

THE **STANDARD BEARER**

**A Reformed
Semi-Monthly
Magazine**



PRC Synod 1993

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Delegates to Synod 1993

In This Issue ...

In an effort to keep our readers informed of what's happening in the PRC in as timely a manner as possible, we again devote part of our July issue to that denomination's annual synod. Pictured on the cover are three of the synod's four officers: Rev. Barry Gritters, Rev. James Slopsema, and Rev. Ronald VanOverloop — first clerk, president, and vice-president respectively. Prof. Engelsma's editorial provides a summary of many of the more significant decisions taken by Synod 1993. And, for our Meditation, we share with you an abbreviated version of Rev. VanBaren's pre-synodical sermon, preached June 7, the evening prior to the convening of synod on the 8th.

Rev. VanBaren admonished his listeners to pray that the peace of which David wrote in Psalm 122:6-9 might be evident at synod. In retrospect we can testify to the fact that the Spirit so directed that such peace did prevail. There were at Synod, as Rev. VanBaren correctly anticipated, tangles to be unraveled and problems to be unknotted; but in every instance it was clear that the delegates had come, not with personal or group "agendas" to be pressed, but with a determination to discover the leading of the Spirit by careful deliberation of every issue in the light of God's Word.

The decisions have now been made — some of them of no little consequence for the PRC and its standing committees. We underscore, therefore, the closing exhortation of Rev. VanBaren, that we continue to pray fervently that those decisions may contribute to the "peace of Jerusalem."

D.D.

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EDITORIAL COMMITTEE

Editor: Prof. David J. Engelsma
Secretary: Prof. Robert D. Decker
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Rev. Ronald VanOverloop, Mr. Benjamin Wigger, Rev. Bernard
Woudenberg.

EDITORIAL OFFICE

The Standard Bearer
4949 Ivanrest
Grandville, MI 49418
BUSINESS OFFICE
The Standard Bearer
Don Doezeema
P.O. Box 603
Grandville, MI
49468-0603
PH: (616) 538-1778
(616) 531-1490
FAX: (616) 531-3033

CHURCH NEWS EDITOR

Mr. Ben Wigger
6597 40th Ave.
Hudsonville, MI 49428
NEW ZEALAND OFFICE
The Standard Bearer
c/o Protestant Reformed
Church
B. VanHerk
66 Fraser St.
Wainuiomata, New Zealand

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Prayer for Jerusalem's Peace

"Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee. Peace be within thy walls and prosperity within thy palaces. For my brethren and companions' sakes, I will now say, Peace be within thee. Because of the house of the Lord our God I will seek thy good."

Psalm 122:6-9

We live in a troubled world. We live among churches that face all kinds of problems. There is great apostasy. In these circumstances it is urgent that we pray for peace—the peace of Jerusalem. This must be our prayer for God's church, for our churches, and for Synod.

The Synod also, in making all of its decisions, must be seeking the peace of "Jerusalem." Because of the house of the Lord they desire that peace.

The world claims to want peace. And yet we hear of war, tribalism, sectarianism in Bosnia, in Northern Ireland, Africa, and elsewhere. The cry is for peace. But there is no peace.

Today the attempt is made to have the different world religions join in prayers for peace. The psalmist, however, was not speaking of that kind of peace. Surely he would not promote a prayer service which joined the prophets of Baal and Jehovah in common prayer for peace in Israel.

Many in the churches cry for "peace at any price." You have heard it. The church, it is said, must not be

troubled by all kinds of doctrinal disputes. It must not be distracted by arguments of women in office, of creationism versus theistic evolution, of homosexuality, etc. The church must rather preach the gospel—it matters not to many what the church says concerning doctrine and walk.

But the Psalmist does not teach that we are to pray for a "peace at any price."

There is also often the desire to have a kind of peace established between church and world. Church and world can cooperate in the realm of "art," entertainment, and benevolence. If we can find some common ground on which we may cooperate, we will have harmony and not persecution.

The psalmist, however, was not praying for a peace by way of cooperation with the world. The psalmist speaks of peace of the city of Jerusalem which had walls and bulwarks. Jerusalem is a city with strong defenses—defenses designed to keep out the enemy. Obviously there was to be no cooperation between the enemy and Jerusalem.

Peace is important. Therefore the church prays for peace—the peace of Jerusalem. That must be clearly distinguished from the peace which the world seeks. The peace that the church desires, the peace for which we pray, is peace with God. It is a peace of fellowship and communion with the righteous God. That peace is ours through the cross. There is no other way to have peace with God.

The world strives for peace, by which it means merely a cessation of warfare. Sadly, the world wants to remove the effects of sin without tak-

ing away sin itself. Man's sin against God is the cause of all war. The world refuses to recognize that the problem is with the sin of our first father, Adam, and his descendants. Mankind severed themselves from the face of the living God: first through Adam's transgression and then through wilful, continued rebellion. Therefore Scripture declares that there is no peace to the wicked. Romans 8:6 states, "To be carnally minded is death...." Only Christ provides peace, through the cross. "Peace," He says, "I leave with you. My peace I give unto you, not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (John 14:27). Christ removes the cause of warfare. He must remove all that separates us from the face of the living God. And He did that when He offered Himself on the cruel cross of Calvary.

That peace He sheds abroad in our hearts (Rom. 5:5). For He regenerates. By His Spirit He calls from darkness to light. Through His Spirit and Word He guides in righteousness



Rev. Gise VanBaren

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

and truth so that His people may honor Him and serve their God. It is because of that wonder of the cross that there is peace.

Now the church preaches peace "to you which are afar off and to them which are nigh" (Eph. 2:7). The church is called in Ephesians 4:3 to endeavor "to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace." The church has always been interested in that peace.

David, in our text, speaks of the peace of Jerusalem. This is not a peace that Jerusalem establishes with its enemies outside of its walls. Notice that the text speaks of "peace within thy walls, prosperity within thy palaces (or bulwarks)." It is inside Jerusalem that peace exists. The church has a warfare with those without: the world, the devil, and our own sinful flesh. But within Jerusalem's walls, within the circle of the communion of saints, there exists peace with God through Jesus Christ.

This peace is our great concern. We have peace with God and therefore peace with one another within the church. David saw that. He wanted peace in Jerusalem because of the house of Jehovah where God's people worship Him. He emphasizes, "Because of the house of the Lord our God I will seek thy good." He was interested in coming there freely with all of the saints to offer the sacrifices and offerings. It was there that God had established His Name. There God's people could praise and worship Him.

Synod must seek this same peace in their meetings. The decisions which are taken affect all of our churches. The task is not simply to unravel some tangles and unknot some problems. This work is to promote Scriptural peace — peace in Jerusalem. This demands of Synod decisions which glorify God's Name, maintain His Word, and promote the cause of His church on this earth. His Name must be proclaimed still from our pulpits and in the mission fields. And this must be done in the way of upholding the truths of God's Word and condemning all error. The concern, the deep concern of the church, and

now of the Synod, must be peace based upon truth.

It is that peace that carries with it the blessings of God. The psalmist twice speaks in our text of prosperity. "They shall prosper that love thee," and, "peace be within thy walls and prosperity within thy palaces." That was not a selfish prayer of David. Some have made it to be such. David was king. He ruled in Jerusalem. If there was unrest in the city his throne would be threatened. And so, some claim, David was a bit selfish. He was interested in preserving his throne. So he encourages the people, "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem. And in that kind of peace I will remain established on the throne."

But that is not David's concern. He speaks God's Word. Under the inspiration of the Spirit he says, "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem." It was not to preserve David's throne but to preserve the house of the Lord that was in Jerusalem. That is why David seeks the peace of Jerusalem. David seeks peace because of its spiritual profitability.

This prosperity is not merely physical riches. David is not speaking of a peace that contributes to material well-being. It is true that often, in the Old Testament, Israel received material gifts in the way of obedience. When they disobeyed, God punished them by taking from them those things which they possessed. Today this prosperity consists of spiritual blessings. It is the riches of grace freely given. It is a spiritual joy and peace in the Lord. He who seeks the peace of Jerusalem enjoys in that way fellowship with God and peace one with another. This the church desires and prays for. All this prosperity flows from the cross.

This comfort and peace we also seek of our God. We come to Him in prayer and supplication for peace, spiritual peace, within the churches. Then we do not "major in minors." We do not argue for the sake of argument. We do not create problems where there is no problem. We do not backbite or slander, disturbing the peace of Zion. But the concern of the

church, and the concern now of the Synod, is precisely this, that the work of God may be conducted properly and His Name worshiped.

And God answers our prayers. We pray for peace even as His Word teaches. And God hears.

Why pray for what God has already promised? Has He not promised to save His people in Christ? Why then join together and ask God's blessing upon us?

Jesus Himself reminded us to ask, to seek, to knock — and in that way God provides. Sometimes we forget that. It seems to me that the lack of a full auditorium in our prayer service for Synod may be an indication that we are not praying as we ought for our Synod, and we are not as concerned as we ought to be for their labors. Scripture says, "Pray! Pray for the peace of Jerusalem." Have you been praying for that in your homes and in your churches? Have you been praying that that peace might be evident in the meetings of our Synod? Have you been praying that the decisions of Synod may contribute to the peace of Zion?

It is urgent. The church must gather together and the individual must continue to pray that God who has in His Word promised peace will give it freely and abundantly. It is ours already through the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is ours according to the eternal counsel and purpose of God. And we enjoy that peace consciously in the way of earnest prayer and supplication.

God answers prayers uttered in harmony with His Word. When we pray for peace in Jerusalem, when we pray for the members of Synod who labor toward that peace, God provides according to His Word.

With respect to Synod and the decisions it makes, continue to pray; and continue to believe that God will answer. This is seeking the good of God's church. Surely He will bless His work in our churches and in the mission fields. There will be peace in "Jerusalem." □

PRC Synod of Hudsonville, 1993

The Protestant Reformed Churches in America (PRC) met in their annual synod from June 8 through June 14. It was a larger synod than those of the past. Each classis sent five ministers and five ruling elders for a total of twenty delegates. The officers chosen by the delegates were Rev. James Slopsema, president; Rev. Ron VanOverloop, vice-president; Rev. Barry Gritters, first clerk; and Rev. Dale Kuiper, second clerk.

Protests and Overtures

Synod gave judgment on several overtures and protests. Among them were the following. Classis West proposed a procedure to be followed in receiving ministers from other denominations. Synod adopted this procedure, which is now appended to Article 9 of the Church Order of the PRC. We publish this procedure elsewhere in this issue of the *Standard Bearer*. The Foreign Mission Committee asked synod to divide mission work between the Foreign Mission Committee and the Domestic Mis-

sion Committee geographically. The United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and Europe are the responsibility of the Domestic Mission Committee. The rest of the world falls to the Foreign Mission Committee. Synod's adoption of this division of labor represented a change in mission policy.

One protest against a decision of last year's synod argued that the church may not receive a "weaker brother" who makes a matter indifferent in itself a matter of principle. Synod rejected the protest declaring that Romans 14 and I Corinthians 8 teach that the church must receive such a weaker brother, although he may not judge his fellow member or militate against settled and binding decisions of the churches.

Another protest objected to the decision of the 1992 Synod of South Holland that an individual consistory might not revise the book of song used by the PRC, *The Psalter*. The decision of the 1992 synod was: "The songbook of a denomination, in this

case, *The Psalter*, is an important element of the unity of the denomination and, as such, may be revised only by synod" ("Acts," Art. 30). The protest contended that synod's decision "elevates non-doctrinal matters to the position of being essential for church unity, which extra-scriptural elevation — though purportedly for the sake of unity — violates the unity of the church." Synod 1993 did not sustain the protest. Its grounds, in part, were the following:

The 1992 decision does not make the use of the 1912 Presbyterian *Psalter* an essential element of unity, but rather an important element. In effect, the protest confuses the difference between the church's basis of unity and the important expression of the organic unity of the churches. Our essential unity, or basis of unity, is the unity in the truth as expressed by our confessions — the "Three Forms of Unity." The use of synodically approved songbooks is an expression of our organic unity, comparable to the use of synodically approved catechism books. That this organic unity is important is evident from the blessing the PRC have experienced, and continue to experience, from all the congregations using the same songbook. Any member can visit any other congregation in the denomination and sing the same songs he sings in his own congregation. He does not feel strange, but very much at one with the members of this sister congregation. The singing obviously contributes to this unity. (The 1992 synod's concern in this decision was for good order in the Churches, and synod rejected (the particular



Pre-Advice, Committee I: Prof. Hanko, Rev. Bruinsma, Rev. VanOverloop, Mr. E. VanVoorthuysen, Mr. C. Doezema



*Pre-Advice, Committee II: Rev. Haak,
Mr. C. Kalsbeek, Mr. U. Tolsma, Rev. Gritters*

consistory's appeal because (it) went about revising *The Psalter* in an improper way, that is, without seeking synodical approval.

The Seminary

Synod admitted six new students into the Seminary. Four aspire to the ministry in the PRC. One is from the First Evangelical Reformed Church of Singapore and intends to study for three years in order to serve as a minister of the Word in our sister churches in Singapore. The PRC are committed to help in the financial support of this married seminarian from our sister church. The other student admitted by synod is a member of the Reformed Church of America (RCA) and will study for the ministry in that denomination. With the six presently enrolled, this makes a total of twelve full-time students in the Seminary in the coming school year.

At the suggestion of the Student Aid Committee, synod increased the maximum allowable aid that semi-

narians may receive from \$5,400 to \$7,000 per year.

Synod asked the churches to take collections for the addition to the Seminary building and urged the Theological School Committee ag-



*Pre-Advice, Committee III: Mr. D. Engelsma,
Mr. E. Gritters, Rev. Dykstra, Rev. Koole*

gressively to promote awareness of the need for individual contributions to this project. About \$10,000 is needed in order to draw the plans, and about \$100,000 is needed in order to begin building.

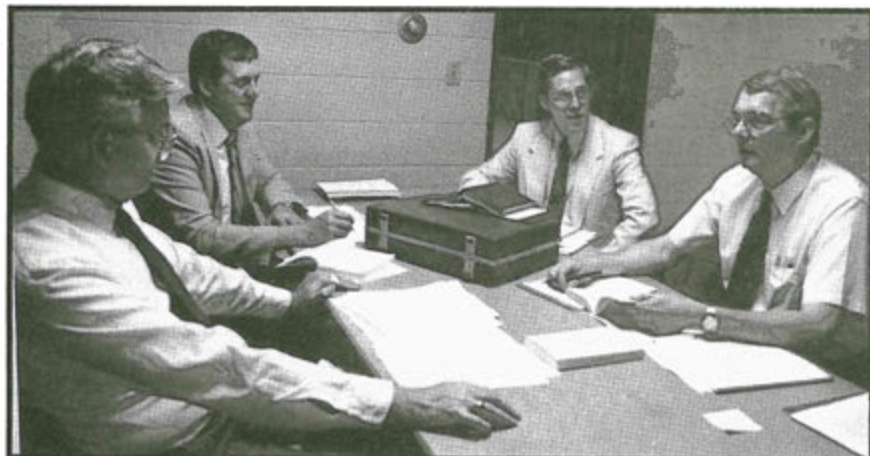
Missions

The Mission Committee gave an encouraging report of the work in Northern Ireland.

This has been an exciting time. We believe we see the clear evidence of God's blessings upon the labors. We do not, and must not, expect great numbers. But we believe it will soon be possible, with patient labor, to establish a church here in Ballymena. The Fellowship is considering several options concerning a building for a permanent worship site here. They express also their appreciation to our churches for the help which has been provided for them in their need.

The PRC now have a missionary on the field in Northern Ireland. Rev. Ron Hanko has accepted that call and has taken up the work. The calling church is the Hudsonville, Michigan PRC. This congregation has exerted itself on behalf of the work this past year, including loaning its pastor, Rev. Gise VanBaren, to the mission group for six months.

Besides helping the Lynden PRC in the broadcasting of its worship service over a local station, synod again approved the denominational support of the airing of the Reformed Witness Hour radio broadcast over five stations. These stations are in Kalamazoo, Michigan; Oskaloosa, Iowa; Denver, Colorado; Ferndale, Washington; and Edmonton, Alberta. The cost is about \$20,000 per year. Synod appointed a committee to help the Mission Committee develop a new approach to radio.



*Pre-Advice, Committee IV: Rev. Kuiper,
Mr. K. DeJong, Rev. Key, Mr. K. Vink*



Pre-Advice, Committee V: Rev. Miersma, Rev. Slopsema, Prof. Engelsma, Mr. G. VanOverloop, Mr. R. Brands

In light of the report of troubles in the Jamaica field during this past year and after lengthy discussion, synod instructed "the Mission Committee and First Church that First Church discontinue calling a missionary and that the field be closed. Grounds: (1) God in His providence has not enabled us to work the vast and difficult field in Jamaica as this kind of field requires. All the methods which have been attempted over the course of over thirty years... have not resulted in strong indigenous churches. (2) The annual reports over the past several years give no indication that the life in the churches of Jamaica has progressed as a result of all our labors." Synod expressed its appreciation to First Church, Grand Rapids for its work on behalf of Jamaica.

As a means to discover possible work in Africa, the Foreign Mission Committee is airing a 15-minute radio broadcast, "the Protestant Reformed Witness," on Radio Africa. Rev. Richard Moore, pastor of the Hull, Iowa PRC prepares the messages. Synod approved the request of the Foreign Mission Committee that the committee obtain an additional radio station in Africa. The committee maintains correspondence with Ghana, Africa and is optimistic about future work in Ghana.

Contact

Synod concurred with the decision of the Covenant Evangelical Reformed Church of Singapore that Rev. Jay Kortering continue another year as pastor of that sister church. Rev. Kortering continues to work with the

Joint Mission Committee, the Theological Training Committee, and the Contact Committee of the Evangelical Reformed Churches of Singapore.

Rev. Rod Miersma, pastor of the Protestant Reformed Church of Wellington, New Zealand, was present at synod as a fraternal delegate from that sister church. Rev. Miersma addressed synod, bringing the greetings of that congregation, expressing thanks for the help of the PRC in America, and informing synod of the condition and work of the New Zealand church.

Synod recommended sending an observer to NAPARC (North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council); authorized the Contact Committee to send observers to the Alliance of Reformed Churches (ARC); did not approve the request of the Contact Committee to send observers to the International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC) meeting in Zwolle, the Netherlands in September (on the ground that synod lacked sufficient information to make a deci-

sion); and heard from its Contact Committee that the committee has accepted the invitation from the Independent Reformed Church of Cambridge, Ontario to speak in that area, introducing the PRC.

Although there was little contact with the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Australia during the past year, two men from that Church are being trained for the ministry in the Seminary of the PRC. These men, Mr. Chris Connors and Mr. David Higgs, are to finish their three-year program this coming year.

Various Matters

Investigatory work continues on obtaining synodically funded group insurance for all the ministers in the PRC.

An index to all the "Acts of Synod" of the PRC is being made by Don and Judi Doezeema and will be ready by the 1994 synod.

The PRC continued their steady growth over the past year and now number 1435 families.

The synodical budget for 1994 is \$840,000. This requires \$570 from each family in the denomination, the same as in 1993.

Faith PRC in Jenison, Michigan will host the 1994 synod, the Lord willing.

May God bless the deliberation and decisions of synod to the welfare of the PRC, the maintenance and promotion of the truth, the good of the church catholic, and the glory of His adorable name.

— DJE



Synod in session

Procedure for Admission of Ministers from Other Denominations*

1. A minister from another denomination desiring entrance into the ministry of the Protestant Reformed Churches under Article 9 of the *Church Order* shall apply to the Protestant Reformed classis nearest to which he resides.
 - a. The minister making application shall have publicly resigned his ministry and his membership in his former congregation and denomination.
 - b. The minister making application shall meet with and seek the advice of a nearby Protestant Reformed consistory.
 - 1) The consistory shall interview the minister sufficiently to make recommendations to the classis concerning the applicant's qualifications for the ministry in the Protestant Reformed Churches and to determine whether they would be willing to hold his ministerial credentials until he accepts a call, should classis approve his exam and declare him eligible for a call.
 - 2) The advice of the consistory shall be forwarded to the Classical Committee along with the applicant's formal request for entrance into the ministry of the Protestant Reformed Churches.
 - c. The minister making application shall furnish the following documentation:
 - 1) A declaration of his reasons for desiring entrance into the ministry of the Protestant Reformed Churches and an account of his background in the ministry.
 - 2) A testimonial from the consistory or session under which he previously labored concerning his purity of doctrine and sanctity of life. If this is not possible because his leaving makes him a *persona non grata*, the classis shall make investigation of the applicant's previous labors.
 - 3) A diploma, or statement of credits, from an accredited college and recognized seminary, to show this scholastic attainment of the applicant.
 - 4) A statement of health from a physician.
2. Classis shall act upon the applicant's request, with the concurring advice of the Synodical Deputies, taking into consideration the following:
 - a. All the documents listed under 1.c. above are found to be in good order.
 - b. The need for ministers in the Protestant Reformed denomination at the time of the application.
3. If the applicant's request is approved, classis shall set a date for convening another classis for the purpose of examining the applicant, and shall instruct the Classical Committee to draw up an examination schedule. The exam shall commence with a specimen sermon, which sermon must be approved by classis and the Synodical Deputies before classis shall proceed to the rest of the examination. The examination shall follow the regular adopted schedule for the classical examination of candidates for the ministry (cf. Article 4) with two additions: Protestant Reformed distinctives, and Knowledge of the *Church Order* of the Protestant Reformed Churches. In addition, the applicant must express a willingness to abide by any past decisions of the Protestant Reformed Synods concerning doctrine and practice.
4. After classis approves his examination, with the concurrence of the Synodical Deputies, the classis shall declare the applicant eligible to receive a call into the ministry of the Word and sacraments in the Protestant Reformed Churches, without further need of examination.
5. The newly accepted minister shall be required to sign the Formula of Subscription before the meeting of classis adjourns and shall be presented with a classical diploma.
6. His eligibility for a call shall be announced to the churches.
7. Until the newly approved minister accepts a call, his ministerial credentials shall be held by a Protestant Reformed consistory appointed by classis.
 - a. This consistory shall supervise the interim labors of the minister and shall see to the needs of his financial support. Financial assistance may be sought from sister congregations, if this is deemed necessary.
 - b. If the minister does not receive a call after three years, he, with the advice of his consistory, shall request Classis to renew his eligibility. □

*This procedure was adopted by the 1993 synod of the PRC.

■ Nonsensical, Simplistic, Paranoid, Theologically Biased, Rationalistic

Re "The Date is 1924" (*Standard Bearer*, May 15), I find it both distressing and annoying that the editor does the very thing for which he castigates other churches. It is ludicrous to suggest that there is one single date that accounts for all the woes of the Christian Reformed Church (CRC). I wish to God that the Protestant Reformed (PRC), Canadian Reformed, and others would stop this nonsense. I wish they would cease being so myopic and realize that church history is far more complicated than suggested by this editorial. Not every thing that took place in 1924 was above board and pleasing to God, but that surely wasn't the beginning of liberalism in the CRC. Nor was 1944 for that matter. The Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (GKN) never had a "1924," so what caused the apostasy there? And what about the Presbyterian Church which ousted Machen: It never had a 1924 or 1944, yet it became apostate too. Let's stop being so simplistic in our analyses.

I also ardently wish that the PRC would get beyond 1924 once and stop riding their hobby-horses. Their "fixation" with 1924 borders on the paranoid. A "Vrijgemaakte" ("Liberated") student once put creation, the Reformation, and 1944 in the same category. Sometimes the PRC do the same with 1924.

Though I have no illusion that it will ever take place, I wish our PR brothers would come to see once that there is indeed a proper, biblical view of common grace, and that this in no way threatens the biblical teaching of the antithesis, nor does it in any way jeopardize the emphasis on the sovereign, particular grace of God. The sad fact is that the PR teachings on these points (including the well-meant offer of the gospel) arose from a preconceived theological mold (bias) where the teachings of Scripture have

to fit into a logical, rational (istic) scheme. There is no room for paradoxes or for truths which appear to us to be contradictory. Our minds are the final arbiter of what is true and not true. Would to God that our PR brothers would face up to this once.

(Rev.) Jelle Tuininga
Lethbridge, Alberta, Canada

Response:

The Rev. Tuininga, leader in the Alliance of Reformed Churches (ARC), must not call names, but discuss the issues.

I propose the following as a start:

1) The doctrine of a grace of God in the blessed gospel for all who hear the preaching as adopted in 1924 by the CRC in the first point of common grace has led to the teaching of universal atonement; the denial of double predestination (election and reprobation); the silencing of the bold, faithful proclamation of the doctrines of sovereign grace; and the utter inability to refute Arminianism, semi-Pelagianism, and outright universalism when they appear.

2) The doctrine of a work of the Holy Spirit within unregenerated humans—the world outside of Jesus Christ—restraining sin and enabling unbelievers to do good as adopted in 1924 by the CRC in the second and third points of common grace has led to the breakdown of the antithesis as regards separation from and hatred of both the world's thinking (universalism, a human Bible, evolution, feminism) and the world's behavior (movie attendance, dancing, divorce and remarriage, homosexuality).

3) These pernicious fruits of the doctrine of common grace adopted by the CRC in 1924 are not only natural fruits but also the judgment of God upon the sin of deposing officebearers and casting out believers and their children for the "offence" of holding fast the Reformed truths of sovereign, particular grace.

— DJE

■ PRC Truth

I have recently begun reading your magazine and would like to tell you that I enjoy it; however, I have a question. On page 295 of the April 1, 1993 issue, there is a reference to "the pure PRC truth of God's eternal covenant." What is "PRC truth?" Is the Protestant Reformed Church the custodian of some special knowledge (*gnosis*)? Please comment.

V.P. Agricola
Alberta, Canada

Response

The phrase, "pure PRC truth of God's eternal covenant," originally appeared in an article by Herman Hoeksema.

What he meant was that the PRC faithfully confess the biblical doctrine of the covenant. Tested by Scripture and the Reformed confessions, the doctrine of the covenant held by the PRC proves itself to be the pure Word of God.

Similar would be the expression, "the pure Reformed truth of God's predestination." The theologian or church using this expression would mean that the doctrine of election and reprobation found in Reformed churches is God's own pure truth.

The PRC have a distinctive conception of the covenant. Hoeksema confidently claimed that it is nothing less than the (special) revelation of God in Holy Scripture.

This claim is subject to the testing of Scripture and the creeds.

— Ed.

■ Roman Catholic Baptism

When I became a member of my church I took a vow to receive the body of doctrine contained in the Westminster Confession of Faith along with its catechism as being in agreement with the Word of God. Therefore, I must voice disagreement with your editorial response to the subject of rebaptism found in the *Standard Bearer*, April 1, 1993.

The Westminster standards teach

that there are certain qualifications as to who may be baptized and who may perform a baptism. I would refer any interested parties to chapter 28 of the Confession and questions 165 and 166 of the Larger Catechism. There one may read, "There be only two sacraments ordained by Christ our Lord in the gospel; that is to say, Baptism, and the Supper of the Lord: neither of which may be dispensed by any, but by a minister of the Word lawfully ordained." A Romanist minister does not meet this qualification. We also read, "...whereby the parties baptized are solemnly admitted into the visible church...." Once again, the Romish church may claim to be the visible church, but we know better. Finally, we can find the qualification that the one baptized must be a professing believer or the child of one. If this were the case, except someone be an uninformed babe in Christ, there is no reason for him to be in a Romish church. It is for this reason that I would say that someone from the Romish church was never baptized at all but rather went through a ritual mockery of the sacrament. Just as the Lord's Supper has become invalid when conducted by Rome, so has baptism.

Now if you refer to the argument of John Calvin I would answer that it was valid for his day. The church was still cutting its ties from Rome. For many Rome was the visible church during their youth and as such met the qualifications to conduct baptisms (which also answers the question of the validity of apostate O.T. priests conducting circumcisions). Once the church had reformed and broken ties for several generations this was not longer true.

I would be interested in receiving a copy of your 1988 "Acts of Synod and Yearbook of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America" to learn more of how you arrived at your stand on this issue.

Ric Kostbar
Howell, NJ

■ Clear Calvinism

I wish to offer my thanks for your

magazine, the *Standard Bearer*. It reflects your position which is clear Calvinism, a view which is ever becoming rarer. Indeed there is a species of Calvinism "which neither satisfies a Calvinist nor offends an Arminian," to quote a Scottish Free Churchman of the past.

However, I would like to ask your opinion on a matter which I came across recently. Did Cornelius VanTil espouse the doctrine of "common grace"? I would appreciate your knowledge on this area and any information you can offer.

James Frew
Springside, Irvine
Scotland

Response:

Cornelius VanTil took his own approach to the issue and expressed himself in his own philosophical manner, but he certainly embraced the theory of common grace. His views on the subject are found in his *Common Grace and the Gospel* (Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1972), a collection of his essays and articles on common grace. According to VanTil, God expresses a favorable attitude toward the reprobate, not only in the bounties of providence (rain and sunshine) but also in the well-meant offer of the gospel. With reference to what the Christian Reformed Church called the "general offer of the gospel" as the manifestation of God's common grace, which VanTil describes as "this most perplexing aspect of the perplexing problem of common grace" (p. 75), VanTil declares that "we may think of the universal offer of salvation as an evidence of common grace" (p. 82).

Throughout, VanTil is critical of Herman Hoeksema's rejection of common grace.

Hoeksema devoted no fewer than 14 editorials in volumes 19 and 20 of the *Standard Bearer* to an examination of VanTil's view of common grace.

—Ed.

■ The Age of the Earth

In his article, "Our Constant and Certain Safety" (the *Standard Bearer*,

Jan. 1, 1993), Rev. John Heys wrote this:

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth in six days; and the seventh day He rested. As we are coming near to the day when 6,000 years have passed since that week in which God created all things in heaven and on earth....

How does Rev. Heys come to have confidence in the approximate date of Creation being 6,000 years ago? Does he do this by the biblical genealogies or by some other means?

I am not opposing his date. In fact, I am delighted to see him put the figure of 6,000 years in print, for it is, I believe, correct. But I am interested in knowing his proofs and defense of the age of the earth.

Al Salmon
Moorestown, NJ

Response:

In reply to Brother Salmon's request that I give the reason for my assuming that the world is now about 6,000 years old, I suggest that it is indeed a matter of the genealogies. There are in the Old Testament repeated references to time, both in the genealogies and in the recording of significant events. Though there are some differences of opinion as to the exact number of years in the genealogies, many Bible scholars agree that the time from creation to the birth of Christ is about 4,000 years. I have, for example, a Bible printed by the World Publishing Association. That Bible presents the first chapter of Genesis as revealing what happened 4,004 B.C. Similarly Alfred Edersheim, D.O., Ph.D., in his book, *Old Testament History*, puts creation at 4,004 B.C. *Nave's Study Bible*, published by Baker Book House, makes it 4,045 B.C. rather than 4,004.

Even as God rested the seventh day after six days of creating heaven and earth and all that they contain, it is evident that now, 6,000 years since the creation of all things, we are coming close to that everlasting Day of Rest of which we read in Revelation 22:5-7.

—Rev. John A. Heys

The Reformed Family: Freedom

"Called unto liberty"

Galatians 5:13

Ranking right up there on any American's priority list is freedom. Personal freedom, religious freedom, and societal freedom are considered to be not only a privilege but the right of each and every one of us.

Our nation was forged on the anvil of freedom. In an eloquent statement, memorized by school children throughout this land, the Declaration of Independence reads: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."

Throughout our two hundred-year existence, the courts of this land have tested the extent of this liberty again and again. How high is freedom? How broad? How comprehensive? How loudly, or how softly, does the bell of liberty toll?

As a nation, we have never been subjected to any other country. No soldier with drawn bayonet has ever occupied our streets. The ominous tramp of military boots at corner or crossroads is as foreign to us as snow in July.

As a Reformed people in America, committed to a particular religious belief, we have been free all these many years to worship God in accor-

dance with the Scriptures. Secretly meeting for worship, furtively reading a few verses from the Bible behind blackened blinds, baptizing our infants in the pastor's study late at night without recording the child's name in the church registry are all outside the pale of our experience.

In America it seems impossible, something dredged out of darkest fiction, even to imagine life without liberty. Bosnia and Croatia are just countries in ethnic turmoil, far, far away, not even remotely connected to the life and freedom we have come to enjoy. We are a free people. Complete liberty is ours. It is guaranteed to us in our Constitution. No government will ever tell us what to do, or how to do it, or when, or where. And every advertisement and jingle touts this message. "Just do it!" "Do your own thing." "Do it your way."

As the passionate, though somewhat addled, James Otis declared back in 1775 when the Sons of Liberty were meeting in a cramped and confining attic in Boston: "It is all so much simpler than you think," he said. He lifted his hands and pushed against the rafters. "We give all we have, lives, property, safety, skills...we fight, we die, for a simple thing. Only that a man can stand up" (*Johnny Tremain*, by Esther Forbes).

That's what freedom is all about — so a man can stand up!

These are stirring lines from our history's record, and even the most indifferent student sits a little straighter upon hearing these patriotic, all-American sentiments.

Forged in freedom, but reared in revolution, is it any wonder that

America has produced a society of rebels? In such a society, women are free to divorce their husbands, husbands are free to abandon their wives, parents are free to turn over the care of their children to day-care centers, children are free to sue their parents, the state is free to murder its unborn children, the homosexual is free to leave his closet, the employer is free to be a Simon Legree, the employee is free to be a Tom Sawyer, and the sexual pervert is free to publish his pornography. Everyone is free to express any deviant thought of his heart. And in the church women are free to be ministers, elders, and deacons. No one bends the knee to any other. Each of us has rights, and no one is reluctant to exercise them. One has only to "stand up" and claim them.

How different is Scripture's interpretation of freedom. Here, freedom has bounds. It has limitations to excess. It has restraints. The Apostle Paul says in Galatians 5:13 and 14: "For brethren, ye have been called unto liberty, only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."

Not a life of license, then, but the life of love.

Just observe what has happened in biblical history to those who have stood up, to those who have used their liberty to license. Eve stood up, and she was escorted out of Paradise; Adam stood up, and he spent the rest of his days stooped over a hostile terrain of thorns and thistles; Miriam

Mrs. Lubbers is a wife and mother in the Protestant Reformed Church of South Holland, Illinois.

stood up, and she was smitten with leprosy; Moses stood up, calling God's people "Ye rebels," and he never set one foot on Canaan's soil; Jonah stood up, and he was dropped into a howling, raging sea. All these stood up, and without divine restoration they would have perished. Standing up outside the liberty as prescribed for each of us in God's Word has dreadful consequences, now and in the life to come.

Freedom, according to Scripture, has very little to do with "so that a man can stand up." It has everything to do with a believer on his knees. Only prostrate, at the foot of the Cross, confessing my pride and perversity,

do I enjoy complete liberating freedom. There I can say with Paul that though I am a slave or prisoner, yet am I free.

So much of Jesus' teaching was by paradox: through poverty I am made rich; the least is the greatest; the last shall be first; out of weeping comes rejoicing; it is in giving that I receive. Paradoxically, then, it is in kneeling that I stand up.

The late Robert Frost defined freedom this way: Freedom consists of "moving easy in the harness." The poet laureate from Vermont may not have been familiar with the teachings of the apostle Paul, but he knew horses

well. And he knew mankind well. Horses and human beings need the harness.

God has laid down his declaration for perfect freedom in the Ten Commandments. His law is the harness in which each of us may live and move comfortably. All those 10 don'ts against which men of every culture and creed chafe — keep them perfectly, do them willingly, and you move easy in the harness. Defy them, strain all your life long against this harness, and you strangle.

This is the simple truth about freedom.

Let freedom ring! □

Newsletter from New Zealand

Rev. Rodney Miersma

As cold waters to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country.

Proverbs 25:25

Greetings from New Zealand! As we are refreshed by the good news which we receive from you, so we pray that likewise you may be refreshed in hearing from us. There are many thousands of miles separating us, a distance which seems to shrink with each letter that arrives in the mail box. Several years have gone by since you have heard from us in the form of a newsletter in the *Standard Bearer*. Therefore, in response to a number of requests from many of you for such an article I will use this opportunity in this guest article to tell you a little more about us here in New Zealand.

However, before we start the news going your way we want to thank you for all the news that has

come to us from you. A special note of appreciation to those who have sent faithfully each month the bulletins, church and school newsletters, other church periodicals, and even such gems as the *Doon Press* (by way of Grand Rapids, mind you). Such regular church and school news means much to us and is enjoyed by all the families of the church. A "thank you" also to the third graders in Loveland who each wrote a letter, many of them expressing that they thought that they had "the best teacher in the whole world." You would be surprised at some of the news we learned from these letters. Then there are the evangelism committees who send to us their latest pamphlets, all of which are quickly read and then advertised and distributed here in our evangelism efforts.

As you read this, perhaps trying to stay cool with an air conditioner during the hot summer months, the saints here in New Zealand are trying to stay warm, for it is in the middle of the winter here in the southern hemisphere. The winters in the Wellington area are cold, wet, and windy. By cold we mean that on some mornings we have frost, with temperatures climbing to about 45-50 degrees F.

during the day. That may not seem to you to be cold for winter, but add an all-day drizzle, with a fresh southerly blowing from the south pole, and you have a bone-chiller. Perhaps the saints in Northern Ireland can relate to that kind of weather. Now add the fact that most homes and churches do not have central heating. The church in which we worship is heated by little electric heaters high up on the wall, where most of the heat stays as well. Meanwhile a cold draft on the floor serves to keep your feet ice cold. However, we do have nice days also, which make up for the unpleasant ones.

As to the weekly activities, they are what you would normally find in any of the Protestant Reformed Churches: twice weekly worship services, catechism classes, and Bible studies. The departure from the normal would be in the circumstances under which these activities are conducted. Much of this is due to the fact that we do not have our own church building. Those of you who belong to small and/or beginning churches know firsthand what some of the difficulties and inconveniences are. In our case we rent a church building from an Anglican congregation

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

around whose schedule we must work, which means that we cannot have our services until 11:00 a.m. Sometimes we must look for another place, when the Anglican congregation needs the building on particular occasions for their own purposes. This is only part of it. One also must contend with worshipping in a building which is sometimes quite foreign to what one's own building would be. The song books and Bibles in the pews will all be different from the familiar *Psalter* and King James Version. One encounters such things as kneeling benches, the pulpit off to the side instead of in the center, announcements and pamphlets advertising another church's activities and beliefs. Thus, in order to have what we need for our services, we must put out all of the Bibles, *Psalters*, and pamphlets before the service, and put them away again when we are finished. The same applies to the equipment that is used to record the worship services and to the sign outside the church with our name and time of services printed on it.

Being without one's own building has an effect also on the mid-week activities. All Bible studies and catechism classes, and Session and evangelism meetings must be held in the homes of the members of the congregation. The underlying disadvantage of all this is that it is very hard to establish our own identity in the community. Through the Session, and the evangelism society working under it, we are trying to establish that identity both in the vicinity of the church and elsewhere throughout the two islands. A bookshop and tape library are established and advertised, booklets and pamphlets are distributed country-wide, and lectures are regularly given in various parts of the country. In the last couple of months we have been holding an afternoon worship service every other week about forty-five miles north of Wellington. At this stage it is too early to tell whether that will bear the positive fruit for which we are looking and working.

What has been the fruit of this labor as far as adding numbers to our

small flock is concerned? None. We do not want to tell you about the various things that we are doing and leave the impression that wonderful results are being achieved as to numbers added. When all is said and done, no matter what one has desired and how much he has labored, one must always come to the humble conclusion that it is only the Lord who will add to His church, and He will do that in His own time, when it His pleasure to do so at all in a particular place. Meanwhile, we continue with the seven families that the Lord has given us, five of which worship together regularly in Wellington, and two of which continue to worship in their own homes. One of these families lives on the south island and the other a hundred miles north of Wellington.

A few words should also be said to give you a picture of the spiritual climate in which we are laboring in New Zealand. Let me do so by way of contrast and comparison. The Protestant Reformed Churches in America traditionally have been established and continue to exist for the most part in areas that are relatively conservative, and in large part both Dutch and Reformed. You are quite at home and very much like your neighbors and others in the community. They have the same background both culturally and religiously. That is reflected in the whole community in its schools, churches, government, and businesses. Their whole way of life is very similar to your own. When you speak to them they know and understand what you are saying.

Here in New Zealand the situation is quite different. Thirty percent of the population are either natives or immigrants whose worship is both heathenish and idolatrous. The other seventy percent are white European immigrants, of which only a very small part attend church regularly. The small remnant that do attend church regularly, with few exceptions, belong to denominations that have long left the truths of the Protestant Reformation, or never had them, the Roman Catholic Church being one. Now

mixed in all of this are little groups of people who belong to no church at all, but meet in homes and halls. What one has as a result is a country which is at heart godless. This is manifested in every aspect of life. Complete indifference to the truth is the rule of the day. And because we are small and not well known, we are looked upon as one of so many little house groups, some of which are cultic. It is in this spiritual wilderness that we labor, a difficult and often discouraging labor, but we are confident that God knows who are His own and that He will gather them by the preaching of His Word, which the world calls foolishness.

Our labors, however, have not been limited to New Zealand. In response to a call for help from the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Australia, the Session sent the pastor and his wife to labor in the Burnie and Launceston congregations in Tasmania for a period of three months, December 1992 - February 1993. The church here in New Zealand knows from experience what it is like to be without a minister for years at a time. Having their own minister now, they deemed it a privilege to have the opportunity and the means to help someone in similar need. We pray that the Lord will use this to strengthen and advance the cause of His kingdom also in this part of the world. One cannot express in words the hunger and desire that was manifested for the Word of truth and the joy that was evidenced in its reception. Let us remember the fellow saints of the EPC of Australia when we come to the Lord's throne in our prayers.

In conclusion, we want to thank all of you as individuals, families, churches, and denomination for your prayers and support. The work could not continue as it presently is without your generosity and love. The Lord willing, my wife and I hope to see many of you soon, since we are scheduled to have a vacation in the U.S.A. during your summer. We covet your prayers and pray that the Lord may bless us together in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. □

SYNOD 1993



*Rev. Kuiper, Elders D. Engelsma and G. VanOverloop,
Rev. Dykstra*



*Elders E. VanVoorthuysen
and R. Brands*



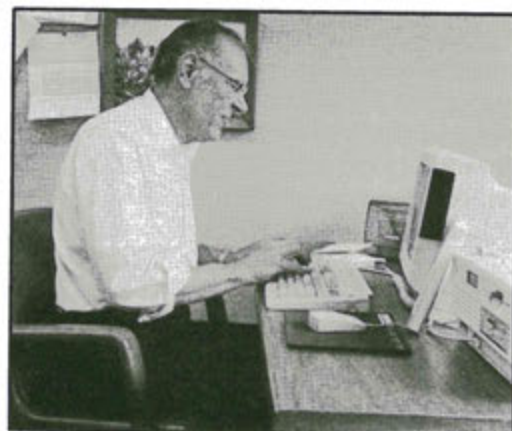
*Rev. Miersma, Rev. Kuiper,
Rev. Slopsema*



*Rev. Haak, Rev. Koole,
Prof. Engelsma, Rev. Dykstra*



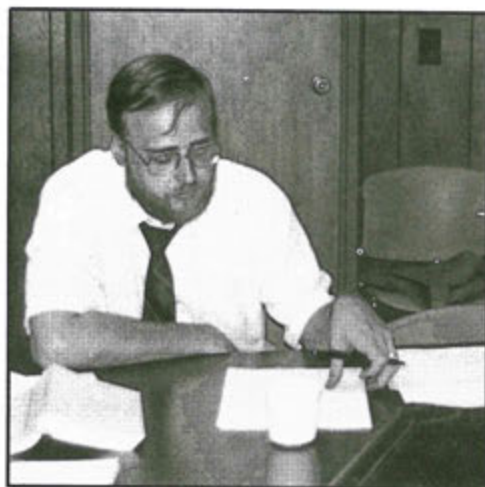
Rev. Haak, Elder C. Kalsbeek



Prof. Hanko



Rev. Key, Elder K. Vink



Rev. Miersma



Rev. Haak



Rev. Key, Rev. Hanko, Rev. Spriensma, Elder R. Brands

Rev. VanOverloop



Rev. Bruinsma



Elder U. Tolsma, Rev. Gritters

Calvinism and Missions

III. "Limited" Atonement

The only way to do the work of evangelism and missions is by proclaiming a "limited" atonement!

"But," it is objected, "how can mission work be effective if you cannot say that Christ died for all?" "How can one press the claim of the Gospel upon an individual, if it cannot be said to that person that Jesus died for him?"

For centuries these rhetorical questions have been stated as charges against the Reformed faith, as objections which are supposed to show the fallacy of this faith. A girl in my congregation recently was bluntly told, "You don't believe in missions, or in witnessing."

The Reformed fathers faced and answered these same objections. Those in whom the faith of our fathers is living still must also answer these objections.

A son of the Reformation, Francis Turretin, wrote the following words in the late 1600s. Notice how biblical his presentation is.

The mission and death of Christ are restricted to a *limited number*—to His people, His sheep, His friends, His body—and nowhere extended to all men severally and collectively. Thus Christ is called "Jesus" because He shall save *His people* from their sins (Matt. 1:21). He is called the Saviour of His body (Eph. 5:23). The Good Shepherd lays down His life for "the sheep" (John 10:15) and for

"His friends" (John 15:13). He is said to die "that He might gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad" (John 11:52). It is said that Christ "hath purchased the church with His own blood" (Acts 20:28).

If Christ died for everyone of Adam's posterity, why should the Scriptures so often restrict the object of His death to a few? How could it, with propriety, be said absolutely that Christ is the Saviour of *His people* and of *His body*, if He is the Saviour of others also?

The Reformers and the Reformed faith contend that only a "limited" atonement is definite and sure, that only the proclamation of a "limited" atonement makes the preaching the power of God unto salvation.

The only way to do the work of evangelism and missions is by proclaiming a "limited" atonement!

* * * * *

Did Jesus offer up Himself a sacrifice as an atonement for the whole human race, that is, for every individual without distinction, or was His sacrifice of Himself with special reference to a definite number of humans? Was His sacrifice intended to make salvation possible for all men, or was it intended to make salvation certain for those who had been given to Him by the Father? Did He die for all men, or did He die for the elect only?

By the way, do not overlook the fact that everyone "limits" the atonement. One either limits its extent or its power. The Calvinist believes that the extent is limited, for it does not apply to all individuals. The Arminian believes that the atonement is limited

in its power, for in itself it does not actually save anyone, since it needs the consent of each person if he is to be saved. When the atonement of Christ's death is made universal, then its inherent value is destroyed. If even one of those for whom Jesus died is lost, then salvation is not certain for anyone. If salvation is made objectively possible for all, then the atonement did not, actually, save anyone.

The best approach—no, the only approach—to the question of the extent of the atonement is from the viewpoint of the atonement itself. So often the discussion immediately goes to and stays on what should be the

If salvation is made objectively possible for all, then the atonement did not, actually, save anyone.

first word, the adjective: limited, universal, definite. First we should consider the other word, the noun. You will know which adjective to use when you know what atonement is and what the Bible says about atonement.

Atonement is a satisfaction for a debt. The atonement spoken of in Scripture is the full payment of the debt of sin.

Atonement means, *first*, that all men are fallen in Adam and therefore deserve eternal death. The atonement is made necessary by the fact that all men as sinners must be punished according to the demand of divine justice.

Let us learn from the way in which

Rev. VanOverloop is pastor of Bethel Protestant Reformed Church in Elk Grove Village, Illinois.

the Reformed fathers answered the universal atonement of the Arminians in the "Second Head of Doctrine" of the Canons of Dordrecht. They began their defense of limited or definite atonement by declaring the biblical truth of the atonement and man's need for it.

Article 1 God is not only supremely merciful, but also supremely just. And his justice requires that our sins committed against his infinite majesty should be punished, not only with temporal, but with eternal punishment, both in body and soul; which we cannot escape, unless satisfaction be made to the justice of God.

Atonement means, *secondly*, that a substitute was provided to take the place of sinners. God made His own Son to be the Substitute.

Article 2 Since therefore we are unable to make that satisfaction in our own persons, or to deliver ourselves from the wrath of God, he hath been pleased in his infinite mercy to give his only begotten Son, for our surety, who was made sin, and became a curse for us and in our stead, that he might make satisfaction to divine justice on our behalf.

Concerning this substitutionary atonement made by God's Son, consider two thoughts. First, there is no injustice in the fact that Christ died for some and not for others. No one deserves from Christ a chance to be saved, for all are fallen and deserve only hell. It is only out of abounding grace that Christ died for any at all. And second, so perfect and so complete is His substitution that though all who will go to heaven are completely destitute of any merit of their own, they do go to heaven; and they do so only on the basis of their Substitute. "The death of the Son of God is the only and most perfect sacrifice and satisfaction for sin: and is of infinite worth and value" (Canons of Dordt, II, 3).

Before we defend our proposition that the only way to witness or to do the work of missions or evangelism

is by proclaiming a definite atonement, consider the argument of the Puritan John Owen.

God the Father in His judgment and wrath punished His only begotten Son at the cross for either:

1. All the sins of all men;
2. All the sins of some men; or
3. Some of the sins of all men.

It must be one of the three, therefore we see:

1. If the *third* is true, all men still have some sins to answer for, and then *none* will be saved.

2. If the *second* is true, then Christ suffered for all the sins of the elect in the whole world, and these are truly delivered by what Christ finished in His death on the cross.

3. But if the *first* be the case, why are not all men freed from all their sins and saved from the punishment of hell?

My friends, there is no substitute for the time-honored, God-exalting truth of substitutionary atonement — that Christ our Lord *actually bore* the sins of those for whom He died specifically. He stood in the place of the "many" who would actually experience complete deliverance from all their sins! Read Isaiah 53:11; Matthew 20:28; Matthew 26:28; Mark 10:45; Hebrews 9:28; and John 10:11. My Lord Jesus Christ substituted for "sheep" given Him by the Father, and *not* for the devil's "goats!"

* * * * *

The impact that the truth of definite atonement has upon the work of evangelism and missions is immediate and great.

The doctrine of limited atonement puts no restrictions on the proclamation of the Gospel. Some say it does. But this objection does not arise from Scripture. Nowhere in the Word of God can it be found that to be able to preach the Gospel to all nations one must have the message that Christ died for all the sins of all men.

The church must proclaim the promise of the Gospel that "whosoever believeth in Christ crucified shall not perish but have everlasting life" to "all nations and to all persons promiscuously and without distinction to whom God out of His good plea-

sure sends the gospel." Therefore, those who do not repent and believe in Christ are themselves to be blamed, and it is not "any defect or insufficiency in the sacrifice offered by Christ upon the cross" (Canons II/6, 7).

As we strive to be obedient to the command to teach all nations, we are sure that the sovereign God is using us and our preaching as His means to apply to the consciousness of the elect the atoning sacrifice of His Son. We obey by going forth, preaching and teaching. We do not have to tell our audiences that Christ died for them. Such a statement cannot be found anywhere in Acts, the "mission" book of the Bible. We do not find Christ and the apostles saying, "God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life." They did not say, "Jesus died for you."

*As a minister of the Gospel
I do not have to labor
under the burden
of the impossible, namely
persuading people to do
for themselves
what Jesus left undone.*

We are commanded to preach, not worrying about which ones are those for whom Jesus died, not worrying about who are the elect and who the reprobate. We preach His Gospel. God saves His people.

We do not have to use the trick of telling everybody in our audience that they should not leave the begging Christ, who died for them, outside of their heart and life. As a minister of the Gospel I do not have to labor under the burden of the impossible, namely persuading people to do for themselves what Jesus left undone.

Of this Gospel we are not ashamed, for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believes (Rom. 1:16). With the Bible we declare that all humans are sinners and that from their sinfulness and sins arise all their problems and diffi-

culties, which are a partial expression of the wrath of God (Rom. 3:23; 2:5-9). We preach the biblical truth that no one is saved by works, that good deeds do not justify anyone in God's sight (Rom. 3:20). We preach that out of free grace God was pleased to send His own Son, Jesus Christ, to be the perfect Substitute and Redeemer (Rom. 3:24). Because the identity of those for whom Jesus is the Substitute is unknown, we proclaim to all the command to repent and believe the truth of the Bible concerning God's Son. We teach that God uses the instrumentality of faith in Christ's sacrifice to bring the consciousness of justification and salvation (Rom. 3:24, 25; 4:5). We preach that the ability to believe, to have faith, is a gift of God, and that it is no more a work than is circumcision (Rom. 4:11, 16). We preach the assurance of salvation and of peace with God to all who believe

that salvation is only in Jesus (Rom. 4:24-5:1). This is the Gospel Paul was inspired to preach. And this is the Gospel we strive to be faithful to preach.

We rejoice to be able to preach the Gospel in such a way that men are called to a real and actual salvation. We preach an atonement full and free. We preach a powerful redemption.

On the contrary, the preaching which declares that Jesus died for all cheapens the Gospel and its proclamation. Such preaching cheapens the precious blood of the Son of God. Such preaching makes the value of His death to be little. It makes the Gospel and its preaching, not the power and wisdom of God unto salvation, but a possibility and potentiality.

* * * * *

It is the personal experience of the power of the atonement that con-

strains us to preach the atoning sacrifice of Christ on the mission field (II Cor. 5:14). The love of God, which freely gives to us forgiveness of all of our sins and the consciousness of a perfect righteousness constrains us to preach. That God reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ and has given to us the ministry of reconciliation provides us with more than enough motivation to present the Gospel in missions and evangelism. If it is merely a potential atonement until my faith takes hold of it, then I will be motivated; but the motivation would be fear, not love. It would be the fear of not being strong enough in my faith, not good enough in my works.

It is the conviction that Christ's blood graciously atoned for all of the sins of wretched sinners that constrains us to go into all the world and to preach and witness to every creature. □

Guest Article

Rev. Ronald Cammenga

The Shameful Sin of Homosexuality (1)

There is a strong movement in our day to legitimize the sin of homosexuality. The homosexuals (or gays, as they are called) have not only come out of the closet, but are demanding public acceptance of their homosexuality. They defend their life-style as an "alternative life-style." And they insist that their homosexuality be respected as a legitimate "sexual preference."

Rev. Cammenga is pastor of the Protestant Reformed Church of Loveland, Colorado.

A great deal of interest in the gay rights movement has been sparked recently on account of the adoption by the citizens of Colorado of Amendment 2 which prohibits the state's adoption of any law or policy that would provide homosexuals, lesbians, or bisexuals with minority or protected status. The adoption of this amendment has caused a national furor. The homosexual establishment is up in arms. There are charges of discrimination against gays. Threats of boycott against Colorado have been made by entertainers, organizations, and various cities. As expected, the

legality of Amendment 2 is being challenged in the courts.

Homosexual Propaganda

In recent years the homosexuals have become increasingly aggressive in promoting their cause. Television and radio, newspapers and magazines (secular and religious) advance the homosexual viewpoint. Writers in psychology, education, sociology, law, religion, and ethics lend their support.

Various organizations are involved in the push for homosexual recognition and rights. These organi-

zations include the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, Gay Lobby, Gay Media Task Force, Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund (which conducts litigation on behalf of homosexuals), the National Gay Rights Activists, and the radical group ACT-UP (Aids Coalition to Unleash Power). The movement has also gained support from the National Democratic Party, the National Education Association, and the National Organization for Women. Gay activists have the support of one of the richest political action committees in the country, the Human Rights Campaign Fund. Through the assistance of this PAC they have successfully engineered political support for their life-style. In certain parts of the country they have also succeeded in forcing laws to be passed forbidding all discrimination based on sexual preference or sexual orientation. The American Psychological Association and the American Public Health Association have also lent their aid by downplaying the consequences of homosexuality and taking the position that homosexuality is no longer to be regarded as deviant behavior. Psychology professors and sex therapists warn endlessly against the evil of "sexual repression" and encourage the homosexual to express his sexuality.

Public rallies, marches, and demonstrations are organized in order to promote acceptance of homosexuality. Colleges and universities sponsor an annual "Gay Awareness Week." "Two, four, six, eight! Gay is just as good as straight!" chant militant gays demonstrating for their cause. Others carry placards declaring, "God Loves Gays." A Christian minister involved in such a demonstration addresses a crowd asserting, "I see my homosexuality as a gift from God."

One of the greatest victories for the homosexuals was the election of Bill Clinton to the presidency of our country. A great deal of money and votes were promised to the Clinton campaign in exchange for aggressive action on behalf of the homosexuals.

Clinton is delivering on his promises. At his insistence the ban against gays serving in the military is being struck down, and huge sums of money are being promised for AIDS research and care of AIDS victims.

One of the areas in which the homosexuals have concentrated their propaganda energy is education. By promoting their cause in the schools, especially the high schools and junior highs, the homosexuals are convinced that they can gain sympathy and turn public sentiment in their favor.

A 1992 Denver Public Schools Health and Science Education teachers' guide entitled, "Gay and Lesbian Youth Tools for Educators," was presented to teachers by gay instructors during a tax-payer-funded continuing education course. This guide contains a questionnaire designed to be answered by heterosexual junior high and high school students. Included in the questions are the following: "Is it possible your heterosexuality is just a phase you may outgrow? Is it possible that all you need is a good gay lover? If you have never slept with a person of the same sex, how do you know that you would not prefer to do so? How can you hope to become a whole person if you limit yourself to an exclusive heterosexual object choice and remain unwilling to explore and develop your normal, natural, healthy homosexual potential?" This in junior high and high school!

In the New York City school system, some recommended books on the reading list for *first graders* are, "Daddy's Roommate" (about two homosexual men), and "Heather Has Two Mommies."

Fallout for Those Who Oppose Homosexuality

The homosexuals have succeeded in bringing bitter consequences to those who oppose them. The murderous hostility of homosexuals, seen already in the incident respecting Sodom and Gomorrah recorded in Genesis 19, survives to this day. Although the opponents of homosexuality are often labeled as intolerant and accused of discrimination, no

group is more intolerant and discriminatory than the homosexuals themselves.

In several recent lawsuits, opponents of homosexuality have been found guilty of discrimination and were forced to pay punitive damages.

An admitted homosexual "Big Brother" applicant was told that mothers of prospective "clients" (boys) would be notified of his homosexuality. He filed suit. The agency was fined \$6,000, prohibited from informing mothers of the homosexuality of its volunteers, and required to initiate an affirmative action program to bring homosexuals into the program.

The Attorney General of Hawaii recently handed down an advisory opinion stating that only the position of pastor could be withheld from a homosexual without breaking the laws against discrimination in that state. All other positions in a church could not be withheld from a person on the ground of "sexual orientation."

Although the opponents of homosexuality are often labeled as intolerant and accused of discrimination, no group is more intolerant and discriminatory than the homosexuals themselves.

Two women in Madison, Wisconsin were fined \$1,500, ordered to write a formal letter of apology, report to a local homosexual group for "sensitivity" classes, and submit to monitoring of their life-style for two years because they refused to take as their roommate a lesbian who responded to their newspaper ad.

Under a "gay rights" ordinance, the Catholic Archdiocese of Minneapolis was recently fined \$15,000 and assessed \$20,000 in damages, payable to homosexuals who complained that the Archdiocese denied their club the "right" to meet in church-owned facilities.

A 1992 New Jersey "gay rights" statute prohibits *all employers*, including churches, from discriminating on the basis of sexual orientation. The same law could force churches not only to hire homosexuals but conduct homosexual marriages.

Seven states and more than 90 cities, counties, and municipalities in America now prohibit discrimination based on "sexual orientation."

In 1992, Mr. Bruce Skewes, a New Jersey high school English teacher, was forced to retire from the school system or face tenure charges simply for giving out printed information about the medical dangers of homosexual behavior.

On August 30, 1991, the Office of Student Activities of Denver's Metropolitan State College issued a directive to all 90 campus clubs requiring that membership in all clubs, including religious and military, be opened to homosexuals. Failure to comply would result in loss of on-campus recognition and loss of all club privileges.

Homosexual instructors of a 1991 Denver continuing education course presented teachers with a several-hundred-page guide entitled, "Gay and Lesbian Youth Tools for Educators." The introductory article contained the following statement: "There is no biblical sex ethic. The Bible knows only a love ethic, which is constantly being brought to bear on whatever sexual mores are dominant in a given country, culture or period." In addition to promoting acceptance of homosexuality, this teachers' guide suggested that resources be distributed to children, including information and telephone numbers of homosexual support groups for children to contact.

The Homosexual Agenda

It is a mistake to suppose, as is often alleged, that the homosexuals are merely interested in toleration. Nothing could be further from the truth. They do not want toleration, but special protection of their lifestyle, and punishment of those who in any way oppose them. The aim of

"Gay Rights" legislation is to give homosexuals protected status as a discriminated-against minority. Their aim is the repeal of sodomy laws, legitimizing of homosexual marriages, requirements for churches and schools to hire homosexual staff persons, special privileges in housing and medical care, and stiff penalties against any who discriminate against them.

Several gay leaders and activist groups are now advocating violence in order to further the homosexual cause. Homosexual leader, Larry Kramer, founder of ACT-UP, stated in an interview with the Wall Street Journal, "It hurts me to say I think the time for violence has now arrived.... I'd like to see an AIDS terrorist army...."

Gay activist Michael Swift has served notice of the homosexuals' intentions.

We shall sodomize your sons, emblems of your feeble masculinity, of your shallow dreams and vulgar lies. We shall seduce them in your schools, in your dormitories, in your gymnasiums, in your locker rooms, in your sports arenas, in your seminaries, in your youth groups, in your movie theater bathrooms, in your army bunkhouses, in your truck stops, in your all male clubs, in your houses of Congress....

If you dare to cry faggot, fairy, queer, at us, we will stab you in your cowardly hearts and defile your dead, puny bodies.

There will be no compromises. We are no middle-class weaklings. Highly intelligent, we are the natural aristocrats of the human race, and steely-minded aristocrats never settle for less. Those who oppose us will be exiled.

The family unit — spawning ground of lies, betrayals, mediocrity, hypocrisy and violence — will be abolished. The family unit, which only dampens imagination and curbs free will, must be eliminated.... All churches who condemn us will be closed.... All males who insist in remaining stupidly heterosexual will be tried in homosexual courts of justice and will become invisible men.

We shall be victorious.... We too are capable of firing guns and manning the barricades of the ultimate revolution. ("The Gay Community News," Feb. 15-21, 1987).

Make no mistake, these *are* the goals of the homosexuals. They are not at all interested simply in toleration. They aim at the destruction of the family, the destruction of marriage, and the destruction of the one institution which stands in their way, the church. □

— to be continued.

Grant, Almighty God, that as we abound in so many vices, by which we daily provoke thy wrath, and as by the testimony of our consciences, we are justly exposed to everlasting death, yea, and deserve a hundred and even a thousand deaths, — O grant, that we may strive against the unbelief of our flesh, and so embrace thine infinite mercy, that we may not doubt but that thou wilt be propitious to us, and yet not abuse this privilege by taking liberty to sin, but with fear, and true humility, care, so walk according to thy word, that we may not hesitate daily to flee to thy mercy, that we may thereby be sustained and kept in safety, until having at length put off all vices, and being freed from all sin, we come to thy celestial kingdom, to enjoy the fruit of our faith, even that eternal inheritance which has been obtained for us by the blood of thy only-begotten Son. Amen.

— John Calvin
Commentary on Micah, p. 408

Report of Classis East

May 12, 1993
Southwest
Protestant Reformed Church

Classis East met in regular session on Wednesday, May 12, 1993, at Southwest PRC. Each church was represented by two delegates.

Business for this session was routine; classis adjourned before noon. First PRC brought, via its credentials, a request for classis to express itself

on divorce and remarriage. This request was declared to be illegally before the classis.

Classical appointments were granted to Southwest according to the following schedule: May 23 — Spriensma, May 30 — Gritters, June 13 — Woudenberg, June 20 — Bruinsma, June 27 — Kuiper, July 11 — Joostens, July 18 — VanBaren, July 25 — Koole, August 8 — Slopsema, August 15 — Gritters, August 22 —

Bruinsma, August 29 — Kuiper, September 5 — Flikkema, September 12 — VanBaren.

The expenses of classis amounted to \$1,119.50. Classis will meet next on Wednesday, September 8, 1993, at First PRC, Grand Rapids.

Respectfully submitted,
Jon J. Huisken,
Stated Clerk

News From Our Churches

Mr. Benjamin Wigger

We begin this issue of the church news with some catching up in the area of trios and calls being considered by various of our denomination's pastors.

First we report here that Rev. R. Dykstra declined the call he was considering to serve as pastor of the Southwest PRC of Grandville, MI. After that decline, the council of Southwest formed another trio, consisting of the Revs. R. Cammenga, J. Slopsema, and C. Terpstra. At a congregational meeting held on June 9, Southwest decided to extend a call to Rev. Slopsema.

We could also mention that Rev. and Mrs. Rodney Miersma, of the PRC of New Zealand, have returned to the United States for a ten-week vacation. Plans call for the Miersmas to visit with family in Michigan and Iowa and to attend the PR Synod.

This summer, the Lord willing, many of our churches will again enjoy something that has been missing for a

couple of years. That something is worship services conducted by our seminary students. From what we have heard, both Seminarians, Allen Brummel and Douglas Kuiper, will be kept busy nearly every Sunday of the summer speaking a word of edification. We take this opportunity to encourage them in this regard and to wish them the Lord's blessing in this important work.

Congregation Activities

From the Congregation of Trinity PRC in Houston, TX we learn that their pastor-elect, Rev. Mahtani, returned home safely to Singapore after a brief visit to Trinity at the end of April. On his return trip he had time to call on some American-Chinese women in Honolulu with whom our churches have had some contact. While he was there he preached to them on Psalm 46, "God is our Refuge." We are also happy to report that Trinity's congregation has been informed that the Department of Immigration and Naturalization has approved their immigration petition for Pastor Mahtani and his family. This means that, the Lord willing, Pastor Mahtani will arrive July 7.

Installation is scheduled to take place on July 14.

The last week in May was a memorable one for the congregation of the Hull, Iowa PRC. It started with a Call-to-Worship service on Wednesday night in their just completed new church sanctuary. This was followed on Friday by an open house and a dedication service. This program was filled with singing, special numbers, and letters from former pastors. Hull's May 30 bulletin even showed a sketch of the new church on its front cover instead of the old church building. Just seeing that sketch is enough to be assured that Hull's new building is very nice indeed.

While Hull's congregation is just now beginning to enjoy its new church home, there are a couple other of our congregations who are just starting down that long road to a permanent church home. The congregations of the Bethel PRC in Elk Grove Village, IL and the Peace PRC of Lansing, IL took official title of their respective properties within days of each other. They now begin to realize, if only in a small way, the hope of someday having a sanctuary they can call their own.

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

The Council of the Hope PRC in Walker, MI recently informed their congregation that there have been several families that have expressed an interest in forming and joining a daughter congregation in response to the Council's recent survey. Hope is considering the proper procedure to follow as a result of this survey.

All singers in the Southeast PRC in Grand Rapids, MI were invited to join a newly organized choir. It appeared that enough members were recruited to begin practice during early May.

Mission Activities

Rev. R. Hanco writes in a recent letter to Hudsonville's congregation that at a recent Lord's day there were 59 people at the morning service and 66 at the evening service. He also states that since they have been in Ballymena with the C.R.F., they have not had a Sunday go by without seeing new faces in church.

The Covenant Reformed Fellowship is planning a series of evangelistic meetings this summer in Ballymena. They will be having meetings every night of the week and will

be publishing and distributing a special tract that Rev. Hanco is writing entitled, "What Think Ye of Christ?"

Young People's Activities

There was a YP Society Banquet for the Doon, Edgerton, and Hull YP in the Doon, Iowa PRC on May 11. Rev. Dykstra spoke on the topic, "Christian Service." □

Food for Thought

"To lengthen my patience is the best way to shorten my troubles."

G. Swinnock

ANNOUNCEMENTS

NOTICE!!!

Classis West of the Protestant Reformed Churches will meet in Lynden, Washington on Wednesday, September 1, 1993, at 8:30 a.m., the Lord willing. All material for the Agenda is to be in the hands of the Stated Clerk, 30 days before Classis convenes. All delegates in need of lodging or transportation from the airport should notify the Clerk of Lynden's consistory using the forms for this purpose.

Rev. Ronald VanOverloop,
Stated Clerk

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Men's Society of the Hull Protestant Reformed Church expresses its Christian sympathy to fellow member Egbert Gritters and his family, in the loss of his father

EGBERT O. "ED" GRITTERS.

May the family find comfort in the words of Psalm 48:14, "For this God is our God for ever and ever: he will be our guide even unto death."

Rev. R. Moore, President
Jim Andringa, Secretary

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

The Lord willing, on July 21, 1993, our parents,

MR. and MRS. C.M. DOEZEMA, will celebrate their 40th wedding anniversary. We are thankful to our covenant God for giving us parents who have taught us and have instructed us in His ways. May the Lord continue to guide and bless them in the years ahead. "...and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and forever" (Isaiah 59:21b).

- * Steven and Neva Feenstra
 - * Robert and Debra Doezema
 - * Roger and Anne Veldman
 - * Dorothy Doezema
 - * Glenn and Beth Feenstra
 - * Charles and Heidi Doezema
 - * Tim and Joan Kaiser
- 23 grandchildren

Holland, Michigan

IN MEMORY

In memory of our beloved mother, grandmother, and great grandmother,
CORA BYLSMA,

who was taken to her eternal home on Ascension Day, May 29, 1993 at the age of 94 years. Although we mourn her loss, we rejoice in the promise of Deuteronomy 33:27, "The eternal God is my refuge and underneath are the everlasting arms," which was such a comfort to her in her declining years.

Children:

- * Stuart and Betty Bylsma
 - * Kenneth Bylsma (Anne, deceased)
 - * Marvin and Mae Koerner
 - * Edward and Barbara Cammenga
 - * John and Thea Buiter
 - * Frank and Esther Block
- 28 grandchildren
81 great grandchildren

Grand Rapids, Michigan

NOTICE!!!

The address of our Synodical Treasurer, Joel Zandstra, is now: 5052 36th Avenue, Hudsonville, MI 49426. Please make this change in your addresses for correspondence.

**BRITISH
REFORMED FELLOWSHIP
FAMILY HOLIDAY CONFERENCE**

Dates: 30 July — 6 August 1994.

Place: Scottish College of Textiles, Galashiels, Scotland.
(34 miles south of Edinburgh; 72 miles from Glasgow).

Speakers: Professors H. Hanko and D. Engelsma, PRC.
Rev. Sinclair Horne, Scottish Reformation Society.

Theme: The Doctrine of Sovereign Grace.

Accommodation: All rooms single study-bedrooms with washhand basins, and bed linen and towels provided. (One bathroom and two toilets per ten rooms).

Tours: Edinburgh; Sites associated with Scottish Covenanters; Bass Rock; Berwick-on-Tweed; Ettrick.

Cost:

Option (A) Full Board: Adults £155; Children 5-12 £78; children under 5 free.

Option (B) Bed and Breakfast: Adults £94; Children 5-12 £47; children under 5 free.

Option (C) Self catering: Six-bedroom family unit with separate kitchen/lounge £200.

Note:

With regard to Options (B) and (C) meals can be purchased at the following rates: Lunch £5 (children half-price); packed lunch £3.50; Dinner £7 (children half-price). However, all such meals must be ordered at the time of booking.

Contact persons (for information or reservations):

Mr. Tony Horne
9 Church Road
Thornbury, Bristol BS12 1EJ
England
(Tel. 0454-414517)

or

Mr. Bill Oomkes
6299 Wing Ave. S.E.
Grand Rapids, MI 49512
USA
(Tel. 616-698-6697)

**OFFICEBEARERS'
CONFERENCE**

Classis West
Meeting in Lynden, WA
August 31, 1993

Theme:
Reformed Missions
and Evangelism

Keynote Address:
Acts 13:1-4
"Missionaries Sent Out
From Antioch"
Rev. Russ Dykstra

Sectionals:
"Missionaries Within
a Particular Classis"
Rev. Richard Moore

"Active Congregational
Involvement"
Rev. Ron VanOverloop

"The Macedonian Call"
Rev. Carl Haak

"Preparing to Give an Answer"
(I Peter 3:15)
Rev. Steve Key

"A Critique of the
Modern Church-Growth
Evangelism"
Rev. Charles Terpstra

"Distinguishing Between
Essentials and Non-Essentials
on the Mission Field"
Rev. Wayne Bekkering

THE STANDARD BEARER

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NOTICE!!!

The 50th anniversary celebration
of Randolph Protestant
Reformed Church
will be held

Friday evening,
September 10 (program),
Saturday,
September 11 (picnic),
and Sunday,
September 12 (worship services).
Please note change of dates.

Former members and all friends
are invited to join us.

For lodging with members of the
congregation, please contact
Pastor S. Key (414) 326-5642
or

Mr. Gary Buteyn (414) 326-5666,
or send a note to the church ad-
dress: 229 Hammond St.
Randolph, WI 53956.

NOTICE!!

Classis East will meet in regular
session on Wednesday, September
8, 1993 at the First Protestant Re-
formed Church, Grand Rapids, MI.
Material for this session must be in the
hands of the Stated Clerk no later than
August 7, 1993.

Jon J. Huiskens
Stated Clerk

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

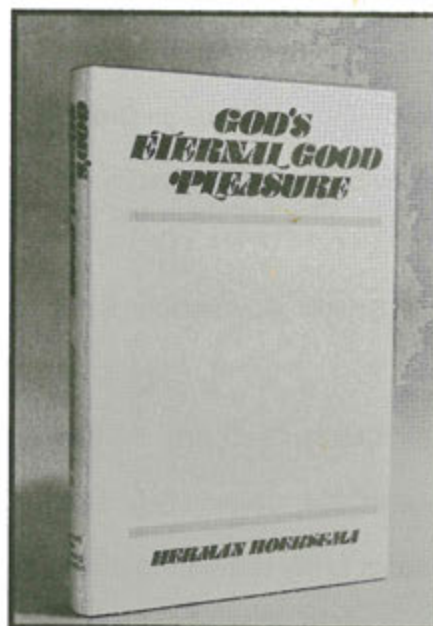
The Council of the Hull Protestant
Reformed Church herewith expresses
its sympathy to its fellow member,
Egbert Gritters, in the death of his
father,

MR. EGBERT O. GRITTERS.

May our covenant God comfort
and sustain the bereaved family, "For
I know that my Redeemer liveth, and
that he shall stand at the latter day
upon the earth" (Job 19:25).

Rev. Richard Moore, President

God's Eternal Good Pleasure by Herman Hoeksema



In the 1940s Rev. Hoeksema
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Reformed explanation of sover-
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also examines the so-called Jew-
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faced those who lived in the
World War II era and which we
today encounter with increasing
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WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On June 23, 1993,
ART and FLORENCE SCHWARZ
celebrated their 50th wedding anni-
versary. We are thankful to God for
blessing them together in their mar-
riage, and pray that He will keep them
in His care. "The Lord bless thee, and
keep thee: the Lord make his face to
shine upon thee, and be gracious unto
thee: the Lord lift up his countenance
upon thee and give thee peace" (Num-
bers 6:24-26).

The Schwarz Family
Loveland, Colorado

*Remember:
Introductory
subscriptions to
The Standard Bearer
are still
half-price!*