamaica to help with their great need.... There is a very great need for a missionary on the island of Jamaica. The problems in a field like Jamaica can be overcome only through prolonged, consistent, and patient labor.... We ought to keep this need before our churches and pray that the Lord will provide such a missionary.... As long as we do not have a missionary we ought at least to continue the conferences. These conferences definitely do some good in maintaining the churches

and encouraging the saints there."

The Mission Committee tries to be good stewards over the money entrusted to our supervision for the work of missions. And we are surely aware that the cost of two one-month conferences per year in Jamaica is considerable. Rev. denHartog's report confirmed our belief that we should view our ability to conduct these sessions (with the Lord's money) as being in fact a gift of God to the Protestant Reformed Churches.

In the past year, First Church has extended four calls to ministers to serve as missionary to Jamaica. "To date," writes First Church in its report to Synod, "all letters of decline reflect in one way or another the rightful concerns of a father regarding the impact of missionary service (in Jamaica) on his family members. The Council recognizes this as a real problem and their subcommittee has struggled to devise a practical answer, as yet without success. We anticipate that by next year's mandated evaluation of the 'Interim Conferences,' should no missionary be in place, we will have a proposal to address the problem."

The harvest truly is plenteous, but....

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Some mission fields are able to survive, even for a prolonged period of time, without a missionary pastor. Others cannot. The difference, of course, has to do with the nature of the field, and the background of the members of the "core group." The CRF's solid foundation in the Reformed faith has equipped them for a Reformed witness in Northern Ireland. That *ability*, along with the necessary *zeal*, has made it possible for the members of the group, not only to maintain the status quo in the absence of a missionary, but even to make commendable progress. The truth is that the mission field in Venice, Florida does not share those advantages. The members of the core group there simply do not have the Reformed background necessary to carry out an effective outreach without guidance. The provision which

Kalamazoo was able to make for the pulpit in Venice was identical to that provided by Hudsonville for Larne. But, whereas in the latter case that provision was sufficient to "hold things together" till such a time as a missionary pastor would begin his labors there, in the former it was not. Soon after Synod 1991, in fact, frustrations led to tensions among the members of the group. Kalamazoo's Council already at that time considered the unrest to be serious enough to warrant their postponing a decision on renewing the lease on the parsonage until such a time as the tensions could be resolved. Subsequent progress in the resolution of the differences led the Mission Committee to commit itself to further labors in the field, but with the understanding that a re-evaluation would take place at the end of four months.

Before the four months were over, three families had withdrawn from the group; and, as a result, Kalamazoo decided to postpone their calling for a missionary to their field. To the Mission Committee it seemed that the disintegrating of the core group (the existence of which was the primary basis for the decision of the Synod of 1990 to declare Venice a mission field) compelled us to consider closing the field. Kalamazoo Consistory, however, in the face of the setback in the field, felt just as obliged not to abandon it, but to make an all-out effort, before Synod 1992, to determine whether or not the po-

tential in the area warranted our continued labors there.

Kalamazoo's pastor was able to arrange for an absence from his own congregation during the month of April, in order that he might spend the greater part of that month in Venice. A couple of members of the Mission Committee planned to be present for part of that time to help in the evaluation — all with a view to making a recommendation to Synod by way of a supplemental report.

Neither the calling church nor the Mission Committee may make decisions like this lightly. Serious consideration must of course be given to the question of the continued viability of the existing core group. And it may very well be that, in the end, the decision to close or not to close will have to be made on the basis of the answer to that question. But, along with that consideration, there is the haunting question of whether or not the field has yet been "proved" — that is, the question of whether a field such as Venice *can* be proved by two years of providing "pulpit supply."

The latter concern has been expressed to the Mission Committee and the calling church both by several of the ministers who have labored there recently, and also by members of what remains of the core group. From the latter, for example, there's this:

We don't know how Venice compares as a field to others you have

worked before. But we do know that Venice is a growing area, with people moving in all the time. We also know that there are several churches in the Venice area, but not a single church that carries the testimony of the Reformed faith. Many of the churches here are little more than social churches. We desire the Reformed faith to go forth in this area. Above all, we desire a servant of God who will labor among us and give instruction to those who are interested in knowing more about us. We long for a missionary-pastor to serve in our midst, and plead with you that efforts will continue to secure a pastor for us.

The calling church is properly sensitive to such an appeal. The Mission Committee can therefore appreciate Kalamazoo's request for a little extra time to evaluate the field after Rev. Woudenberg's return at the end of April, after which they will submit their annual report and recommendations.

* * * * *

May we add just this: People of God, pray for the Mission Committee, for the calling churches, and for Synod, that they might be so guided by the Spirit that decisions made are in harmony with the will of the church's King and for His glory.

And ... pray ye the Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth laborers into His harvest. □

Mr. Doezeema is secretary of the Domestic Mission Committee.

Jamaica Seminar, 1992

Rev. Barrett Gritters

Few men have the privilege to work with their own father. Probably fewer still have the privilege to work with their father in the gospel of Jesus Christ. For 30 days in February, my father — Elder Edwin Gritters from Redlands, California — and I had that opportunity to labor in God's work in

Jamaica. First PRC of Grand Rapids and the Mission Committee of the PRC asked us to work together to conduct the third seminar on the island. Gladly we accepted the invitation, and set out to prepare to teach the sessions.

Synod's decision was that, in the

absence of a missionary, we "continue laboring in Jamaica by making the focus of our attention the instruction of the leaders and potential leaders in the fundamentals of the Reformed faith by two men in two four-week sessions for the next four years.... This enables us to maintain a signifi-



Pastor Tomlinson and family, Beeston Spring PRC

cant, though low-key involvement which does not require a large expenditure for our churches. We pray that this will be beneficial to the Jamaican churches. That (sic) the same time, this recommendation leaves the field open for the providential direction of the Lord for its future" (Acts of Synod of the PRC, 1990, page 40).

On Friday, January 31, we arrived in Montego Bay, rented a car, and drove to the southwestern part of the island, near Savanna La Mar. Rev. Joostens had made arrangements for the seminar at the Orchard Great House, which served well the last two seminars. Elder Gritters had helped conduct the first seminar in February of 1991. His experience with the people and the island was invaluable. After the initial culture shock (extreme poverty, weather [hot], driving on the wrong side, narrow and winding roads, giant-sized potholes, and drivers worse than Jehu) we were able to dig into the work.

We were asked to build on the instruction of the last two sessions that had focused on the six chapters of theology, but now to emphasize preaching. So attention was focused on *Theology* and the doctrine of Scripture, as well as on *Ecclesiology* and the doctrine of preaching. The four main sections of study were: "The Doctrine of Scripture," "Principles of Interpretation," "The Doctrine of Preaching," and "Practice of Sermon Making." Along with these areas of instruction, we studied the book of I Thessalonians, and I preached to the men daily from this book. Each day, then, included doctrinal instruction in the two areas of theology and

ecclesiology, practical instruction in analyzing the sermons preached, as well as discussion regarding the content of the sermons preached. This discussion led to review of the other areas of theology, as well as to questions regarding the life of the church.

Present at the seminars were 14 to 16 men (including four pastors) who eagerly received the instruction, even asking to meet some evenings to pursue a subject at greater depths. When the ministers were separated from the elders, deacons, and laymen, for the purpose of a more technical discussion of questions in exegesis, there was evidenced a true eagerness to grow in the ability to explain the Scripture to God's people. At that time, Elder Gritters instructed the men in some of the practical aspects of their office.

On the Lord's days, I had opportunity to preach in the churches. With five pastors and seven churches there is always a church in need of a pastor. One Sunday I preached in three of the churches and gave the message at a

funeral of one of the older members of the Cave Mountain Protestant Reformed Church. Because her family were members of the Salvation Army, the service was held in that church. On a hot Sunday afternoon, the Lord gave opportunity to present the gospel to hundreds of Jamaicans who were not members of the PRC of Jamaica, nor even close to Reformed. We were thankful for that.

In the churches we work with, the members remember fondly the work of Rev. Bruinsma during his five years there. Whenever we would sing a Psalm that they knew well, the response was, "Rev. Bruinsma ("Broonzma") taught us that one!" The ability of the ministers to expound a text of God's Word (as an assignment in our seminars) showed that the Lord gives fruit to the labors of our missionaries in the past. In addition, First PRC is to be commended for their continuous labors on the field, labors that for the most part go unnoticed by us.

Frustrations abound: Inability to find work for the young men in the areas of the churches. Poverty. Illiteracy. Inefficiency. A culture that fights with all its might against the establishment and maintenance of good family life. The lack of good, dependable transportation for the ministers to the various churches (two, well-appreciated, but 20-year old motorbikes). The competition of apostate churches or cults that lure the young people and children to their churches with candy and clothing (the



February 1992 Conference in Orchard Great House

used clothing and other goods we send from the States is not only appreciated, but badly needed). The inability of our churches to maintain a missionary presence on the island for an extended period of time. And the lack of a missionary now.

Only a few weeks ago, some Grand Rapids area PR ministers who had gathered for a luncheon discus-

sion asked themselves the question, "Why aren't there men, presently, taking the call to be missionaries to the fields the Lord has given us?" Many answers were given. This comment stands out in my mind: "If we don't get missionaries on these fields soon, they won't be fields anymore." Brothers and sisters of the PRC in America, and readers of the *Standard*

Bearer, pray the Lord of the harvest to send us laborers. And don't let Him go until He blesses us with this most urgent of needs for Christ's cause. □

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

A Brief Report on the Visit to Ghana

Rev. Russell Dykstra

Early in the morning of January 31 of this year, two delegates of the Foreign Mission Committee [FMC] of the Protestant Reformed Churches stepped off British Airway flight number 79 [London to Accra] in Accra, the capital of Ghana, West Africa. It is impossible fully to describe this moment in print. Mr. Henry Bleyenburgh and I, having left the farmland of northwest Iowa some thirty hours earlier, were definitely out of our element in this tropical city of over one million people. We were greeted by [for us] intense heat and high humidity, tight security, bewildering forms to fill out, and a sea of unfamiliar [black] faces.

Although at the time we were nervous, a bit disconcerted, excited, awed, and not a little afraid of the unknown, we were also quite aware of the significance of our visit. Never before had anyone been sent by the FMC to an African nation. In spite of the fact that many other churches had sent missionaries into this huge continent, we were walking in uncharted territory, not only personally, but for the Protestant Reformed Churches! We were privileged indeed!

Why Ghana?

If you are wondering why the FMC sent men to this particular country, consider yourself gently chided

for not reading the Acts of Synod more carefully. For the FMC has had a long-standing contact with a Mr. Gabriel Anyigba of Ghana for over 20 years! He is part of an independent mission-minded group in Ghana known as the Volta Evangelical Association [VEA]. Gabriel has been receiving and distributing tapes and literature from the PRC for years, and at one point the FMC recommended that he be brought to the US to be trained in the PR Theological School [a request turned down by synod]. In addition, the FMC had other contacts in Ghana, and in fact received more letters from Ghana yearly than from

any other country in the world. So last year the FMC decided it was time to visit the country, examine the past work done there, and investigate the possibility of establishing a mission field there. The Synod of 1991 agreed, and the trip was on. The delegates spent nearly three full weeks in Ghana.

The Republic of Ghana

The climate of Ghana is hot and humid year around. It does, however, have two distinct seasons — rainy and dry. The rainy seasons are approximately mid-March to June and Sept/Oct through November. The dry seasons are ushered in by the



Rev. Dykstra enjoys coconut with Gabriel Anyigba (far left)

harmattan, a hot, dry northwest wind off the Sahara. Conditions in the far north are severely hot and dry, but were less so near the coast during our stay.

The present government of Ghana, in power since 1981, is led by President J. Rawlings. The government is, as one might expect, very authoritarian, heavy on rules, regulations, paper work, and bureaucracy. But the important thing for our purposes is that the government seems to be quite stable, and no major barriers exist to mission work in the country. Currently a constitution is being written which may lead to a more democratic form of government in the near future.

The Ghanaians are a very friendly people, and they welcomed us everywhere we went. Although the population is almost entirely black, after a week or so we felt very much at home, and often forgot that we were a different race.

We were thankful to notice that the Ghanaian society is much less sexually promiscuous than the U.S.'s society. Additionally, the family structure seems to be quite well established. In the Christian groups we saw that the norm was a [married] father-mother household, although most marry quite late in life because of the poverty.

The living conditions in Ghana vary, depending on where one lives. Outlying villages are primitive, with none of the conveniences we take for granted, even drinkable water in some cases. Living in Accra would be like stepping back 20-30 years from U.S. development.

Ghana is definitely a third-world country, but is trying very hard to catch up with Western nations. In fact it has made tremendous strides in the last 10 years. One result of this has been rapid urbanization, i.e., development and growth of cities. Almost the whole population can be divided into three groups:

1. People who both live and work in a city like Accra or Kumasi. These people are one generation from the village. A good wage would be \$100

(US) per month, but would not permit much luxury at all. A loaf of bread costs about \$.50 (US). Nearly all income must be used for food and shelter.

2. A second group of Ghanaians are those trying desperately to escape the village. Such individuals have their home in a primitive village, and travel to a city to work.

3. The third group consists of those who still live contentedly in a primitive village and farm. It is among these people that the VEA does much of its work, in the Volta Region.

The people of Ghana are definitely divided by tribal differences in culture, language, and attitude. We had contact with three tribes. The largest group is Ashanti. They are found in the Central Region (including Kumasi, the second largest city at 500,000). In earlier centuries they had an empire which included much of Ghana. Their chief still has much respect and power with Ashantis, who are rather proud of their culture and influence.

The Fanti tribe is related to, though distinct from, the Ashantis; it is found in the west and coastal areas.

We had the most contact with people from the Ewa tribe, such as Gabriel. The Ewas have their roots in the Volta Region, on the eastern side of Ghana.

The Work

The main contact of the FMC, and thus the main reason for visiting

Ghana, was the VEA and Gabriel Anyigba. The VEA arranged most of the details of our stay, and were most helpful and hospitable. We would have been at a total loss without their gracious help.

The VEA is made up of Ewa-speaking people. Thus, while most members of VEA live in Accra, they do most of their work in the Volta Region. They use the Ewa language in their Bible studies and evangelism.

The group is led by the VEA Executive, a group of about 20 people. Most of the members are from the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ghana [EPC], but not all. One member of the executive is, in fact, a Pentecostal. The VEA has refused to become the mission arm of any denomination, including the EPC. They support their labors by their own donations.

Our goals were especially two: 1) to learn more about the Ghanaian contacts and 2) to tell them more about us. The schedule that the VEA set up was ideally suited for this. They arranged for two speeches — one on "The Second Coming of Christ" [I gave essentially the same speech as was given at the 1991 YP Convention] and one on "Reformed Theology." Both were well received and many good questions were asked, especially after the speech on Reformed Theology.

In addition, I was given opportunity to preach twice in Evangelical Presbyterian Churches. This was truly



Church building of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church in Kpobi Kopi, Ghana

an experience, because the sermons were translated into Ewa — sentence by sentence. The translator, Mr. James Agbeblewu [head of the VEA], was evidently quite capable, but Mr. Bleyenburgh will testify to the fact that this is less than ideal, and not an exciting way to preach. The first worship service was only two days after we had arrived in Ghana, and we were still suffering much from culture shock. We worshiped in a covered, open pavilion in the heart of Accra. The sermon preached was on the parable of the sower.

The next Sunday, we worshiped in a village church under a thatch roof. This time the preaching [on Daniel 3] went somewhat better, because we were better acclimated to the culture and style of worship.

The VEA also set aside adequate time for discussion. We had many opportunities to exchange views on our doctrines and practices, to discover our points of agreement and difference.

In general, we were kept quite busy by the VEA and by other labors expected by the FMC, visiting as many contacts as we could. Well over 1,000 miles were traveled inside the country.

Space limitations forbid much elaboration on these things, but we found in Ghana a wide variety of beliefs — from Pentecostal to essentially Reformed. We met contacts that could be dismissed after a few minutes of discussion. We met others with a sincere appreciation for the truth and a desire to learn, with whom we had many hours of enjoyable discussion and study. In addition we can say that the seeds of the Reformed truth were sown. The antithetical fruit of this was evident — both love for as well as opposition to the truth.

Future labors in Ghana

The goal of any mission work is to establish a field and get missionaries working there. The field in Ghana is not ready for this yet, but this remains the goal of the FMC. The FMC

is enthusiastic about the possibility of future labor in Ghana, and has determined to work toward another visit in two years, the Lord willing, assuming that the work with the contacts in Ghana progresses as expected. Until then the FMC is committed to maintaining diligent and steady communication with a number of contacts in Ghana, chiefly with the VEA.

This work of missions in Ghana is exciting for the FMC. It marks a milestone in the history of the PRC. We thank our God for this work. It is our prayer that Christ will continue to open doors for us in Ghana, and give us the grace to be diligent in obeying His command to go out to all the world with the riches of the Reformed faith. Pray for this work! □

[Rev. Dykstra has a slide picture presentation of the trip to Ghana if any would be interested in learning more about the work.]

Rev. Dykstra is pastor of the Protestant Reformed Church of Doon, Iowa.

Contribution

Rev. Rodney Miersma

Global Communion of the Saints

Of the Communion of Saints

All saints that are united to Jesus Christ their head, by his Spirit and by faith, have fellowship with him in his graces, sufferings, death, resurrection, and glory: and being united to one another in love, they have communion in each other's gifts and graces, and are obliged to the performance of such duties, public and private, as do conduce to their mutual good, both in the inward and outward man.

The Westminster Confession of Faith, XXVI, 1

In this way the Westminster divines set forth the truth concerning the relationship of God's people to their head Jesus Christ and to one another as fellow saints. For many years, the experience of the unity of the body of Christ was limited more or less to the local congregation. Life was very simple, and God's people

were confined to their own community since travel was limited and the modern means of communication were not yet available. Therefore the truth that God gathers His saints from the four corners of the earth, from every nation, tongue, and tribe, was a truth confessed but not personally experienced. With the advent of the automobile, airplane, and the telephone, one was soon able to visit and communicate with fellow saints in

other parts of the country and then even in other parts of the world. The ocean no longer served as a natural barrier, separating different parts of the world. Now we have even more modern means of communication, with the invention of the satellite, jet airplanes, computers, and facsimile machines. In just hours we can be on the other side of the world. In a matter of seconds, by simply pushing a few buttons, we can talk or send

Rev. Miersma is pastor of the Protestant Reformed Church of New Zealand.

messages around the world as if we were next door.

All this has not only made the individual saint aware that God has His children in other parts of the world, but also made it possible for him to have personal contact with these faraway saints. One's life and contact is no longer restricted to the length of the kitchen table or to the end of one's nose, but extends to the ends of the earth. Your minister may be sent far away, even for months at a time, to serve God's kingdom in other countries. Your son or daughter may very well meet a foreigner, marry, and live in a country far from his place of birth and family. Your offerings now go beyond the local church to bring the Word to saints of another land or to help its poor. It is all rather exciting, and so it should be — not only from the viewpoint of meeting people, fellow saints, from other lands, but also because this is an indication that the time for the return of Christ is approaching nearer and nearer, which in turn means that our salvation draweth nigh.

To illustrate this truth I will use the church here in New Zealand as an example. In this way two things may be accomplished. First, this will demonstrate that global communication is an established fact and very necessary for the church of Christ. And, secondly, this will enable you to know us even more intimately as being one with you in the body of Christ.

In the late sixties a few families in New Zealand were alarmed by the doctrinal error that was being condoned in their church. In the course of their struggles they came into contact with the *Standard Bearer*, which led to contact with its editor-in-chief, which soon resulted in an Australasian tour by Rev. C. Hanko and the late Prof. H.C. Hoeksema. (We may add here that it was at the urging of one of the New Zealand men that the PRC emissaries altered their travel plans in order to visit Singapore. Look what the Lord has done with that contact!) Subsequent to the visit of Rev. Hanko and Prof. Hoeksema to New Zealand, other ministers from

the PRC traveled there to teach and to preach the distinctive Reformed faith. This led eventually to the organization of a small church. The church was made up of saints from various parts of the globe, with members having come personally from such countries as England, Scotland, Northern Ireland, The Netherlands, New Zealand, and now also from the United States. Soon a sister-church relationship was established with the PRC in America. A short time later she called and received her first minister from her sister.

What had taken place up to this point, and what continues to take place even today, is the recognition and application of the Scriptural truth as presented in the Confession quoted above: "and being united to one another in love, they have communion in each other's gifts and graces, and are obliged to the performance of such duties, public and private, as do conduce to their mutual good, both in the inward and outward man." By the freely given contributions of the saints in the PRC in America, we are able to have our own minister, which enables us in turn to spread the Word of God in yet another country. Through the preaching of the Word, and through the efforts of our Evangelism Society, material has been placed in the hands of people throughout the length and breadth of the two islands. We also have been privileged to be able to send tapes and pamphlets to foreign countries as diverse as The Netherlands, Eastern Europe, Africa, Singapore, and Australia. In addition to our sister-church relationship with the PRCA we are having ongoing contact with the Evangelical Reformed Churches in Singapore and with the Evangelical Presbyterian Churches in Australia. The latter have invited us to send delegates as observers to their presbytery meeting in June, which invitation we have accepted. All of this is exciting and stimulating, for it brings the family of God closer and closer.

However, what has been taking place on a more or less official level has also been happening in the day-

to-day life of the church members. You and we are getting to know each other personally. At the beginning of the year the undersigned sent to all the Protestant Reformed churches a newsletter in which a special "thank you" was given to one church in particular for sending to us their bulletins and other church news. An invitation was extended to the other churches to do likewise. The response has been very gratifying. Individual saints have taken it upon themselves to send news and bulletins both from their churches and from their schools. Some were from the older and retired, some from busy mothers, others from teenagers and even from primary school children. To cement the bond between us, this material is distributed among the members of the congregation for all to read and enjoy. As one correspondent wrote, "It's as if we're holding hands around the world with those of like faith." What was especially gratifying were the letters from the school children who are being made aware of their relationship to saints in other lands. One group of third-graders wrote, "We are writing to find out more about Christians in other lands. We want to know more about your church in New Zealand." This was followed by a number of questions and a request for a picture of the church and congregation. Enough to warm the heart of any saint!

In light of the above I want to use this opportunity, personally and on behalf of the congregation, to thank all of you for this manifestation of love for fellow saints in other parts of the world. It is almost like "holding hands," isn't it? If there are more of you who would like to share in this experience, we welcome your letters and we will try to reply in kind. Or, if you can, you may visit us in person. Already we have had visitors from a number of different countries, which has led to the formation of friendships which continue yet today. Our homes are always open. What one immediately experiences is that, even if we have never met before, yet because we are fellow saints it is as if we

always knew each other. Such is the family of God. Such is the experience of the communion of the saints on what was once only the local level, but now also the global. Our church family extends beyond our city, state, and country, to foreign lands and to the islands of the seas, even to the remotest parts of the earth.

As stated earlier, this points to the imminent return of our Savior upon the clouds of heaven. One of the signs of His return is that "this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come" (Matt. 24:14). Accompanying this sign will be the co-ordinate sign of rampant apostasy from the truth, for Christ also said, "And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold" (Matt. 24:12). Thus the saints are drawn together, in order that they may instruct and encourage one another as they struggle

together on their sojourn through this valley of the shadow of death. Each child of God is a member of the body of Jesus Christ. Each one has a particular place and function within the body that serves the purpose of the whole. As we come nearer to the end of time we see that more and more — not only that we need each other in the local congregation, but also that we need the saints in other lands as well. We as fellow saints have gifts to give and needs to be supplied by other saints. As it is in the physical body so it is in the spiritual body. Just as no member of the body can live in isolation from the rest of the members, so also as saints we can not live in isolation from each other. In these perilous times, times in which Satan goes about as a roaring lion knowing that his time is short, the Lord is drawing us together. Especially in these latter days it is not just a pleasant experience for saints to know each

other, but it is a necessity. As Solomon wrote many years ago under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, "Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour. For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up. Again, if two lie together, then they have heat: but how can one be warm alone? And if one prevail against him, two shall withstand him; and a threefold cord is not quickly broken" (Eccl. 4:9-12).

It is our prayer here in New Zealand that through this article you may learn to know more about us, and that we might all grow in an understanding of how we fit together and relate one to the other in the body of our Lord in the communion of the saints. May the Lord continue to bless us in our respective churches and in the union whereby He has bound us together. □

Contribution

Rev. Kenneth Koole

Analyzing the Disciples' Mistaken Kingdom Notion (2)

In the first installment we suggested that in explaining the disciples' rejection of Christ's heavenly kingdom doctrine we must show sympathy to their perplexity. They had not the fullness of the Spirit, and they were on the wrong side of the cross to understand how it fulfilled the temple functions and spelled the defeat of God's enemies. Christ's resurrection is what sheds light on the cross and the kingdom.

In the second place, there is that which must be criticized in the disciples. There are aspects of their refusal to believe which must be re-proved, as Jesus Himself did on more than one occasion.

Tied in with their understandable ignorance, there was also a pride and a prejudice. These two things are very important in bringing practical truths home to the student. These are

two sins with which we all have to deal.

First we look at this matter of pride. This played a large part in the disciples' refusal to exchange their carnal kingdom view for Christ's heavenly, spiritual, invisible kingdom teaching. It did not appeal to their pride and earthly ambitions.

The disciples did not lack in ambitious pride (as we do not). How many times were not the disciples reprimanded for arguing about who would be greatest in the kingdom, meaning, who would have the high-

est administrative position! Each had his own place picked out. Judas Iscariot, for instance, did not care who sat right next to Christ in Jerusalem, just as long as he himself was "Chancellor of the Exchange," that is, Secretary of the Treasury. For that he lived.

Interestingly, these earthly ambitions found their origin in the disciples' home training. If you recall, it was James and John's mother who requested of Jesus, "Lord, when your kingdom is established, will you see to it that my sons sit one on either side

Rev. Koole is pastor of Faith Protestant Reformed Church in Jenison, Michigan.

of you?" She wanted that supreme honor reserved for her boys!

The point is, there was nothing subtle about their kingdom ambitions. They were always jockeying for position. Their families encouraged this perspective. No one was going to outmaneuver them.

*How can you attain
to a high, visible profile
in an invisible, spiritual
kingdom?*

Well, it is an earthly kingdom that feeds and satisfies these ambitions. How can you attain to a high, visible profile in an invisible, spiritual kingdom? You can not. It is this personal ambition that stood between them and Christ's conception.

Further, it became increasingly clear what Christ's concept implied, namely, self-denial. He hammered this home. For instance, how many times did he not take a child, place it before them, and say that except they became as one of these, they could not enter the kingdom?

Finally, Christ made it clear in a painful way when He, on the night of His betrayal, stripped down, put a towel around His waist, and washed their feet. They were aghast. They were to do likewise? What a hammer blow to their self-serving ambitions. We can understand why this had little appeal to their nature.

I trust the relevance of this matter for teaching our children, with whom it is too often, "Me first!" is obvious to you all.

Secondly, there was this evil of prejudice. By prejudice I refer especially to what Scripture calls being a "respector of persons." One's assessment of another is based on his social status or ethnic background.

The Jews, of course, detested the Gentiles. The disciples were no exception. The Gentiles were judged "unclean," defiled. The promised kingdom would certainly be racially pure.

Yet Jesus indicated something different. That was obvious at the very outset. Think of the Samaritan woman. The apostle John, early in his gospel, devotes a whole chapter to this incident. It made upon him a deep impression. He recalled how scandalized he had been when Jesus had headed straight north through unclean Samaria, and then had proceeded to have contact with that woman and her relatives and, seemingly, enjoyed it. As he explains his original surprise, "For the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans" (John 3:9).

And then there was Christ's ongoing contact with publicans (the turncoats) and with harlots (the defiled). That did not make his disciples happy either. For one thing, they failed to see what these people could add to the kingdom (even their money was tainted), and for another, it made them unpopular with the people that counted in the nation, namely, the religious leaders.

We need mighty men of war, we need the wealthy, we need men of influence; we need to cut down our enemies, not pick them up out of ditches.

The disciples could understand and accept a kingdom that welcomed rich young rulers (the more, the merrier; such were contributors), but not one that drove them away, and focused on the common and the needy. They could not see such a kingdom as having a future. Christ's kingdom agenda baffled them. You do not antagonize the wealthy, the influential, and the powerful. You court their favor. How else do you come to power?

And then there was the matter of those filthy Gentiles, and of those hated Roman soldiers. Christ healed their children and commended the faith of one of them as greatest in the land. The disciples wanted nothing to do with a kingdom that had room for such if they could help it. These people were unclean, uncircumcised, and probably liked grilled pork chops. Now how can you have fellowship with such "fiese" people?

A kingdom that would drive out the uncircumcised, defeat the pagan Gentiles in military fashion, and get back Jewish self-respect, that the disciples could live with. One that urged the conversion of pagans, and sought their incorporation into the kingdom, in order that they might share in Israel's promised glory and victory? This had no appeal to the disciples. This was their pride, their sin, and it does much to explain why they wanted to dismiss Christ's kingdom teaching.

I suggest that you show your students that side of the disciples, with its root, pride, and whack off its head. It is to be rebuked in strongest terms. It is Pharisaical. It is to be condemned when it shows itself in the lives of the disciples of Christ both back in the Gospel times and in our own lives as well.

And yet, for all the foregoing, the disciples must be distinguished from Judas Iscariot and from the Pharisees who sought Jesus' death.

But how? — in light of the fact that they were just as unwilling to accept Christ's statements concerning His kingdom as were the Pharisees.

The difference lies in their loyalty to and love for Jesus of Nazareth, as the Christ. Whatever their misconception concerning Christ's kingdom, it can never be said that they hated Jesus, or did not want Him as the Christ. Even when the disciples tried to correct Christ, with statements like "Be it far from thee Lord," they did so because they wanted him to be popular and to rule. It was loyalty misdirected, but it was still loyalty.

It was this way: you could have offered the Pharisees their kingdom conception, earthly, Jewish, etc. but with the one condition, namely, that Jesus had to be acknowledged as its rightful Lord and that they had to honor Him in submission, and they would have rejected the proposal forthwith even though it meant forfeiting the kingdom. They hated Him that much. They would have no kingdom at all rather than bow the knee to Jesus.

With the disciples, for all their weaknesses, it was just the opposite. They of course wanted both their earthly Kingdom conception and Jesus as the Christ; but, when all was said and done, the day after Jesus had died, if you had given them the choice between Jesus as their Lord and their earthly Kingdom concept, they would have exchanged the latter for Jesus in their midst. Without Him life was not worth living. It was that simple. They were like exasperating children, but still they were attached to His person.

The disciples had for Him a personal love and a faith which in Christ's own eyes outweighed all their foolishness. "To whom else shall we go, Lord? Thou hast the words of eternal life." And again, in the words of Peter, "Lord, thou knowest I love thee" — which is to say, "I may have been very foolish and weak, and not any different than many whom I once despised, but Lord, thou knowest I love thee." That was the difference.

This explains Christ's bearing with them in their pride and prejudice and in their childishness. They were still His friends, and before the face of God they knew they were sinful men. They knew they were saved by grace and not by their wonderful deeds and works.

When Jesus rebuked the Pharisees, they gnashed their teeth and hated Him as light.

When Jesus reproved His disciples, they became bewildered and ashamed. That's the difference in heart.

They are to be judged in the end neither according to their deficient understanding, nor according to their hardheadedness; they are to be judged according to their willingness to be corrected without resenting Christ for rebuking them. They never doubted that Jesus was filled with the wisdom of God and that He was the only Savior. This is always the mark of true faith, be it misguided for a time.

Such children of God are teachable and correctable, though much patience may be required. In such light Christ viewed His lovable, but exasperating, childlike disciples. With patience He continued to teach them.

You see your students? Put the apron around your waist and go and do likewise.

There is one further matter to be touched on briefly, and that is this — what was God's purpose in this display of these believers' ignorance and in withholding insight? You read for instance that "these things... [were] hid from them, neither knew they the

things which were spoken" (Luke 18:34). God saw fit not to illuminate them during Christ's ministry. Why?

It has to do, I am convinced, with God's will to glorify His Son, the Lord Christ, as the great officebearer of the church; and here in particular, as the chief prophet. There was none, for instance, in Old Testament times who could grasp and set forth the truth of God as the Triune One. This honor of revelation befell the Son who came from the bosom of the Father. So it is with the truth of Christ's kingdom according to its true "dimensions" and nature. The Christ had to come as King and perform His work as High-priest on the cross, and then interpret it for our understanding to be opened.

As well, the inability and unwillingness of the disciples to grasp the truth of the kingdom serves to magnify the glory and necessity of the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of Christ. He it is who searches the mind of God. Without Him there is a blindness about and resistance to spiritual things in even the best of men. The truth of the kingdom can be set in plainest terms right in front of one's nose, but one still needs the Spirit of the crucified and risen Christ to enable one to "see" and believe. □

Strength of Youth

Rev. Steven Key

True Thinking

With all the attacks upon the mind, it is absolutely essential that we "gird up the loins of our minds," as the apostle Peter commands us in I Peter 1:13. That means that the foundation of our living and of our thinking must be grounded in clear views of divine truth.

Doctrinal knowledge is generally given little value by most today.

Rev. Key is pastor of the Protestant Reformed Church of Randolph, Wisconsin.

Perhaps youth tend to undervalue doctrinal knowledge more than anyone else. One reason for that is that youth tend to think in terms of the practical. They often fail to make the connection between doctrine and practice, imagining rather that if the heart is right, and the conduct correct, then the doctrines which one believes really do not matter all that much. Or, to put it another way, a person may be pure of practice, while his religious opinions are radically erroneous. But nothing is more con-

trary to Scripture and, as you will come to learn, to experience as well.

Jesus declares that His people are "sanctified in the truth" (John 17:17). That actually means that if you will be sanctified, if your life will reflect consecration to God, it will only be as you live in the sphere of God's truth. That is an assertion quite contrary to the philosophy of this world, also the broader church world.

Most of the philosophies governing today's thought patterns are based upon feelings. To put it an-

other way, man's thinking today is very much man-centered and near zero God-centered. And some of the modern philosophies of human thought are playing havoc with your minds.

One such way of thinking is that of existentialism. It is not my intention to present the definition of existentialism as a philosophy, but simply as it stands related to how we live today. It is not, therefore, so important that you remember the term, so long as you get the idea. Existentialism in its practical outworking teaches that man has absolute freedom of choice, but that there are no rational criteria serving as a basis for choice. "Don't worry about yesterday, don't worry about tomorrow; just do whatever turns you on today." We read in Jeremiah 6:16: "Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls." And today the answer given is exactly the fulfillment of the rest of that verse, "But they said, We will not walk therein." The Lord said, "Also I set watchmen over you, saying, Harken to the sound of the trumpet. But they said, We will not hearken." Our society and much of the church world today is very self-oriented, with little or no concern about its roots or the future. What about you? Are you living only for right now? Are you unwilling to consider your heritage? Do not forget, we are sanctified in the truth. Moreover, there is a tomorrow.

Another modern philosophy attempting to play havoc with your minds is that of hedonism. Hedonism is the Playboy philosophy that says, "If it makes you feel good, do it." Pleasure is god. That is hedonism. Not only society, but the church as well, has become feeling-oriented. We certainly confess that feelings belong to the emotional makeup of the man which God created good. That we have feelings is good. But when feelings are in control, and when we subject our thought processes to feelings, we are walking down a destructive pathway. For one thing, we are

so subject to sin, and our defensive mechanisms are so highly refined, that we are able to develop good feelings toward just about any behavior we want badly enough. If you want to "get a buzz" drinking or smoking weed, if you want to fornicate, you are probably well able to tell yourself, "It feels good." But the end of such "good feelings" is destruction and everlasting damnation, except there be repentance.

But just as deceitful a form of hedonism is seen within Christianity when truth is set aside for a religion of feelings. I have met young people whose whole relationship with Jesus Christ is a matter of feelings. If you ask the question, "Are you a Christian," you are likely to get the answer, "Oh yes, I just feel Jesus in my life, and it feels so good." There are young people running from one place to the

*God will never insult you
by coming to you
through your feelings*

next, looking to get zapped by God, to get turned on to Jesus. If they are not "feeling good" in their own church settings, and they are not having the loins of their mind girded up by faithful preaching and instruction, they turn to the Pentecostals, the Charismatics, and even sects, to find "good feelings."

I ache inside when I see young people make a commitment as a matter of feelings. Whether a religious commitment or a marriage commitment or any other kind of commitment, if it is made on the basis of feelings and not according to the truth of God's Word and precepts, it is bound for disaster. I well remember, prior to coming to a deeper understanding of the Reformed faith and the truth of Scripture, my involvement in a national Christian young people's organization. There would be conventions, where music and fun was the focus, but where there would be speeches as well. And there would

be a number of young people who would make "a commitment to Jesus Christ" within the context of an emotional response. Now, there is certainly a place for emotional response in the one called by God. Godly sorrow worketh repentance. I get excited when I see a man or woman or young person convicted enough to weep before God for his sins and to receive His blessed forgiveness. That is godly emotion. But when a young man or woman has a spasm of emotion because somebody sings "Just As I Am," or some more contemporary music, and because somebody tells emotionally charged stories, finishing with an appeal to accept Jesus, the commitment invoked by that spasm of emotion cannot last. Whatever feelings are there, and no matter how deep those feelings run, they can never be sustained.

Whenever I hear someone say to young people, "If you give your heart to Jesus, things are really going to work out..." I cringe. Some day that young man or young woman may read the 11th chapter of Hebrews, and it will not feel good. Even worse than reading it, we might have to live it! It says, some who followed God were mocked and beaten and imprisoned. Others were stoned. Some were cut in half! Others wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute. The ungodly ripped them off! They had no place to live any longer. They could only wander from cave to cave, through deserts and mountains. Where would such a life leave someone whose Christianity is based upon good feelings? We are not Christians on the basis of feelings.

The Christian faith is not getting "turned on by Jesus." The Christian faith is not a matter of mere feelings. Christianity is a relationship with the God of our salvation, a relationship that builds through time and eternity, a relationship that is established upon the knowledge of the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom He has sent (John 17:3). God will never insult you by coming to you through your feelings. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." We

must live and believe, not on the basis of how we feel, but on the basis of the fact that we have put our faith and confidence in what the Lord has revealed to us in the Scriptures, and in the reality of the love of God.

Our thought patterns must not be governed by the ungodly philosophies of this world. Until your way of thinking is removed from the world's foundations to that foundation which God gives you, you are going to live just like the world. That you are different from unbelievers and ungodly will be seen when you *think* differently than they do.

Often when your Christian faith really counts, when you are making decisions about relationships with your girlfriends and boyfriends, your

dating standards, marriage, your field of study in school, your relationships to your family, your place in the church; when your Christianity *really* counts, then a weakness shows itself, a weakness that is seen in a failure to *think* in accordance with God's Word.

"Gird up the loins of your mind." That is God's calling for you. He knows how vulnerable you are in your feelings. He knows how easily swayed you are in your feelings which have been affected by sin. He wants your mind.

Young people also are sanctified in the truth. In fact, it is only so far as the truth is received and believed, loved and obeyed, that true obedience is found in the heart and in the way one lives. To suppose that one

can be sanctified, or can benefit by embracing error, is completely contrary to all reason.

We must know the truth. But above all, see to it that you are not content with a mere doctrinal or speculative religion. Listen to God, who tells you that you are in a state of moral ruin, depraved; that you need pardoning mercy and sanctifying grace; that you must be "transformed by the renewing of your minds." The principles and practice to which you are called are not those of some sect, but those of the Bible, God's inspired and infallible Word. You cannot escape the battles and the trials. But there is a tremendous victory, I assure you, when you think and live on the basis of God's Word. □

*A Cloud Of
Witnesses*
Prof. Herman Hanko

The Waldensians

On the late Massacre in Piedmont

Avenge O Lord thy slaughter'd Saints, whose bones
Lie scatter'd on the Alpine mountains cold,
Ev'n them who kept thy truth so pure of old
When all our Fathers worship't Stocks and Stones,
Forget not: in thy book record their groanes
Who were thy Sheep and in their antient Fold
Slayn by the bloody Piemontese that roll'd
Mother with Infant down the Rocks. Their moans
The Vales redoubl'd to the Hills, and they
To Heav'n. Their martyr'd blood and ashes sow
O're all th' *Italian* fields where still doth sway
The triple Tyrant¹: that from these may grow
A hunder'd-fold, who having learnt thy way
Early may fly the *Babylonian* wo.²

¹The pope of Rome.

²"The Babylonian woe." The reference is again to the Roman Catholic Church which attempted to destroy the Waldensians. The reference to Babylon is rooted in the notion that the Babylon of Revelation 17 & 18 is a reference to the Roman Catholic Church.

With the words of this sonnet the blind poet John Milton commemorated the terrible massacre of the Waldensians by the Romish Church.

Even in the Middle Ages, when the Roman Catholic Church ruled supreme and invincible over all of Europe, it did not always have everything its own way. Throughout these dark times individuals or groups raised voices of protest against the tyranny and corruption of Rome.

The only explanation for such dissenters from Romish teachings is the great work of God in preserving His church. The Confession of Faith speaks of the fact that "this holy Church is preserved or supported by God, against the rage of the whole world; though she sometimes (for a while) appears very small, and in the eyes of men, to be reduced to nothing."³

One evidence of God's preser-

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³Belgic Confession, Article 27.

vation of His church is the existence throughout most of the Middle Ages of a group called the Waldensians. They are surely some of the most faithful of all the dissenters in the Middle Ages; and they are one of my favorite groups of saints.

Although there is some dispute over the origin of the Waldensians, most historians consider Peter Waldo, after whom they were named, to be the founder of the movement.

Although almost nothing is known of Peter's early life, it is known that he was the son of a rich merchant in Lyons, France, and that he inherited his father's wealth. What the date of his birth is, no one knows, but his death was in 1218; which puts him very early in the Middle Ages, a child of the Twelfth Century.

Troubled by his wealth (which had been increased through usury), and by the obvious worldliness of his life, Peter asked his priest concerning the best way to God. He was told, as was common in those days, that the way to God was to sell all that he had, give to the poor, and follow Christ.

Peter did not hesitate to follow what to him was a clear command of his Lord. Because he was married, he provided sufficient money for his wife, he placed his daughters in a convent to be cared for there, he paid back all those from whom he had taken usury, and he gave everything else he owned to the poor.

Peter Waldo gathered about him a small group of men who began to translate the Scriptures into the vernacular and began to assume the responsibilities of preaching. They were known by different names: The Brethren in Christ; The Poor in Christ; The Poor in Spirit. But they finally became known by the name of their founder, Peter Waldo. They lived lives of total poverty and dedication to God.

In 1179, Peter Waldo asked his archbishop for permission to be recognized as a separate and approved movement and asked for permission to be organized as a preaching fraternity. The request was passed on to the pope, Alexander III, who refused their request. They appealed again to

the Third Lateran Council in 1179, but this Council also refused their request.

Convinced that they were only doing that which was biblical, they continued to preach anyway, and thus incurred the wrath of the church which excommunicated them at the Council of Verona in 1184.

*Only the fact
that God preserves
His church
can adequately explain
their existence.*

What is particularly interesting about the Waldensians is their views. I doubt whether any group of people in all Europe, prior to the Reformation, understood the truths of Scripture so clearly as these poor people. Philip Schaff even calls them "the strictly biblical sect of the Middle Ages."⁴ It is almost impossible to imagine how these simple folk could have come to such excellent knowledge of the truth in the times in which they lived. They were the lowly, the uneducated; they were despised and persecuted; they had been brought up in the chains of Roman Catholic heresy; and yet they were so clear on such important points. So much were they forerunners of the Reformation that when the Calvin Reformation dawned, most of them were quick to join it; it was as if the Calvin Reformation was exactly what they had been waiting for all these centuries. Only the fact that God preserves His church can adequately explain their existence.

At the beginning of the movement the Waldensians did not depart from Roman Catholic teachings. They did not reject the authority of the pope, the entire sacramental system

of Roman Catholicism, nor the church itself as the mother of believers. They were, in fact, very much like a religious order. They demanded vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience for full membership and insisted on a novitiate⁵ before becoming full members.

But from the outset their main emphasis was on preaching. It was preaching that got them into trouble with the church, for they preached without permission. But they continued even in the face of excommunication because they were convinced that preaching is decisive for salvation—a Reformation doctrine that stood at the heart both of the Lutheran and of the Calvinistic reform of the church. Rome taught that the sacraments were essential for salvation and that preaching was subordinate to the sacraments. The Waldensians saw the error of this and insisted that the Lord had added the sacraments to the preaching and that, therefore, God saved His people by the preaching of the Word. It was especially this doctrine which Rome hated with a passion, for the sacraments stood at the very heart of the entire papal-sacerdotal system of which Rome was so proud.

It really ought not to surprise us, in the light of the times, that the Waldensians went too far with their idea of preaching. They were opposed to Roman Catholic clericalism, and soon came to see the importance of what Luther later called the office of all believers. With their emphasis on the office of all believers, and failing to distinguish between the special offices in the church and the general office of believers, they gave to the laity, including women, the right to preach. All God's people were preachers, and they were preachers not by virtue of ordination, but by virtue of a godly and spiritual life which manifested that they were believers.

One benefit of this erroneous viewpoint, however, was the fact that they saw the need for all God's people to possess the Scriptures. And so they translated the Scriptures into the vernacular, and even insisted on the final

⁴Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, Vol. V, p. 493.

⁵A trial period.

and absolute authority of the Scriptures for life, doctrine, and preaching. Preaching had to be exposition of God's Word.

After persecution and excommunication, their views developed. They saw inconsistencies between the position they had taken and the other teachings of Rome. And so, bit by bit, they rejected the oath, purgatory, prayers for the dead, the mass, and transubstantiation.

Such teachings as these attracted immense throngs to the Waldensians, and the movement spread rapidly into France, Italy, Switzerland and even parts of Eastern Europe. It was exactly because of the threat to Romish power and the popularity of the movement that brought down upon the Waldensians the fury of Rome. The full force of that cruel, unjust, and frightening institution for the suppression of heresy, the inquisition, was brought to bear against them.

The stories of suffering and torture which these folk endured make one weep even today. Their fathers

and mothers were torn apart on the rack and burned at the stake. Their children were burned with irons to force them to report evil deeds of their parents. A whole cave of men, women, and children, who had fled to the mountains to escape, was suffocated by a huge fire built at its entrance and smoke being forced into the cave. As the poem at the beginning of this article points out, mothers with their infants clutched in their arms were hurled over the sides of cliffs.

Under the pressures of persecution, they fled into the Alpine Valleys and high plateaus of Switzerland, and there they survived.

Were they so cruelly treated for wrongdoing? An inquisitor himself said of them: "They are modest and well behaved, taking no pride in their dress, which is neat but not extravagant. Avoiding commerce, because of its inevitable lies and oaths and frauds, they live by working as artisans, with cobblers as their teachers.

Content with bare necessities, they do not accumulate wealth. Chaste in their habits, temperate in eating and drinking, they keep away from taverns, dances and other vanities. They refrain from anger and are always active. They can be recognized by their modesty and precision of speech."

One man, suspected of Waldensian error, was able to prove at his trial that he was not and could not be a Waldensian, but had to be a good Catholic, because he lied, swore, and drank.

These saints of God, who stained the Alps with their blood, eagerly embraced the Reformation. But Rome? To this day Rome has not confessed any wrongdoing for shedding the blood of the saints. Nor has Rome changed at heart. It would, I am convinced, do the same today, given the opportunity. But the souls of the Waldensians cry from under the altar. And the Lord will answer their prayer. □

News From Our Churches

Mr. Benjamin Wigger

Evangelism Activities

On Saturday, March 21, the PR Evangelism Planning Committee, consisting of evangelism committees from all the west Michigan PR churches, met. Representatives of our three churches in Illinois were also present.

At this meeting final touches were put on a rather ambitious advertising project. Plans call for these Michigan churches to run an advertisement once a month in the religion

section of the Grand Rapids Press. This ad will contain the names, addresses, and worship service times of all our PR churches in the Grand Rapids area. It will also contain an approximately 300-400 word article written by one of our ministers or professors. These articles would be informative to others about what we believe and stand for, and the reason why we believe as we do.

The first ad, coming out in June, will be twice as large as the regular monthly ads would be. This is due to the fact that, in order properly to introduce our churches, Prof. Engelsma, who wrote this advertisement, needed extra space. And the

committee felt that it was very important that this introduction be properly written.

It is hoped that, through these ads, a great deal of misinformation about our churches can be eliminated. In today's world it is increasingly urgent that the truth be presented in a positive light.

The Evangelism Committee of the Randolph, WI PRC sponsored a lecture April 9 in their church auditorium. Their pastor, Rev. S. Key, spoke on the subject "Church Membership in an Evil Age."

During this past Lenten season, the congregation of the Hope PRC of Redlands, CA sponsored a series of

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

four special worship services. Rev. A. denHartog delivered four sermons on Sunday evenings, March 29, April 5, 12, and Good Friday, under the general theme, "The Cross in Reformed Perspective."

These messages were advertised in the local paper. The congregation was also encouraged to pass the word individually by extending a personal invitation to friends and relatives.

Our own PR Seminary sponsored a public lecture on Thursday afternoon, March 26 at the seminary. Mr. Jon Huiskens, Dean of Academic Services at Hope College, and a member of the Grandville, MI PRC, spoke on "The History of the Protestant Reformed Churches: Learning to Live With Caricature."

Once again, this year, the congregation of the First PRC of Holland, MI conducted what is turning out to be their annual Spring Seminars. For three successive Thursdays, April 16, 23, and 30, these seminars were held at the James Center. The topic covered was entitled, "The Covenant Family." A special invitation was extended to young couples who were just recently married, and to those raising a family.

The Council of the South Holland, IL PRC took two decisions regarding their work in evangelism. First, they decided to continue sponsoring and supervising the Bible Studies in the Fort Wayne, IN area for another six months (through September); and second, at the request of the Sovereign Redeemer Fellowship in Boise, Idaho, the Council also decided to continue supplying this group with six more months of preaching and teaching (through August).

Congregational Highlights

We can add by way of a followup to our last news column, that while in Loveland, CO for the Second Annual Young Adults Retreat, Rev. Dykstra gave a presentation of his slides of his recent trip to Ghana, Africa to the Loveland congregation the Sunday evening before the retreat.

The Choral Societies of our Faith PRC in Jenison, MI and the Hudsonville, MI PRC combined their voices this year to present two programs dealing with the suffering, death, and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. The first concert was held in the Seminary Chapel at Calvin College on March 28, the second at

Hudsonville PRC on April 12. Collections taken were designated for the Free Christian School in Edgerton, MN, and for this year's Young People's Convention.

Ministerial Calls

Candidate Mitch Dick has accepted the call to serve as pastor of the Immanuel PRC of Lacombe, Alberta, Canada. However, before he may be ordained into the ministry he must first be examined at a special meeting of Classis West sometime in June.

At a special congregational meeting on March 30, the members of the First PRC of Grand Rapids, MI extended a call to Rev. A. denHartog to serve as missionary pastor to the island of Jamaica. With Rev. denHartog on that trio were the Revs. W. Bekkering and J. Kortering.

The congregation of the Grandville, MI PRC called Rev. C. Haak to serve as their pastor. Revs. J. Slopsema and R. VanOverloop were part of that trio.

And we could also add here that the Council of Grandville decided that the pastorate of Rev. Kortering will conclude as of May 3. □

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

The Lord willing, on May 25, 1992, our parents and grandparents, **JOHN and GRACE FLIKKEMA**, will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary. We thank God for them and the love, care, and covenant upbringing they gave to us. We pray that God will continue to bless them as they enjoy these years together.

O Thou Who art Thy people's shield,
Their helper and their guide,
Upon them let Thy grace and peace
For evermore abide.

- Chuck and JoAnne Bult
Julia, Jonathan, Rosanne
- Kevin and Lois Inskeep
Susanna, Jonathan
- Keith and Mary Vooy
Hillary, Laurence, Olivia

South Holland Protestant Reformed Church

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Ladies Society of the Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church wish to express our sincere sympathy to our member, Mrs. Henrietta Lubbers, in the death of her brother,

MR. LAMBERT SCHUT.

May she be comforted by the words of II Corinthians 5:1, "For we know that, if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

Rev. G. VanBaren, President
Mrs. Gertrude Lubbers, Secretary

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On May 19, 1992, the 25th wedding anniversary of our parents,

MR. and MRS. CHARLES KALSBECK,

will be celebrated. We are thankful to God for giving us God-fearing parents, through whom we have been taught to fear and reverence our merciful, heavenly Father. May the Lord preserve them as they continue their earthly pilgrimage together.

"The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him; and he will shew them his covenant" (Psalm 25:14).

- Harlan and Lenora Hoekstra
Charles
- Jeffrey and Mary Kalsbeek
- Becky, John, Dorothy, and Anne Kalsbeek

Hope, Walker

THE STANDARD BEARER

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CALL TO SYNOD

Synod 1991 appointed South Holland Protestant Reformed Church of South Holland, Illinois, the calling church for Synod 1992 of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America.

South Holland's Consistory hereby notifies our churches, sister-churches, and all interested Reformed churches and believers that the 1992 Synod will convene, the Lord willing, on Tuesday, June 9, 1992, at 9:00 AM in the South Holland Protestant Reformed Church, 16511 South Park Ave., South Holland, IL 60473 (Phone: 708-596-3113).

The Pre-Synodical worship service will be held in the South Holland Church on Monday evening, June 8, at 7:30 PM. Rev. Jason Kortering, president of the 1991 Synod, will preach the sermon. Synodical delegates are requested to meet with the Consistory before the service.

Delegates in need of lodging should contact the clerk of the Consistory, Mr. George Vroom, 16525 Louis Ave., South Holland, IL 60473 (Phone: 708-596-1771).

Consistory of the
South Holland PRC,
George Vroom, Clerk

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Adult Bible Society of Faith Protestant Reformed Church extends its deepest sympathy to its beloved pastor and leader, Rev. K. Koole, and his family in the death of his father,

MR. PETER KOOLE,

on April 23. We commend them to the throne of grace with the prayer of David in Psalm 119:49, 50: "Remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope. This is my comfort in my affliction: for thy word hath quickened me."

Miss H.J. Kuiper, Secretary

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Council and Congregation of Hope Protestant Reformed Church of Walker, MI expresses its sympathy to Mrs. Peter Koole and family in the death of her husband, their father, and our fellow officebearer,

ELDER PETER KOOLE,

whom the Lord took to glory on April 23, 1992.

"Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints" (Psalm 116:15).

Rev. J. Slopsema, President
John DeVries, Assistant Clerk

NOTICE!!!

Mail intended for the Consistory of Randolph PRC should hereafter be sent to:

Mr. Berwyn Huizinga
W 1009 Cemetery Road
Randolph, WI 53956

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Domestic Mission Committee of the PRC expresses its sincere sympathy to the family of

MR. PETER KOOLE,

their beloved husband and father, and our esteemed fellow committee member, taken suddenly to his eternal reward on April 23, 1992.

May we together find comfort in the inspired words of the apostle Paul in I Corinthians 15:22 — "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive."

Rev. James Slopsema, President
Don Doezeema, Secretary

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The consistory and congregation of the Loveland Protestant Reformed Church express their heartfelt sympathy to Mr. and Mrs. Ron Koole and family in the sudden death of his father,

MR. PETER KOOLE.

"Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them (Revelation 14:13).

Rev. Ron Cammenga, President
Mr. Bob Brands, Clerk

REMINDER:

The *Standard Bearer*
will be published
only once a month
during the months of
June,
July,
and August.