



# *THE* **STANDARD BEARER**

**A Reformed  
Semi-Monthly  
Magazine**

Lost, unsaved relatives, neighbors, fellow students or workers, are *lost*. They are in the bondage of sin and are under divine sentence temporally and eternally. Does that speak to us? Or are we indifferent to the peril of their soul?

See "*Kelong and Net*" — page 397

Vol. 70, No. 17  
June, 1994



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### In This Issue ...

This issue continues the theme of missions that has been prominent in the past two issues of the *Standard Bearer* with particular emphasis on foreign missions.

Rev. Russ Dykstra has two significant contributions. One is "Missionaries Sent Out from Antioch." From Acts 13:1-4, Rev. Dykstra draws instruction for the mission calling of the church today. There are "four elements in the church of Antioch found in a church that desires to be used by Christ in missions."

In his capacity as secretary of the Foreign Mission Committee of the Protestant Reformed Churches, Rev. Dykstra reports on the work and plans of the committee. The FMC is investigating work in Ghana, Africa. It is proposing to synod 1994 that a committee visit Ghana once again on behalf of full-time work there by a missionary. Read "Foreign Mission Work in the PRC."

In an article that delivers even more than its intriguing title promises ("Kelong and Net"), Rev. Jason Kortering discusses methods of missions. Drawing on his experience in Singapore, where his labors as minister-on-loan involve him in work with the lost, Rev. Kortering calls on the congregations to be active in missions with both *kelong* and *net*.

Not all the articles this time are on missions. Be sure to read Rev. George Lubbers' careful exposition of the apostle's exhortation in I Timothy 5:3-7 concerning an important aspect of the life of the congregation, "The God-Required Honor Due to Widowed Mothers."

The editorial highlights the agenda of the 1994 synod of the PRC. This keeps our people informed and enables them more intelligently to pray for the synod, vital expression of the unity of the churches. Members in Western Michigan are urged to attend the pre-synodical worship service at Faith Church in Jenison on Monday evening, June 6. The sessions of synod are open to the public.

Our readers are reminded that the *SB* appears only once a month in June, July, and August.



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—DJE



# Self Examination

*Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure; for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall.*

II Peter 1:10

Therefore....

Because you have experienced the power of our mighty God in your hearts and lives....

Because you have been efficaciously called out of death into life, and even made partakers of the divine nature....

And because, besides all that, you are given exceeding great and precious promises, be diligent to make your calling and election sure.

There may be someone in the church who reveals nothing more than temporal faith, which may cause him to be very exuberant about his newly discovered joy, yet when trials and persecution beset him he falls away. Or there may be someone who is born and reared in the church, but never actually possesses true faith, is spiritually blind, and is barren, never giving evidence of the fruits of grace.

You who by a true and living faith know Jesus Christ do not want to be counted with either one of them. Wherefore the rather, give diligence, brethren, to make your calling and election sure.

To make your election sure you must make your calling sure. Therefore your calling is mentioned first.

But the point is, make your election sure.

\* \* \* \* \*

Your election is that amazing wonder of grace that God has chosen you as His very own, and loves you with an eternal, unchangeable love, for no reason to be found in you, but only in sovereign good pleasure.

Out of the whole human race God has chosen a people unto Himself as His cherished possession, to be redeemed by the blood of His dear Son, to be renewed by His Spirit, and brought into His fellowship to adore and praise Him forever. God chose an organism, His church, as a body with Christ as its Head, and has chosen each individual for his own place in the body to serve in his own unique manner to the praise of His name eternally.

Since the rest of humanity by that same sovereign will are reprobated to perish in their sins, we can only marvel the more that we should be counted among that elect people. Why should God choose me? I certainly am no better than the many thousands who are justly condemned to hell for their sins. I stand amazed at that boundless mercy that the eternal God should have compassion upon me, the most unworthy. Don't you?

That election is the eternal and certain ground of our salvation. Our Canons tell us that our election is of unspeakable consolation to us. How important it is that we are sure that we are among the elect, whose names are indelibly written in the Book of Life.

To make our election sure, Peter tells us, we must make our calling sure.

Our calling is that powerful work of our God's Spirit in our hearts whereby, through the preaching of the Word, we were transformed from death into life, from darkness into God's marvelous light.

You and I took no active part in that, but were mere recipients. When Jesus stood at the tomb of Lazarus He cried, "Lazarus, come forth," and power went forth from Him, bringing life into that decaying corpse, so that Lazarus awoke and came forth out of the tomb. Even so, when the powerful voice of Jesus penetrates into the hidden recesses of our souls we hear the voice of Jesus calling: "Awake, thou that sleepest, arise from the dead!" Our Canons refer to this as a supernatural, incomprehensible work of God in Christ Jesus, which is equal only to creation and the resurrection from the dead.

As a newborn babe has the ability to see, even though it cannot as yet focus its eyes, so also at our rebirth we are given the potential, the ability, to believe. In due time this ability is brought into an active believing, whereby we learn to know our sin and misery and embrace Christ with all His benefits, to live a new and holy life in gratitude to God. We are called out of death into life, to live before the face of God and to tell His praises.

Therefore it is so very important that we give diligence to make our calling sure. Only then can we make our election, the eternal ground of our salvation, sure.

\* \* \* \* \*

Does this imply that our calling, and therefore our election, is and remains a grave uncertainty throughout most of our lives? Is it an earmark

*Rev. Hanko is a minister emeritus in the Protestant Reformed Churches.*



of a child of God that he doubts his salvation? Should I be asking myself time and again, "Am I really saved?" Does self-examination mean that I ask myself, "Am I a child of God?"

We must understand well that this would be contrary to the presence and work of the Holy Spirit within us, and also contrary to true faith wrought by Christ's indwelling Spirit.

Faith is a sure knowledge. It is not a mere intellectual knowledge (as important as that is), but a conviction of the heart. Job confesses: "I know that my Redeemer liveth." And Paul assures us that he is "confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ."

Besides that, faith is a hearty confidence, trust, assurance. As David says: "My soul waiteth upon God, from him is my salvation."

Therefore Paul does not admonish us to examine ourselves whether we *have* faith, but rather, whether we are *in the faith* (II Cor. 13:5).

The example has been used of a man who, when he awakens in the morning, does not pinch himself to find out whether he is alive. He knows he is. He does not look in the mirror to see whether he is the same person that went to bed the night before. He knows he is. He does not ask his wife whether he is still her husband. He knows he is.

The same thing applies to a true and living faith. We know that we are sons and daughters of our merciful, covenant God.

In the words of the apostle Paul, we must examine ourselves whether we are *in the faith*.

"The faith" here means the objective truth as we have it in the Word of God. Just as we are accustomed to speak of "the faith of our fathers," referring to the content of their faith, so also here the truth as it is revealed to us in the Scriptures and as we

receive it through faith is meant.

This does not mean that I can rest content because I accept all that is in the Bible to be true. Or because I formally attend church and say my prayers. Or because I am faithful to my husband or wife, care for my family, pay my obligations, and live a decent, respectable life. All that may be true, but it may still also be true that I do not live "in the faith," I do not live in the full assurance of being God's elect.

The question is, therefore, do I love the Lord my God with my whole being? Do I love Him more than I love my family and my earthly possessions? Does He have first place in my life? Do I seek to glorify His name in all that I say and do? Do I put all my trust in Him alone? Is it evident to my family, among my acquaintances, and at my places of labor, that I live close to my God? Do others see in my daily walk that I am a Christian?

We place ourselves before the mirror of God's holy Word with the prayer, "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

What we see as we stare into the mirror of God's Word is not appealing. We see our sinful nature and our sin as it still wars in our members. We see in our daily walk the very opposite of love and devotion to our God. We sin constantly in all that we say and do. We see ourselves as hopelessly lost sinners in the sight of the living God. We can only complain: "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" In our misery we cry out with the psalmist: "Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O Lord. Lord, hear my voice, let thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplication."

But we also hear anew the glad tidings of the gospel. We hear Christ say to us: "Though your sins be as scarlet, I have washed you white as

snow." All the gold and silver of this world can not atone for a single sin. No animal sacrifice, no angel from heaven, can pay the ransom for our sins. God performs the impossible. He gave His Son. His Son gave His life. Christ now lives to bless us out of heaven. By His Spirit within us He assures us of the forgiveness of our sins and sanctifies us to a new and holy life, to the praise of our God.

In gratitude to Him we desire to live unto Him, even as we live by Him.

This includes crucifying the flesh and prayerfully guarding ourselves from the snares of temptation. Peter urges us "to add to our faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity."

\* \* \* \* \*

"For if ye do these things ye shall never fall."

There are those within the church who are spiritually blind. It is not all Israel that is called Israel. In due time they fall away.

That was true in Peter's day, and it grieved the saints. There was a Judas among the twelve, even though he went unsuspected for some time. There are also among us those who are carnal, some of whom, after much prayer and labor, must be excommunicated.

Equally painful it is to see fellow believers fall into sin. We become deeply aware of our own sinful weaknesses. We take to heart the warning, "Let him who stands beware lest he fall." And we pray the more earnestly: "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the Evil One."

Peter assures us that we shall never fall when we diligently seek all our salvation in Christ alone. If our salvation depended in the smallest degree upon us, we would have every reason to question whether we are actually saved. If God had waited for us to make the first move, to extend a hand, or even to breathe a sigh, we would never have been saved.

*What we see  
as we stare  
into the mirror  
of God's Word  
is not appealing.*



But salvation is of the Lord. Christ knows His own, given to Him by the Father and redeemed by His cross, whom He calls by name, and they

come to Him. And this same Christ who has begun a good work will surely finish it. He assures us: "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."

None of self. It is all of Him!

Well may we heed the Word of God: "Give diligence to make your calling and election sure." □

## Editorial

# Synod of the PRC 1994

Faith Protestant Reformed Church in Jenison, Michigan will host the 1994 synod of the denomination. Synod will convene on Tuesday, June 7. The pre-synodical worship service will be held on Monday evening, June 6, in the auditorium of the Faith church. Rev. James Slopeema, president of the 1993 synod, will conduct the service and preach the sermon.

The agenda indicates that this synod will be short on controversy and long on positive proposals. In a church-world rife with tensions, strifes, and divisions, the PRC enjoy peace. Under God's blessing, this is due to a real oneness based upon the Reformed confessions — the "Three Forms of Unity." Peace enables them energetically to carry out Christ's mandates to His church in missions, contact, theological instruction, and other areas.

There is also growth. The denomination grew by fifty families since last year. It is now nearing 1,500 families, the largest it has ever been.

God grant that synod may serve these churches well, deciding everything on the basis of Holy Scripture, the creeds, and the church order of Dordt and "endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:3).

## Missions

The Foreign Mission Committee (FMC) proposes that a delegation be

sent again to Ghana, Africa within eight months after the meeting of synod. The purpose is to make preparation for the eventual calling of a missionary to work in Ghana. Presently, the FMC conducts a weekly radio broadcast over Radio Africa. Rev. Richard Moore is the preacher. The FMC is in contact with Rev. Jason Kortering in Singapore concerning missions there. The FMC "is committed to promoting the work of foreign missions in the PRC. As part of this effort, the committee has started the practice of printing a semi-annual news letter to the churches." The committee "requests the prayers of all the saints that the Lord will again grant our churches the privilege of sending missionaries into lands where the gospel has not been preached in the generations of the people."

The Domestic Mission Committee (DMC) is proposing that synod authorize the calling of a home missionary. He will investigate fields and labor in fields that may open up. The committee recommends that the Loveland, Colorado PRC be the calling church and that the home missionary begin his work with a group in the San Luis Valley in southern Colorado. The Loveland church has been active in the gathering of a group of five families and several individuals in that area. Protestant Reformed ministers have been preaching for the group since June, 1993. The DMC has laid out a helpful guide for related,

denominational work by the home missionary, including radio and writing.

The DMC has done some careful evaluation of the work presently being carried on by the PRC through radio. The result is the recommendation that several stations be dropped. At the same time, the committee is preparing "one year's worth of radio broadcasts for the purpose of introducing our churches and the Reformed truth." These broadcasts will be used both for the discovery of new fields and for the support of fields that the PRC are working. The denominational committee will help a local church in the support of a radio broadcast in the amount of up to 50% of the cost, if the church can show that the broadcast has potential for denominational missions.

The synod receives an encouraging report of the Northern Ireland mission. Rev. Ron Hanko has, on many occasions, for many audiences, in many different places. Missionary Hanko reports that "the members of the CRF (Covenant Reformed Fellowship) are all actively involved in the work." One aspect of this activity is the distribution of a great deal of literature throughout the British Isles. The Northern Ireland mission cooperates with the British Reformed Fellowship in the promotion of the Reformed faith in the wider area of Scotland, England, and Wales. Member-



ship in the CRF, the mission group itself, numbers fourteen adults, three young people, and thirteen children, exclusive of the Hanco family. In addition, some twelve adults, three young people, and seven children regularly visit the services on the Lord's Day. There are also other visitors.

### Seminary

The Theological School Committee (TSC) reports to synod that there were twelve students in the seminary this past year. Two men will have graduated by the time of synod. Both are Australians who trained for the ministry in the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Australia, Mr. Chris Connors and Mr. David Higgs. Two students will begin a six-month internship this summer. Seminarian Allen Brummel will work in Singapore under the supervision of the sessions of the two Evangelical Reformed Churches, Pastor Lau Chin Kwee, and Rev. Jason Kortering. Seminarian Douglas Kuiper will do his internship in the PRC of Doon, Iowa under the supervision of the Doon consistory and Rev. Russ Dykstra. These will be the first implementation of an intern program adopted recently by synod. The purpose is to give advanced seminarians experience in the congregation or on the mission field. One young man from the PRC will begin studies in the seminary this fall.

Construction of the addition to the seminary building is about to begin. Friends outside the PRC and members of the churches have freely donated some \$320,000. This represents about 75% of the estimated cost. The addition will consist of a library, study space for the students, studies for the faculty, and storage space for denominational works. The TSC will conduct a financial drive for the remainder of the cost after construction begins. The committee is recommending that synod approve collections in the churches until the debt is repaid.

A room in the new addition will house the denominational archives. Recent acquisitions include the per-

sonal papers of Herman Hoeksema and of Justin Kortering, long-time elder in the Holland, Michigan PRC. Archivist Jon Huiskens and the TSC make an important plea:

The archives continue to look for additional materials. Of particular note to the archives are the papers of those individuals and organizations which have figured prominently in the history of the PRC. Anyone, therefore, with materials that might be useful to the archives should not destroy them, but rather should donate them to the archives so that they may be preserved and then made available to those who may wish to use them in trying to tell the story of our existence.

The heart of the work of the TSC is expressed in the opening lines of the report of Rector Robert D. Decker, included in the report of the TSC:

To be used of God for the preparation of ministers of the Word and Sacraments is a great privilege for which the professors are thankful. We do this in a denomination of churches where we have complete freedom to teach the truth of Holy Scripture as interpreted and summed in the Three Forms of Unity. And we enjoy the encouragement, support, and prayers of God's people. For this we thank our God without whose grace this could never be.

### Contact

The Contact Committee (CC) reports on various degrees of contact with the Alliance of Reformed Churches, independent churches in Canada, the Evangelical Reformed Churches of Singapore, the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Australia, and the Protestant Reformed Church of New Zealand. The PRC have full sister-church relations only with the Evangelical Reformed Churches of Singapore and the PRC of New Zealand.

Contact with an independent church in Canada and with the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Australia has raised the question of the

PRC opening their pulpits to ministers of churches with which the PRC do not have a sister-church relationship. The CC is recommending that synod allow for the opening of the pulpits of the PRC to such ministers according to guidelines suggested by the CC. This will require that synod declare a decision of a previous synod "incorrect." The decision in view is that of the synod of 1989 in Article 12:

The Constitution of the Contact Committee makes the exchange of pulpits one of the most important fruits of full sister-church relations (V-B-1); it hardly seems possible that mutual opening of pulpits can also belong to a less complete fraternal relationship where circumstances have dictated that a full relationship is not possible ("Acts of Synod 1989," p. 14).

The Alliance of Reformed Churches brings to our synod the question, "Are (you) interested in working toward a federative unity with the independent churches? If so, according to what procedure would (you) suggest such federative unity be sought?" The CC has drawn up a letter of response to this inquiry and asks that synod adopt it.

The relation of the PRC with the Evangelical Reformed Churches of Singapore and the prodigious labors in Singapore of Rev. and Mrs. Jason Kortering are heartwarming. God opening up the way, it is to be hoped that there will be much that the PRC can do in helping the Evangelical Reformed Churches of Singapore in many ways in the future.

### Other Matters

Among the other matters that synod must treat, there are several appeals against the decision of the synod of last year closing the Jamaica mission field. A council overtures synod to change decision "D" under Article 38 of the church order, so that an appropriate church council makes nomination for the election of officebearers at the organization of a new congregation. A member overtures synod to change the procedure



of the examination of ministerial candidates from other churches. The Emeritus Committee has a special report on the supervision of the sup-

port of emeriti ministers, suggesting that a revision of Article 13 of the church order may be necessary.

God bless the deliberations of the

synod to the welfare of the PRC, the good of the church universal, and the glory of His Name! □

— DJE

## Letters

### ■ Special Issue on Missions

I want to thank you for the beautiful special issue of May 1 on missions. I enjoyed the whole very instructive issue, but was struck especially by the articles, "Missionaries Sent Out From Antioch" and "The Macedonian Call," by the brothers Dykstra and Haak. As I read I could not help but reflect on my own call and experiences as missionary to Latin America for 38 years. That certainly followed the pattern so clearly laid out and explained in those articles.

This is only the second time in the more than thirty years that I have been receiving the *Standard Bearer* that I have written to the editor. The first time was some twenty-five years ago when I requested and received permission to translate and use some articles in my Reformed Doctrine courses at the Juan Calvino Seminary in Mexico City, the seminary of the Independent Presbyterian Church in Mexico.

May the Lord continue to bless you richly as you labor for the advancement of His cause.

J. Jerry Pott  
Holland, MI

### ■ More on Government Aid

Reading the *Standard Bearer* is always enjoyable and edifying, yet sometimes it creates questions. This was true of Mr. James Lanting's answer in the March 15, 1994 issue given, at the request of the editorial committee, to the reader's question on what our position should be regarding the receiving of government aid by parents in our schools.

Was this answer to Mr. Flikkema's question regarding our position on

receiving government aid to Christian schools saying, in effect, that our position is really one of no position at all? Was Mr. Lanting saying that receiving government aid by our parents and/or schools is a good position to take, as long as we do not see "a realistic threat of corresponding and unwanted government control over the recipient or the use of the funds"?

Obviously, it is all right to receive such aid *legally*. The government offers it and will probably also continue to do so — as long as it remains solvent at the tax-payers' expense. But isn't there a greater threat of government control in our schools today than there ever was before? We know our government's position towards religion in the schools of our land, don't we? Is not the increase of godlessness in our land due in part to the removal of prayer, Scripture, and all reference to our Creator God from the schools of our land? If so, should we seek aid from such a government?

It seems to me that the *Standard Bearer* should have answered Mr. Flikkema's question from a Reformed, spiritual, and/or biblical point of view. That is, does God's Holy Word support the position that parents in spiritual Israel should ask and accept aid from earthly governments to help support the education of their children?

Isn't it recommendable to take the position that government aid should be avoided? I well remember my father saying in this regard, "The tender mercies of the wicked are cruel" (Prov. 12:10). This truth was made clear to me during my student days at Calvin College when I took a course on creative Bible teaching. Our entire class, after a few moments of waiting

for the instructor, had to get up and go to an older section of the building. The reason given was that religion could be taught there since it had been built without the use of government aid.

The interesting illustration in the editorial of the same issue entitled, "The Nose of the Camel," with its reference to women voting at congregational meetings, would be good here, also, wouldn't it? That is, by stopping the "intrusive camel at the point of his nose," we will prevent the beastly camel from coming entirely into the tent. Reformed Christian schools do not want government control in their school tent!

Thanks for your time, and keep up the good work of publishing the *Standard Bearer*, as a Reformed magazine.

Ken DeJong  
Lansing, IL

### RESPONSE:

Readers will recall that the original question posed by Mr. Flikkema was whether it is wrong for Reformed parents to participate in a government pupil transportation reimbursement program offered to parents of non-public school students. My reply was that it is not wrong for Christians to receive this government reimbursement for student transportation costs so long as it does not entail a realistic threat of unwanted governmental control over the use of these funds.

My good friend Mr. DeJong suggests, perhaps unfairly, that this is "really no position at all." I think he writes this because Mr. DeJong apparently believes that Christians, as a matter of principle, should never receive *any* aid or assistance from our "evil" government ("The tender mer-



cies of the wicked are cruel"). In fact, Mr. DeJong has told me that Christian farmers, for example, should refuse all farm assistance programs offered by "the wicked U.S. government."

To be consistent, Mr. DeJong would also have to refuse health assistance for elderly parents (Medicare and Medicaid), social security disability payments for handicapped persons, Pell grants and scholarships for needy college students, low interest student loans, flood aid and disaster relief, and many other government aid programs that many Reformed Christian taxpayers participate in.

I respectfully suggest that this view is indefensible. I would insist that Reformed Christian taxpayers in this country may take advantage of Medicare/Medicaid, social security, farm aid, disaster relief, and student transportation reimbursement *so long as it does not entail objectionable government control over the recipient or proper use of the funds.* And if this objectionable government intrusion is what Mr. DeJong means by "the nose of the camel," then, of course, we have no disagreement.

— James Lanting

### ■ Private Communion

A few comments on your answer to Ellen VanDenTop in the *Standard Bearer* of April 1, 1994 in "The Reader Asks." Your answer troubles me. I believe in close communion and that

we should never play with the Lord's Supper, as so many are doing today. But it seems to me that in the case Ellen VanDenTop mentions, all the demands for a worthy celebration of the Lord's Supper are fully met. Here is a woman who, as far as able, is a living member of the congregation and lives along with the congregation as far as she can, that is, joining in with the worship services by way of a "telephone line." She desires also to take a part with the congregation in proclaiming the Lord's death, and have her faith strengthened through the use of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. She does this under the jurisdiction of the elders. They evidently know she is a devout Christian woman. I assume that she is delighted to be able to so join in with the congregation. But now she is told: Sorry! We have rules that forbid this.

That answer sounds very cruel and unchristian to me, yes, even sinful. You should have, as I see it, complimented these elders for so caring for this lady who needs just this kind of care. Let me say that we need rules, and that we must observe them. But surely you agree that there are exceptions to all rules. This is such an exception. As officebearers we are called to take heed of the flock, and this involves a care for the spiritual welfare. Rules must never stand in the way of giving such loving care.

(Rev.) Cecil W. Tuininga  
Edmonton, Alberta, Canada

### RESPONSE:

Rev. Tuininga characterizes our answer as a cruel and unchristian application of a "rule." The "rule," however, is nothing less than the Church Order of Dordt and the confessions of the Reformed Churches (cf. Belgic Confession, Article 35), both of which clearly teach that the Lord's Supper must be served in a public gathering of the congregation. True, modern means of communication make it possible for shut-ins to enjoy some of the benefits of attendance at the house of God on the Lord's day; but, partaking of the Lord's Supper *at the same time as other members of the congregation* is not the same as partaking in the public gathering of the congregation. The former remains private communion — which the fathers of Dordt forbade.

And, as to being "cruel and unchristian," we should note that it is the Lord Himself who so orders our way that some of us are confined to our beds for extended periods of time. And He does so, knowing full well that during that time we will not be able to go to His house. It behooves us to submit to His will, content with the assurance that, when God for His own purpose deprives us of the dispensation of His grace through the instituted means, we will find that He is faithful to provide in every circumstance, and that His grace is always sufficient. □

— Ed. Comm.

## Open Letter to the Members of the PRC

On the 25th May my family and I left Michigan for Australia. We have just concluded a stay in Grand Rapids of almost three years; this is a long time to be away from home. We will be glad to be back home, to be reacquainted with members of our family and old friends. We will be glad to be back in the church in which we have been raised since infancy. Yes, we will even be glad to be back in our own culture. But there is much sad-

ness associated with our leaving as well.

I would like to take this opportunity publicly to thank those among the Protestant Reformed Churches who have made our stay in the USA enjoyable and worthwhile. Firstly, I thank the PR Seminary faculty and staff for all the teaching and support that they have afforded us. We came over here to be trained in your seminary, and I believe we have been

trained well. The instruction has been Scriptural, solid, lively, and thought-provoking. We have not always agreed with every "jot and tittle" of what has been taught, but in the vast majority of instruction we have rejoiced in the commonality of our faith.

The support staff has been just that — supportive. Never have they been too busy to help out. Never have they failed to offer good, solid, practical advice when it was needed.



Our spiritual home while being in the USA has been Hope PRC. We have made many friends in this congregation. We have been faithfully taught from God's Word, Lord's day by Lord's day. We have enjoyed the communion of the saints, and have had our youngest child baptized in this congregation. It will be sad to leave.

We have made some *special*

friends among the PR members. We have been supported in special little ways — too numerous even to begin to mention. We have established relationships which are firm and treasured. Our children have gained friends from among your children.

Yes, we are happy to have left for home, but mixed with that happiness is an underlying feeling of great sadness. It may be that we will never see

each other in this life again; and that is cause for sadness.

It is my personal hope that our stay in your midst may be the foundation from which arises a closer relationship between our two denominations; a relationship built on the great truths of God's Word which we both hold so dear. □

Yours in Christ's Name,  
David Higgs

## All Around Us

## Prof. Robert Decker

### ■ Persecution a Daily Reality for Many Christians

We North American Reformed Christians tend to forget this. We are free to worship the Lord from Sunday to Sunday as He has commanded us in His Word. We educate our children in Christian schools. We conduct our family devotions and strive to live the Christian life of obedience to the will of God. All this, and more, we do with very little or no opposition from the world of unbelief. The result is that we think little about persecution. We know that it's coming. We know that in the very end there will be a great tribulation, "such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened" (Matt. 24:21-22).

We know too that Jesus spoke often of the fact that Christians would be persecuted. "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven," Jesus said. And the Savior continues in the context, "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my

sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you" (Matt. 5:10-12). In the night before the cross Jesus warned His disciples (and all Christians), "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you.... If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also. But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me" (John 15:18-21).

We know all this, but because we do not experience persecution ourselves we tend to forget about it. For many Christians, however, persecution is a daily reality. For example, brutal persecution of Protestants is increasing steadily in the former Soviet Union. A systematic "cleansing" of Protestants, similar to that experienced by all faiths under Joseph Stalin, could occur soon in the Commonwealth of Independent States, said Boris Perchatkin, an evangelical Christian and former Soviet dissident. As order breaks down in Russia and the surrounding republics, strongmen attached to the Muslim and Russian Orthodox establishments are filling the power void, Perchatkin reported. In February, the Russian Army formed an alliance with a million-member military organization with historical roots in the Cossack people. The two groups pledged loyalty to Russian Orthodoxy and war against Protestants, Perchatkin said. Protestantism

is seen as an American plan to interfere in the affairs of the former Soviet Union. Some Russians are convinced that Protestant mission work is motivated by the sinister desire to "steal Russia from the Russians." The result is that there is great danger to foreign missionaries in Cossack regions. Many Russian Christians fear for their lives, and thousands are ready to leave after hearing for months of kidnappings, tortures, murders, lynchings, and threats.

Things are no better in China. Asia Watch, a human rights agency, recently presented a 664-page report to the United States Congress. The report gives information on over 1,000 people imprisoned in China as "prisoners of conscience." Christians have a prominent place in this list. Three Christians, according to the report, died in prison in 1993. Asia Watch called 1993 the worst year for human rights since 1989-1990, after the Tiananmen massacre. The report noted a "widespread pattern of detentions, beatings and finings by local police of house church Christians, mainly poor farmers, in the three north-central provinces of Henan, Anhui and Shaaxi."

In our family devotions and personal prayers, as well as in our public and congregational prayers, we ought not forget to bring the needs of those persecuted for righteousness sake to the throne of grace.

National & International  
Religion Report  
REC News Exchange

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



## ■ Christian Reformed Church Gets New General Secretary

The Rev. Leonard Hofman is retiring this year after serving as the CRC's General Secretary since 1982. The position of General Secretary is comparable to that of stated clerk in most other Presbyterian and Reformed denominations. Dr. David Engelhard, professor of Hebrew and Old Testament at Calvin Theological Seminary, has accepted the single nomination by the CRC board of trustees for General Secretary. The final steps in the selection process are an interview before the Synod and a vote to confirm the nomination.

Engelhard's nomination followed the decision of Dr. Calvin Bremer, pastor of the large Bethel CRC in Lansing, IL, to decline the nomination. Bremer and search committee chairman, Rev. Calvin Bolt, both stated that one significant factor in Bremer's decision to decline was ambiguity in the job description for the position of General Secretary in relationship to the Executive Director of Ministries. This latter position was created in 1990 as part of a general denominational restructuring. Dr. Peter Borgdorff will remain in this position. The General Secretary is respon-

sible for matters relating to the churches, and the Executive Director of Ministries is primarily responsible for matters relating to the denominational agencies; but some overlap between the positions still exists.

Engelhard has taught at Calvin Seminary for some 23 years.

*Reformed Believers Press Service*

## ■ White and Black Evangelicals Will Talk

In January of 1995, representatives of the predominantly white National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) and the National Black Evangelical Association (NBEA) will meet. Don Argue, retiring president of the NAE, said his group had been slow to work with its African-American counterpart. Lloyd Lindo of the NBEA said he felt it was the most hopeful sign of reconciliation in his 35 years of ministry.

Elward Ellis, a black evangelical, told the NAE that the blacks and whites in the United States do not know each other. It will take some risk, he said, really to get to know each other, once we get past "manifestos and documents."

The NAE also decided on a thorough reorganization. The annual meeting challenged the organization in five major areas: racism in the

church, leadership roles for women, dealing with generational differences, cooperation between local church and parachurch groups, and reinvigorating local evangelism.

David Wells, highly respected professor of historical and systematic theology at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, also challenged the delegates about the course of evangelism. He argued the evangelical movement was in danger of losing its soul, as it is being swept up into the "marketing ethos" of American culture. Wells, the author of *No Place for Truth, or Whatever Happened to Evangelical Theology?* said churches are adapting their messages inappropriately. "Churches are doing what Pepsi has done." He called on evangelicals to adopt a "vivid otherworldliness" to recover "the lost Word of God."

This is a warning evangelicals ought to heed! Much of the evangelical church in the United States, rather than calling God's people to come out from among them and be separate (II Cor. 6:17), is conforming to the world in her doctrine, worship, and practice (Rom. 12:2). □

*Christianity Today*  
*National & International*  
*Religion Report*  
*REC News Exchange*

Contribution

Rev. Russell Dykstra

# Missionaries Sent Out From Antioch (2)

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

[In the first installment, we noted that God is sovereign in the mission work of the church. Then, turning to Acts 13:1-4 and related passages, we saw how God prepared the church in Antioch to send out Paul and Barnabas to the mission field. God providentially gave the church the perfect geographic location and the right combination of members; and, above all, God built up the young church spiritually to be ready and eager to send out the gospel.]



## The Call of the Holy Spirit

The call to missions comes from the Holy Spirit, as Acts 13:2 records. "As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them."

Probably one of the many prophets in the church spoke this word of the Holy Spirit. Perhaps you wonder why it was necessary for the Holy Spirit to come in this direct way to the church. Two reasons may be given.

In the first place, God still spoke through special revelations in this time, because the Bible was not yet complete. Today this is unnecessary. The Spirit will not come to any congregation with a verbal announcement calling men to labor in missions. The church has the Bible and the example of the church and from this must learn God's will in its labors.

However, this direct call of the Spirit was also necessary because the church was setting off in a new endeavor—breaking new ground, so to speak. Officially sending two missionaries to Gentile lands and people had not been done before. They needed the assurance from the Spirit Himself that this was His will.

"Separate unto me Barnabas and Saul." Notice that the Spirit directs the church to consecrate these men, to ordain them to the office of missionary, if you will. Yet it is definitely the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of Christ who calls the men to the labors. This is the work of Jesus Christ who came to earth first of all to reveal God, to save His people by suffering and dying for them. Having accomplished that, He went to heaven and there received the gift of the Holy Spirit. Before His ascension, Jesus commanded His church, through the apostles, to preach the gospel to the ends of the earth. Here, Jesus sends the Spirit to inform the church of His will, calls men to the office, and directs them to a particular field to labor.

That Christ called the church of Antioch deserves emphasis. Barnabas and Paul did not stand up in the worship service and suggest that the church ought to send them out on

mission work. Nor did the church of Antioch decide on her own that it would be a good idea to send some men out. Rather, the Holy Spirit made the announcement.

Calling and sending missionaries is still the work of the Holy Spirit, though today it is not as overt. It might seem, at first, preferable that the Spirit make such announcements; but, upon further thought, one can understand why God does not so work. If the church had to wait for a voice from heaven she would do nothing until she heard the voice. The church would sit back contentedly in the pew and wait for the message telling when and where to labor. But God requires that each church be busy and seek the will of the Lord. At the very least the church ought to be ministering to the Lord and fasting, as was the church of Antioch, and looking for the work that God gives her to perform. Jesus promised His church that the fields are white with harvest, and the laborers are few. Thus the question is not, Does the Lord want us to labor? but, Where does the Lord want us to labor?

When Christ calls, the only response the church may have is to send. That brings up the matter of the Macedonian call—a specific request from individuals who want the preaching of the gospel. This was treated by Rev. Haak (the *Standard Bearer*, May 15, 1994), and needs no further explanation here. The church cannot simply wait for a Macedonian call but must be busy seeking the place in which Christ would have them labor.

What can be learned from this call of the Spirit to Antioch? Notice, first of all, that there is a definite call from the Holy Spirit to missions. He will inform the church where to labor.

Notice also that the Holy Spirit called *two* men to go out. This is a principle established by Christ Him-

self when He sent out His disciples to preach the gospel of the kingdom two by two. The Holy Spirit re-emphasizes that here in Acts 13: Separate me Barnabas and Saul—two men. That is no coincidence. It is the will of Jesus Christ for His church that two men go out to labor on a mission field, especially a foreign field. The work requires it. Jesus in heaven is wise enough to know what His mission field requires. Whether or not this is an inviolable rule of mission work can be debated; but the Scriptures certainly are clear that this is wisest.

Recall also, in that connection, that, while the Holy Spirit called two ministers to go out and labor, always on Paul's missionary journeys others accompanied him. John Mark started out on the first missionary journey. Luke, the writer of Acts, traveled with them and described their visits from city to city. Later Timothy would come along. Thus, not only were two ministers sent,

but other individuals accompanied them to support and assist the missionaries in their work. This is comparable to what sometimes today is called the "team effort," i.e., having on the field a team of people who assist the missionary(ies).

In addition, in this passage it is noteworthy that the Spirit called *two specific men* to go out. Many prophets and teachers were in the church of Antioch. But when the Holy Spirit came to the church of Antioch He did not ask for any two ministers. The Spirit singled out Barnabas and Saul. Why? Christ wanted those two men, not just any two.

From this it is apparent that not every minister is called to be a missionary. God prepares certain ministers to be missionaries. Think of the preparation that Paul had, including not only his Jewish training under Gamaliel, but his Hellenist instruction as well. The whole life of Paul

*The question is not, Does the Lord want us to labor? but, Where does the Lord want us to labor?*



was preparation, culminating in his conversion after which God revealed, "He is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles..." (Acts 9:15). God prepared *that* man.

Similarly today, God gives to a particular minister the personality, the gifts, and the preparation to be a missionary of the gospel. Just as some men are called to be seminary professors, some ministers are called to be missionaries. And some are not so called.

Christ, through the Spirit, calls today through the church which recognizes a field of labor and issues the call. The Spirit then applies the call to the heart of His chosen minister in such a way that he is convicted — Christ calls him to labor in the mission field. All this demonstrates forcibly that Christ sovereignly rules over His church by His Spirit in the work of missions.

#### The Elements Found in a Mission-Minded Church

Finally, this passage indicates four elements in the church of Antioch found in a church that desires to be used by Christ in missions. For these elements believers can both pray and work in their own congregations.

First, the church must be characterized by obedience and faithfulness to the Bible. This is necessary in the first place because God's Word is truth, and the truth builds up the church and makes her spiritually strong enough to be able to send out missionaries. The truth has to be proclaimed and lived by the congregation. But the same truth must be preached on the mission field. Only the preaching of the *truth* saves; God does not save His people with lies. Paul never compromised the truth on the mission field. In fact, the inspired letters of the apostle Paul to the churches established by God in his mission labors indicate that he insisted on purity both in doctrine and walk of life.

This was true also with the "hard doctrines." Consider how Paul maintained the doctrines of election and reprobation in his (inspired) epistle to

the Romans, a relatively young church. No doubt he preached the same.

The same was true of walk of life. He wrote to the church of Rome that if a person leaves or divorces his wife and marries another, that person is an adulterer to the day that he dies. Paul wrote that to a young, "mission" church. He did not compromise in doctrine or walk of life. It is obviously important that the church itself hold fast to the truth if she will be used by Christ in mission work.

A second element is that the lives of the members of the church must be a continual witness to the truth of the sovereign grace of God. This is related to the truth that mission work arises out of the church. It requires that the members of the church be continually witnessing to those who are around them. Others must see that these people have been drawn out of darkness into the marvelous light of God. They will ask such believers a reason for the hope that is within them. In Paul's day, believers who were running for their very lives, still witnessed to the truth. Out of such witnessing arise opportunities for evangelism and mission work.

A third element in a missionary-sending church is ministers who are ready to go out. However, let us be aware of the devastating effect of the wealth and materialism of this age. Ministers caught up in such materialism will find it well nigh impossible to forsake a comfortable parsonage, a relatively easy life in a congregation, good food, nice clothes, new cars, and the conveniences of modern Western society. That is especially true when the call is to go to the other side of the world and live with people of a radically different culture and race; to live in a house that few in America would even consider inhabiting; to eat food that people in America would not eat

(because it is so strange and simple); and to live with almost no modern conveniences. This can be a major hindrance to doing serious foreign mission. Ministers need the continual prayers of the members so that they are not caught up in the materialism of this age and thus become unwilling and unfit to go out and do mission work.

Finally, the church must be one that supports missionaries on the field. The support referred to here is not financial; it is assumed that the churches will financially support the missionaries as they do their pastors. The support meant is spiritual and psychological. The church as a whole sends a missionary, not just a synod or a consistory. Antioch did that. Look at verse 3: "And when

they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away." The church, as a whole, did these things.

Do you wonder why the Holy Spirit blessed Barnabas and Paul with much positive fruit in their missionary work? Part of it was due to the church back home. When Barnabas and Paul faced opposition and persecution in preaching the gospel, they had the assurance that the church back home was fasting and praying for their work. Later Paul and Silas, when they were lying on the cold stone floor of the Philippian jail, their backs bleeding and their legs in stocks, did not picture in their minds the church back home going to basketball games and eating out and having a good time. Their minds pictured the church gathered together in the sanctuary or in their homes fasting and praying for them. And God answered those prayers with grace both to sustain the missionaries and to change the hearts of the hearers. That kind of support — that kind of *living* — is essential for a church that is serious about mission work.

*The lives  
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Is not that our desire, fellow believers? Christ commands us, Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel. If that is not happening as much as it should in our judgment, if we have resources that are not being used, then we must do some soul-searching and find out whether or not

these elements are found in our midst, in our congregations or denomination. If we are not living for the cause, and if our attitude is not correct, Christ may well decide to use someone else for the work.

It is certain beyond words that Jesus Christ *will* gather His church.

Whether it is in spite of any given congregation or through a congregation, He will gather His church. The prayer of all faithful officebearers and members of the church of Jesus Christ is that He will be pleased to use their churches for this great work. □

## Guest Articles

# Kelong and Net

Rev. J. Kortering

About a year ago, when I was participating in a series of lectures here in Singapore on the "Reformed View of Missions," a brother asked me whether I favored the *kelong* method of missions or the net. The question was an example of cross-cultural frustration, for I didn't know what he was talking about. After a few attempts to explain, of which I understood very little, Pastor Lau came to the rescue and briefly explained the difference and how they related to each other. It surely is helpful to have an understanding colleague.

The question was very pointed and gave rise to my reflection for some time to come. Some of my musings I will share with you in this article.

Fishing is an important trade here in Singapore. Since Malaysia is directly north, fishermen take their trawlers either to the northwest into the Straits of Malacca or to the northeast into the South China Sea. These commercial fishermen generally use nets to snare their catch of fish. They catch all sorts of sea life, so they have to sort it all out, throw away what they do not want, and take their pre-

cious cargo of fish to the fish market for sale. The wet-markets overflow with freshly caught fish every day.

There is however another method of fishing. It is called *kelong*, a Malay word which describes the frame and net which are suspended in the water to attract fish. Bait is placed in this net in order to lure fish into it. We had opportunity to visit a fishing village in Kukup, Malaysia. All the houses, the temple, and the school are suspended above the water by being attached to poles which support them. In a separate area and a little way from shore was the *kelong* fishing set up. We went there by boat and had an opportunity to inspect this method of fishing.

Once we crossed the cultural gap, we could understand the question.

The Bible speaks of mission work as being like fishing. Jesus had said to His disciples, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men" (Matt. 4:19). Jesus told a parable how the kingdom of heaven is like a net which, when cast into the sea, gathers every kind of fish, which needed to be sorted out. So Christ will separate mankind in the day of judgment (Matt. 13:47-50). After His resurrection, Jesus appeared to His disciples who had toiled all night and caught no fish. He said to them, "Children, have ye any meat?" They answered him, "No." And He

said to them, "Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find." They did that, and they had so many fish that the net began to break. By this miracle Jesus conveyed to His disciples that He had power not only to bring fish into the net, but, more importantly, to save sinners. They would be fishers of men and He would bring the fish into their nets. Precious souls would be saved. Missions has to do with saving souls.

The choice between *kelong* and net has to do with methodology. To put it simply, by the net method the church and people of God go out to seek and find the lost, but by the *kelong* method the church and people of God attract the lost and draw them into the fellowship of the church. We want to examine both of them briefly and determine how they relate to each other and to the church.

Most of our congregations have sign boards outside our places of worship. Among other things, they usually say, "Visitors Welcome." We do well to ask ourselves, is that the extent of our reaching out to the lost? If so, I suppose that would be an example of *kelong* fishing. Our church building is the net and the congregation is the attractive bait by which our ungodly and unsaved neighbors are invited to swim in and join us. Or are we to go out and catch the lost and

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bring them in? Does it, in other words, take a bit of effort on our part to "catch fish"?

When we speak of methodology of missions, we must be sure that we agree that the catching of fish, saving of souls, is serious business. This is true from many points of view. I will mention two of them. Lost, unsaved relatives, neighbors, fellow students or workers, are *lost*. They are in the bondage of sin and are under divine sentence temporally and eternally. Does that speak to us? Or are we indifferent to the peril of their soul? May God arouse in us a real burden for lost souls. Secondly, the saving of souls is God's business from beginning to end. We thank God for that! The great emphasis of the Reformed faith upon God's sovereignty stimulates and encourages us to press forward in the saving of these souls. Our God is *able*! From this we conclude that however *kelong* or net fits into this scheme of God, God calls us to be active in the work and He will determine the outcome.

The casting out of the net assumes a seeking of the lost sinner. Jesus emphasized this when he sent out His disciples, two by two. He re-emphasized this with the final instruction for His church: "Make disciples of all nations" (Matt. 28:19). The early New Testament church followed our Lord's command, and the church at Antioch sent out Paul and Barnabas and others. The glorious history of missions unfolds the story of the church of Jesus Christ, as she is busy in sending out missionaries to the ends of the earth, casting out the net and bringing lost souls into the kingdom of heaven.

Such mission activity usually involves the cooperation of many congregations. The constitutions of our mission committees differentiate between the local congregation doing mission work and the churches in common doing it. The point that we

must not forget is that if we are to do mission work as churches in common we must be doing mission work in our local congregations. The church of Jesus Christ among us is not a so-called denomination of churches, it is the local church. For this reason we have a calling church to administer our mission fields. This church works closely with the denominational committee which represents the churches in common. This being true, we must face the reality that unless all our local congregations are seriously concerned about the salvation of the lost souls in their immediate vicinity, we will not have a burden for the lost in Jamaica, Africa, Singapore, India, Myanmar, or wherever else the Lord sends us.

Let me put this even more personally. The local congregation will not succeed in casting out the net for the lost without the diligent effort of every member. Local evangelism committees can do just so much with pamphlets, public lectures, and other common ways to reach out to unsaved

neighbors or to those who may be Christians but show interest in the Reformed faith. The indispensable element which is needed is the diligent effort of every member of the church to reach out to his neighbor. It starts with a real burden for the lost. It grows with a sensitivity to seek opportunities to witness to them concerning salvation in Jesus Christ.

We all know that effective evangelism of the lost requires developing personal relationships with them. But how is this done? This is a very sensitive area of Christian witnessing. We are talking here about the world, the unsaved, the lost. And the Bible tells us that whoever is a friend of the world is an enemy of God (James 4:4). How, then, can we establish personal relations with them? The answer is

obvious, if we are not looking for excuses. The friendship we develop with them is a serious concern for their soul, and they know that. This cannot be accomplished by joining them in their "beer busts." This begins in a lunch-room conversation when they talk about their frustrations and emptiness of life. You throw out questions when they boast of their hedonistic life-style, questions that force them to think. This takes courage and wisdom, but it is the only way in which the local congregation can reach out to the lost. Remember, a person may go to church, but be lost. One who does not confess his faith and live like a Christian is deceiving himself, and that is even worse.

The Samaritan woman of John 4 demonstrates this kind of witnessing when she goes to the city and tells her neighbors about Jesus. They who heard her came to Jesus and said, "Now we believe, not because of thy saying; for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world" (John 4:42). Our Heidelberg Catechism makes this same point concerning the prophetic office of every believer. "Confess his name," we read in A. 32; and, in A. 86, "by our godly conversation others may be gained to Christ."

Use of the net is not limited to the work of the church as institute. It is the vital work of every Christian. The prophetic office of Christ works through every Christian. It uses us in such a way that others can hear the voice of Jesus through her official ministry. Are we doing this? Are we as members reaching out to the lost? Are we inviting them into our homes for serious discussion about their spiritual welfare? Are we willing to meet with them regularly to open up to them the Scriptures, and to encourage those who are searching? Unless we answer yes, we are not using the net as Christ instructed us.

What about the *kelong*? This as-

*The saving  
of souls  
is God's  
business  
from beginning  
to end.*

*The prophetic  
office  
of Christ  
works through  
every  
Christian.*



pect is inseparably connected with the net. When it comes to missions, the net and *kelong* go together. The title of this article is "*Kelong and Net*." From the point of view of the *kelong*, we are called by God to attract the lost and struggling. This does not contradict the doctrine of total depravity. We are not now talking about unsaved people being attractive; we are rather talking about Christians being attractive to others.

We must view this in two ways. First, as Christians we must project the attractiveness which Jesus gives to us by virtue of our salvation. "Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time. Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man" (Col. 4:5, 6). We read, "Walk honestly toward them that are without" (I Thess. 4:12). Even the elders of the church must have a good report from them that are without (I Tim. 3:7). "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:35). From a negative point of view, we read, "Give none offense, neither to the Jews nor to the Gentiles, not to the church of God ... that they may be saved" (I Cor. 10:32, 33).

These attractive spiritual virtues we have received from Jesus, our Savior and Lord. The fruit of the Spirit is not for intellectual reflection, but for daily practice, for then we are not desirous of vain glory, but provoke one another and envy one another (Gal. 5:22-26). That is how Paul summarizes the putting off of the old man and putting on the new man in Christ Jesus. It involves obedience to our Lord both in faith and life. "Let all bitterness, wrath, and anger and clamor and evil speaking be put away from you with all malice, and be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you" (Eph. 4:31, 32). Such Christians are attractive and will be attractive to others. If we do this, then we can understand why we read in Peter's first epistle, "But sanctify the Lord

God in your hearts; and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear" (I Pet. 3:15). There will be a holy jealousy which leads them to inquire of such a way of life.

If we practice the above, the local church will be made up of attractive members. Obviously, if all her members live in this manner, they will be interacting with each other personally, and any visitor will take notice. I ask you, what unsaved person who is looking into the truth of Christianity and visits a church which is made up of people who are so absorbed in their own life that visitors are not even noticed or addressed, or worse yet, if he appears in a church where members are at odds with each other and will hardly talk to each other, will seriously consider the religion of those people? I ask you as a Christian, are you in any way the cause of others to stumble? We are always representatives of *the church* wherever we go and whatever we do. This is especially true when we are gathered together in worship on the Lord's day.

Secondly, we thank God that there is another form of attraction within the local congregation. That is the attraction of her ministry, generally

known as her marks: the Word of God is faithfully preached, the sacraments are properly administered, and Christian discipline is faithfully administered. This again reminds us that the real attraction of the church is a gift from our Lord. We must never be tempted to try to attract "outsiders" with all sorts of gimmicks, contemporary music, attractive dramatic presentations, and what not. These are not only wrong, but they fail. The attraction of the ministry of the church as well as of her members is the attraction of her *Lord*! Others must see Jesus in us — just as the Sanhedrin saw Him in the apostles: "They took knowledge that they had been with Jesus" (Acts 4:13). Others must hear the voice of Jesus when they come to worship: "My sheep hear my voice and I know them, and they follow me" (John 10:27).

The attractiveness of the membership and her ministry verifies that a church practices what she preaches.

The gathering of the lost involves every Christian and every congregation.

It involves "*KELONG and Net*."

May the God who has saved us in Jesus His Son enable each of us to accomplish this great task.

The glory is God's alone. □

# Foreign Mission Work in the PRC

## A Brief Report of the Foreign Mission Committee

Greetings to the readers of the Standard Bearer! For those who do not have access to the Acts of the PRC Synod, or who do not keep up with the reading, allow us to inform (or remind) you that the Foreign Mission Committee (FMC) is staffed by ministers and elders from the congrega-

tions in Edgerton, MN, and Doon and Hull, IA, as has been the case from its formation.

The FMC is thankful for the opportunity to be involved in the great calling of Christ's church, namely, sending forth the gospel to the ends of the earth. Our desire and goal is to proclaim the gospel in foreign lands.



Thus we labor in the expectation that the Lord will grant our constant prayer to open doors in foreign fields and to give us laborers who are committed to laboring in these fields.

One of the most striking things about foreign missions is how different it is from domestic missions. Domestic missions is largely the work of church reformation and gathering the lost sheep of the house of Israel. In such a field, the missionary works primarily with those who have some knowledge of the Bible, and labors in societies once touched by the biblical principles of morality. In short, a domestic missionary labors in a culture with many similarities to his own.

On the other hand, the highest priority of foreign mission work is to send missionaries to unreached peoples of the world. Thus the mission work is not only to those who have never heard the gospel, but it is in countries and societies largely untouched by the principles of God's law, what are generally called pagan nations. This radical difference not only creates unique problems, it also requires a different attitude toward foreign missions. Consider some of the difficulties over and above the ordinary problems of a mission field in America. A missionary and family face the immediate problem of the language barrier. Even though English is becoming the universal language, knowledge of the tribal language (in Africa, for example) is required if they live and/or work outside of the large cities. So they must learn the language of the people — the missionary becoming proficient enough to preach in the language. They will struggle with the tremendous differences in life-style. They must learn the laws, customs, and values of the people among whom they labor, which will be drastically different from what the missionary has known all his life. They must adjust to living at or near the financial level of the people with whom they live and work — whose income will almost certainly be under \$1000 a year. The missionary and his wife will face the problem of how best to

educate their children — no small concern for God-fearing parents!

What is described above are some of the difficulties of what is called today "cross-cultural missions." It raises many questions. The FMC is struggling with these questions, in hopes of being better equipped one day to send a team of people with the missionaries to a foreign field in Africa, for example. The FMC is thankful that the Lord greatly blessed the PRC in the field in Singapore. We are very eager to help the ERCS in Singapore if they should desire that. At the same time we recognize that most foreign mission work will not be like that of Singapore. There, a group of saints had been converted out of paganism and were looking for guidance and further development in the truth. Not only that, but Singapore itself was a former British colony, and the society quite modern. However, most foreign mission fields will not be "discovered" in that condition. Most will require a very slow and patient work of sending printed material, correspondence, and visits to faraway countries as we start, you might say, "from scratch."

The current FMC work in Ghana is a case in point. The FMC is excited about the possibility of missions in Ghana. At the same time, the work of developing the field and seeking the best avenues for getting into the field goes very slowly. It has been over two years already since two members of the FMC visited the contacts in Ghana. This is difficult for our impatient flesh, especially in the fast pace of American life. But the work continues, and, we trust, with God's blessing.

The FMC is submitting plans to this year's Synod for a return visit to Ghana. The FMC is absolutely convinced that visits to Ghana are necessary to further the work. Correspondence alone will not likely lead to a missionary on the field. At the same time, it will be necessary to do more teaching and preaching there to learn whether enough agreement exists between any of the contacts and us to be able to work together.

The FMC plans to send a commit-

tee of two members with a number of goals. First, they want more of the Protestant Reformed faith and practice to be set forth in Ghana to the groups with whom we correspond in order to learn more about our agreements and disagreements particularly in the areas of doctrine, practice in mission work, and worship. We also hope, on the one hand, to learn whether any groups would be able and willing to assist us with missions in Ghana in spite of some differences in these matters. On the other hand, we need to determine whether the differences are so great that we cannot in good conscience work with them.

We want the delegation to learn more about the possibility and problems of getting a missionary into Ghana, either in connection with another group or independently. The FMC also proposes a schedule for meeting and developing a better relationship with any new promising contacts since the last visit. In it all, we are guardedly optimistic about future mission in Ghana and trust that in the way of obedient labors God will direct us to open doors to preach the gospel there or reveal that they are closed.

These are some of the labors the FMC is privileged to conduct. We recognize that our efforts are, in many ways, feeble and insignificant. We are painfully aware that we have no active missionary in a foreign field. The committee covets your prayers for God's grace on us, and God's blessing on our labors. Surely all readers who love the cause of the Reformed faith and mission work will join in our earnest prayers that Christ Jesus will open the doors and enable us soon to have another foreign mission field with the missionary (ies) preaching to unreached people in the world. □

Secretary of the  
Foreign Mission Committee  
*Rev. Russ Dykstra*



# The God-Required Honor Due to Widowed Mothers

## Lesson 15

*Honor widows that are widows indeed. But if any widows have children or nephews, let them learn to show piety (godliness) at home, and to requite their parents: for that is good and acceptable before God. Now she that is a widow indeed, and desolate, trusteth (hopeth) in God, and continueth in supplications and prayers day and night. But she that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth. And these things give in charge, that they may be blameless.*

I Timothy 5:3-7

We should observe carefully that we are dealing with three matters. Briefly stated they are as follows:

1. That the church of God is bound by the Lord Himself to "honor" in a special way those widows who are really widows. According to verses 5 and 6 this honor accorded to widows must be discretionary. The real widows must not be confused with those who are not real widows. To this matter we must give our attention in this lesson.

2. Paul also teaches the members of the church that God would have the children and grandchildren to "learn to shew piety at home" (v. 4).

3. The spiritual motivation for shewing such "godliness at home" is that such a conduct is according to the good, acceptable, and perfect will of

God (Rom. 12:1, 2; I Tim. 1:5). And that such conduct is "good and acceptable before God" is the end of all contradiction. Such is the new obedience of God, which is in "newness of spirit," not according to the "oldness of the letter" (Rom. 7:4, 5).

It ought to be stated that the name "widow" is a very honorable one. In the Hebrew language the term is *almanah*, that is, "a silent one." She lives "alone." Basically she is and remains a very lonely child of God. The reason is that her husband had died. God had severed that sacred tie with her husband. It is the only honorable way to be separated from a beloved husband. All other separation is the outgrowth of that which God hates. (Read Malachi 2:14-16.) God, who took away the widow's husband, has a special care for such widows in the church. He says to the church of the living God, honor the widow who is a widow indeed by my gracious removal of her husband from supporting her. That husband was to her even as Christ is to the church. She is a very lonely, yet very honorable, child of God. (Cf. Psalm 68:5; 146:9.) To honor such widows is the privileged duty of the people of God.

This honor is not to be accorded by the church through its diaconate to those who have been divorced on the ground of fornication and adultery. Such are not "widows indeed." These are divorced because of the hardness of their hearts (Matt. 19:3-12).

Paul teaches Timothy to charge the children and the nephews that such honorable care is the duty of those who are in the very home in which they are born and reared. So strong is this charge that, if any does not provide for his widowed mother or grandmother, such a one is, in this lack of concern, a very denier of the faith; yes, he is worse than an avowed infidel. At least the infidel shows concern for his neighbor. (Read the parable of Jesus in Luke 10:25-37.) If a Samaritan will do for a Jew what the priest and the Levite refused to do, should not a son who fails to provide for his own mother be branded as worse than an infidel, who at least shows the milk of human kindness?

The obligation to care for a needy, widowed mother is a spiritual lesson which must be learned by members of the family. (Read, concerning this "learning," Hebrews 5:8 and Luke 2:49-52.) Here the eldest brother in God's family combines His learning obedience in the temple in Jerusalem with the day-to-day obedience in the home of Joseph and Mary. His learning was the suffering all his lifelong and finally on the cross. Our learning to care for an honorable widowed mother is the abc's, the first principle, of godliness and practical piety. (Read Exodus 20:12; Leviticus 19:2.) In this latter passage we read, "Ye shall be holy: for I the LORD your God am holy. Ye shall fear every man his mother, and his father, and keep my



sabbaths: I am the Lord your God." The Gentile churches must learn how to conduct themselves in the house of God. The first commandment with promise is: If you obey your parents ye shall live long in the land of my sabbaths, and finally in the eternal Sabbath which remaineth for the people of God (Heb. 4:9).

The children in the Christian family ought to "requite their parents"!

In the Greek text, the verb translated "to requite" is "to make return for, repay, to make return for a benefit or service received." The Holland translation is *wedervergelden*. The service which children receive from mother is a mother-love which no son or daughter can ever really repay fully. All that they can do is shew such kindness and love which is a spiritual token of their undying gratitude. Why? Because their parents were such perfect fathers and mother? Not at all. All their lifelong these godly parents confessed on bended knee to their heavenly Father their weaknesses and shortcomings. Yet, God would use them, as just such weak vessels, that the glory of His faithfulness might be revealed in the generations who keep His covenant. Such is good and acceptable to God, who says, "Ye shall fear every man his mother, and his father, and keep my sabbaths: I am the LORD your God."

\* \* \* \* \*

God distinguishes between two different kinds of widows. There are those who are lonely, yet who continually "trust (hope) in God," continuing in prayers and supplications night and day. On the other hand, there are widows who live delicately (in carnal pleasure). They never quite understood their calling as mothers in Israel toward their husbands and children. Soon such widows defiantly cast off the "loneliness" inherent in Christian widowhood. She is indeed not the kind of widow whose only hope is that she be kept in the power of God through faith and hope. When she did receive children she was not like the converted Eve, who believed that she was saved in

childbearing. She did not "continue in faith, love, and sobriety." She never received her children as a true mother in Israel, whose calling was, under her husband, to admonish her children in the fear and nurture of the Lord. She was dead "while she lived" with her husband, and she remained spiritually dead. She never uttered prayers and supplications for her children. So she was spiritually dead while her husband lived and also after he died. If her husband was chiefly concerned with the salvation of their children, she never really shared his enthusiasm. Now that he died, she will make the best of it and eke what pleasure she can out of her life of widowhood. Such widows the saints will not honor as widows indeed. She does not deserve the name and the honor of a godly widow.

There were "many widows in Israel" during the time of Elijah. But there was a pious widow who dwelt in Sarepta, a city of Sidon. Yes, the Bible knows how to distinguish "widows indeed" from those who are not such. Here is room for self-examination on the part of every widow in the church of God.

\* \* \* \* \*

In verses 9-15 we read: "Let not a widow be taken into the number under threescore years old, having been the wife of one man, well reported of for good works; if she have brought up children, if she have lodged strangers, if she have washed the saints' feet, if she have relieved the afflicted, if she have diligently followed every good work."

We would have it noticed by all that there was evidently a kind of service rendered in the churches of Paul's day which was of such a nature that it required women of exceptionally "good report" in all the churches. We think here of the women who received special mention by Paul in Romans 16:1-5. Who does not think also of Acts 9:36, 39? The good works prove that such a widow is not a novice in working for the benefit of the needy in the church. And that she is a widow who is past sixty implies that she has always given her all, and

intends to follow these works. She will be one who is very proficient and will give full measure. She never shrinks before arduous and difficult tasks. She gives herself. She has much love to the needy saints, doing good to all!

A young widow must not even be considered to be placed on the list of those who are called for such arduous work, which require so much self-denial. Young widows under sixty years of age must be told categorically that they are a "class" of widows who are not yet ready for this arduous assignment in the church. Paul writes to Timothy that there is a potential problem to consider. It is that your widows will fall into Satan's temptation to desert the ranks of these doers of their assignments. The KJV writes, "for when they have begun to wax wanton against Christ, they will marry." This marriage is a manifestation of a certain sinful wantonness against Christ. In this "wantonness" there is an unruly power of sin. It is the strong lustful desire to have a "man" at any cost. Their only "will" is to marry. It is the strong cry of the blood in their veins, which will vanish when they reach the age of sixty years, the time when the overpowering "burning" has ceased, of which I Corinthians 7:9 speaks: "for it is better to marry than to burn." This is counterbalanced in I Corinthians 7:39: "The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord."

In view of this we must hold that it is not sinful for a "young widow" to will to marry. Blazoned in Scripture is the true word: "Marriage is honorable in all, and the bed undefiled, but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge" (Heb. 13:4). What does this teach us? Is it not that although marriage is right, there are times when it is not convenient? (Cf. I Cor. 6:12.) Now to avoid placing such moral hardships upon the young widows, the Holy Spirit here gives a very wise and kind rule, that widows under sixty be not considered to be placed



on the role. It prevents confusion and disorder in the churches, while at the same time it allows the young widows to remarry in the Lord. Thus they will not be deemed to be sinfully wanton, driven by pent-up, burning sexual desire. However, it must be the desire to bear children in the church; the desire to be saved in child-bearing; a sobriety which is governed by faith, love, and holiness (I Tim. 2:15).

Thus the holy avenues of assisting in the care for the "widows indeed" remain open for the real widows who are past the age of sixty and are the true objects of the Lord's care in the church.

We might repeat here the words of Leviticus 19:3: "Ye shall fear every man his mother and his father and keep my sabbaths"! Thus says the LORD. I am your God. Let every man or woman walk in this command-

ment, not in the oldness of the letter, but in newness of spirit. For the end of the commandment is love out of a pure heart, a good conscience and faith unfeigned (I Tim. 1:5).

### Some Questions and Suggestions to consider:

Do the Scriptures leave us wholly in the dark concerning the identity and nature of the official status of the "widows" in the churches?

This is a good question which is often raised by those studying these passages. In I Timothy 5:9, the Greek text reads *katalegesthai*. Literally, "to be put on the list." This terminology suggests that this was simply a list of willing volunteers. It was not to be placed in an instituted special "office" of deaconess at all. Thus some suggest. They then proceed to read in I Timothy 3:11 an office akin to the

office of a deacon, as spoken of in Acts 6:1ff. We believe that this is done to no avail. We suggest the following considerations:

1. Is it not entirely unnatural to have an "office" of deaconesses in which only "widows" may serve? and that, too, only after they have come to the age of no less than sixty years? In I Timothy 3:11 the list of qualifications to be eligible for the "placement on the list" hardly fits into the spiritual qualifications of the wives of deacons, that is, their conjugal companions. The qualifications for the "list of women" are identical with the attained life of sanctification of all the saints in Christ.

2. Rather it is far more natural to think of volunteers to perform the good works of mercy which included a walking in all good works (I Tim. 5:10b). □

## The Logic of Rhetoric

*But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.*

Galatians 1:8

Besides strict logic (that which sees all truth as being harmoniously united together without contradiction), there is another logic in common use, that of rhetoric and eloquence, which is not nearly so demanding. This is a logic designed, not to determine truth, but to influence

and persuade people. In our day we are surrounded by this kind of logic on every side.

The study of this logic was begun, as was that of straight or scientific logic, primarily by Aristotle. Actually, he never called it a logic, because he saw it as essentially different. To him logic was a matter of determining truth, while rhetoric was the art of persuasion and influence. The two are not the same. So he prepared for it, even as he had for logic, a set of guiding principles to make it more effective in that for which it was designed. This he set forth in his book called *Rhetoric*.

As it was, once the strength of Greece had fallen and Rome took over,

this *Rhetoric* of Aristotle became his most popular work. The Romans were fond, not so much of thinkers, but of orators and oratory. They therefore made good use of what he taught, producing men like Cicero and finally Quintilian. They had the *Rhetoric* of Aristotle copied over and over again, while his *Logic* was left to be forgotten. Rhetoric became their logic; if a thing was convincing, for them it was true.

This actually continued for some time, until finally in the Middle Ages—the Medieval Period—the *Logic* of Aristotle was rediscovered, and its use became again the standard by which the Scholastics determined truth. But it did not last. Rather

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shortly, at least as we see it, the Renaissance swept into Italy, with its daughter Humanism developing in the north; and once again rhetoric surged to the fore. It was not what was said, but how, that became again the important thing; and, in many ways, it has continued so to this day.

Now there is certainly nothing wrong with rhetoric, or the study of eloquence, as such. The fact is that the Bible is rhetorically a remarkable book. There is an eloquence of expression that flows through it from beginning to end. And, for that matter, many of the greatest writers of Christianity studied rhetoric and became fine practitioners of it. Augustine, for example, not only studied, but taught it; and his works shine in consequence. Calvin was schooled in Humanism, as most of the Reformers were, and the abilities he developed in it did much to establish his work. One could only wish that there were more such in our day.

In a sense, this is what Dr. Klaas Schilder was. He was a master of rhetorical excellence in many ways. His prowess in this, particularly as a preacher, was immense. This does not mean that he was a particularly good speaker. Actually, he was not. His voice was not very clear, and he often mumbled when he talked. I can remember as a child listening to those who heard him, complain about how hard it was to make out what he said, especially for those who no longer regularly listened to Dutch. But that did not negate the fact that his use of words was brilliant. His mind was quick and imaginative. He was able to find nuances of meaning and implication in obscure passages where few others thought to look. Rudolf VanReest, in his biography, *Schilder's Struggle for the Unity of the Church*, speaks at length of what Schilder was able, for example, to elicit from the expression in Revelation 8:1, "there was silence in heaven." And I can recall those who heard him preach on Zipporah's bloody circumcision of Moses' children, reflecting on how it impressed them, even after many years. With his amazingly imagina-

tive powers, he was an artist with words, who could draw pictures in the minds of those who heard, reaching into the recesses of Scripture for images and figures to drive his point home. Often, with very little preparation, he would put together a sermon as he went — or, as we would say today, "on the fly" — but in such a way that every thought and idea seemed to lead to the end he wished. And, being Reformed, with a deep love for the truths of the confessions, what he produced was always edifying and sound. He was a preacher indeed.

But, as inclined as Schilder was to rhetorical flourish, Herman Hoeksema was not. It was not a lack of ability; his mind too was brilliantly quick, and with an artistic bent. In his youth he had shown ability as a poet; but afterward, for the most part, he left that behind. In contrast to Schilder, he was an excellent speaker, having a clear, strong voice with the tambour of a trumpet, which could reach clearly into the farthest corners of the large auditorium in which he usually spoke. And the warmth of his personality reached out to draw his audience in. But rhetorical devices he refused to make his strength, lest they become ends in themselves, drawing people with his style, rather than with what he said.

Herman Hoeksema was a theologian — an exegetical, systematic theologian — first of all, and unashamedly so.

He did not like big words (as neither did Schilder). He always spoke as simply as he could. In fact, I can remember him reflecting back on the days when he as a student had gone with his seminary friends to a lake for a swim, and one of them who went first into the water shouted back, "If you will only submerge yourself completely, the water will not feel so frigid." Of which, with a deep chuckle, Hoeksema would say, "Why didn't he just say, 'If you jump right in, the water won't feel so cold?'"

Similarly he refused to rely on spontaneity in his presentations, the inspiration of the moment. (He would tell us in school that, if he would go to

the pulpit without preparation, looking for the Spirit to inspire him, the only thing the Spirit would say would be, "Herman, Herman, how lazy thou art.") It was not that he could not do so. With his fertile mind he often fielded questions, from catechumens and seminary students, with answers which were an education in themselves to hear — but only because they were always against a background of thorough preparation.

His method was to work, carefully delineating his subject, and then examining it over against all the current teachings of Scripture which might in any way relate to it. It was not illustrations he looked for, or striking phraseology, but the interrelationship of biblical truths which might shed light upon each other, and assurance that they did not conflict. He was convinced that any contradiction in the interpretation of various biblical passages was evidence that one did not understand them correctly; and they were best left until one did understand them. God is one. He lives in harmony within himself, and He would never allow his revelation to contradict. This he deeply believed.

Hoeksema was a didactic preacher — not authoritative, imprecatory, or rhetorical. He had no desire to tell people how to live. Nor did he have any interest in what was so popular in his day, namely, "fire and brimstone preaching" — preaching, that is, which would dramatically draw out the terrible consequences of sin until the audience quivered in fear, ready to do whatever the preacher said. It was not that he was indifferent to sin and its consequences. In his sermons on Romans 1 (preached in the mid-thirties), he very vividly brought out how that the development of the sins described there — sexual perversion, homosexuality (not nearly so common then as now), and all other products of the reprobate mind — are not just sins, but themselves the judgment of God, the inevitable punishment on those who reject the truths He has given (Rom. 1:18-21). But it was without dramatics. He



simply used clear and careful instruction as he passed through each element in the text. His purpose was not to arouse his audience for the moment, but to leave with them something they could understand, retain, and reflect upon as they went out into the world again.

And that was why, in a large part, Hoeksema was opposed to "the offer of the gospel" as well. It was not simply because he disliked the word, or that it did not fit his dogmatic scheme. He was quite aware of the fact that, at its root, "offer" came from the Latin *offero*, which means simply *to present*. In this sense it is used in the confessions to indicate the need for presenting the Gospel to all men, with which he had no difficulty. The problem he saw was that in modern times the word has taken on rhetorical bent. It is made to imply that the Gospel must be presented in such a way as to suggest that God, to be a loving God, must be pictured as wanting to save all men, if He can, for only in that way can people be persuaded to come to Him. And, besides, that is what people want to hear. But to it Hoeksema objected, because it stands in direct conflict with what the Scriptures say.

Perhaps it is inevitable that popular presentations include many enthymemes, logical leaps from an opening premise to a conclusion, without tracing out the middle-terms — the logical train of thought which makes clear that the conclusion does really follow from what is said. For practical reasons these logical short cuts have to be used; but, if they have not been worked out in one's theology beforehand, they very readily lead to the acceptance of, or even an enthusiasm for, the paradoxical, not just in form — as when Jesus says, "the

first will be last, and the last first" — but also in content — as when God is seen as immutable, but in a changeable way (a proposition once defended by Arminius), or that God loves only the elect, while at the same time telling all men that He would like to have them saved (an underlying proposition of common grace). And it would seem that this has also come to mark the theology of the Liberated churches (but to that we shall return later).

Between Hoeksema and Schilder personally, their differences caused no real difficulty. They accepted each other in the confidence that they shared a common confessional commitment, and from that they could go on to work together. In fact, when Schilder did break off their bond with his final letter in the form of an article, "*De kous is af*" ("The Stocking is Finished") Hoeksema almost plaintively responded:

In conclusion, I want to emphasize once more that the stocking is not finished. And if Dr. Schilder feels that because of the stand of our churches as revealed in the Declaration of Principles he does not want to unravel the tangle and start knitting anew, it suits me. Nevertheless, I want to state that in that case I am disappointed in him, and for the rest say, "Vale, Amice Schilder."

It was almost as though he did not really want to let go, and nourished still the hope that someday they would be able to take up again. But it was not long thereafter that Schilder was taken away.

And actually it was not so much they as their followers that forced the breach.

When Schilder came on his post-

war trip to America — finding Hoeksema incapacitated, and looking as though he would be able to give leadership no more — he traveled with his eloquence throughout our churches, from one to the other; and many were taken in by him. Being almost as sheep without their shepherd, they seemed ready to leave what they had learned, and try this new way. (It did not work, of course; for, when later they did break with Hoeksema, they could not get along with the Liberated either, many of them finally being left lost and floundering in the Christian Reformed Church for the rest of their days.)

But the problem was even more with the followers of Schilder. Taken up with the excitement of their newfound freedom, they were immensely suspicious of anything that smacked of "systematic theology," "logical reasoning," or "scholasticism" as they saw it. Determined to follow the heart rather than the mind, the intuition rather than dogma, they reacted against the well thought out doctrines of Hoeksema until Dr. Holwerda with his public/private letter drove the wedge home — from which none of them, not even Schilder, ever drew back — "And let them then as Liberated," he wrote, "preserve their contact with Holland by all means, and also spread our literature.... If Rev. Hoeksema's conception was binding, I would say, Never join." Without ever having discussed it with him, he dismissed the teachings of Hoeksema. It was as much as to say, "Don't listen to what they believe, but infiltrate their churches until we can take them over and make them think our way." And with that the knitting was indeed finished, and has never been taken up again. □

## Book Reviews

*Evangelical Interpretation: Perspectives on Hermeneutical Issues*, by Millard J. Erickson. Baker Book

House, 1993. 130pp. No price given (paper). [Reviewed by Prof. H. Hanko.]

In an important introduction to this book, the author informs us that he is interested, not so much in principles of hermeneutics as such, but in



the philosophical questions underlying hermeneutics (the rule of biblical interpretation). He keeps his promise.

While the book is perhaps too technical to be read by those who have not made hermeneutics their particular study, it is sufficiently important to be read by ministers, professors, and students of college or seminary level. I offer a brief review of its contents so that our readers may have some idea of what to expect when they purchase the book.

I cannot refrain from remarking first of all that I am continually amazed at the number of new problems which students of Scripture are able to raise as important questions in connection with the study and understanding of Scripture. One keeps thinking to himself: How thankful we all ought to be that God's people do not have to trouble themselves with all these problems (and their answers) for them to understand God's holy Word. Indeed, if all these problems had to be solved, there would be no time left to learn what God Himself says in His Word.

In chapter 1 the author deals with the question whether God's meaning in a given passage is the same as the human author's meaning. Taking issue with Walter Kaiser, the author says that the two may very well be different. But this question in turn involves other questions: What is the relation between the divine author and the human author? How does one get from the meaning of a text to its significance? Did human authors fully understand what they wrote?

In chapter 2 the author faces the question of whether the Holy Spirit enables us to understand the Bible better than one lacking the Holy Spirit. Does the Holy Spirit convey truth? or does He only make us willing to receive it? This question, the author points out, involves the question of the effect of sin upon the mind. Rejecting the position of some as "epistemological Pelagianism," the author seems to teach that the Holy Spirit raises one's IQ.

In chapter 3 the question is faced: How is the Bible to be applied to today's world? Apart from his answers, the author seems to forget ex-

egesis of passages which are a part of the heritage of the church, and seems not fully to appreciate the fact that Scripture is timeless truth because in it is the infallible record of salvation in Jesus Christ.

Chapter 4 deals with the contributions made to interpretation by theologians, missiologists, and historians. He sometimes comes perilously close to relativizing biblical truth, although he explicitly claims to repudiate this notion.

In the final chapter our present task in hermeneutics is defined as a calling to engage the subjectivist world in a dialogue in which we prove by rational argument that they are wrong.

All in all, the book makes for fascinating reading even if one cannot agree. The trouble seems to me to be, as in so many current books on hermeneutics, that: 1) the approach of faith to Scripture is abandoned in favor of the approach of rationalistic proof; 2) too much emphasis is placed on the so-called human element in God's Word. □

## News From Our Churches

Mr. Benjamin Wigger

### Evangelism Activities

Let's start this issue of the "News" with various evangelism projects in our churches.

The Evangelism Committee of our Hudsonville, MI PRC recently sponsored an area-wide conference on the subject, "Are You Afraid to Witness?"

This conference was held on a Friday evening and Saturday morning, April 29 and 30. On Friday night, Rev. C. Terpstra, pastor of the South Holland, IL PRC spoke on the subject, "What Is Evangelism?" This speech was followed by a slide presentation of the outreach work currently being done by the Trinity PRC in Houston,

TX, as presented by Trinity's pastor, Rev. J. Mahtani.

On Saturday morning the conference got started again with a speech given by Rev. W. Bruinsma, pastor of the First PRC in Holland, MI, entitled "Church Members' Calling to Witness." This was followed by Rev. Mahtani giving instruction in "How to Witness." If you are interested in all or part of these messages, audio and video tapes are available. Call Hib Kuiper, Jr. at (616) 669-1993.

Rev. Mahtani is currently leading a new Bible study at the University of Houston. The group will be meeting twice a month to study the book of Proverbs.

On April 15 the Evangelism Committee of the Randolph, WI PRC sponsored a public lecture. Rev. R. VanOverloop, pastor of the Bethel PRC in Elk Grove Village, IL, spoke

on the subject, "The Lord's Return: Is It Near?"

On April 27 Rev. VanOverloop found himself in Loveland, CO speaking at a public lecture sponsored by the Men's Society of the Loveland, CO PRC. He spoke that evening on the topic, "A Christian Perspective of AIDS."

The Evangelism Committee of the Peace PRC in Lynwood, IL sponsored a lecture on May 5, with Rev. C. Terpstra speaking on the topic, "Satanism."

Also on May 5 Rev. R. Cammenga, pastor of the Southwest PRC in Grandville, MI, spoke at Southwest on the subject "NIV or KJV." This speech was intended to be a comparison and evaluation of these two Bible versions. Among the many questions it hoped to answer, was this, Ought the NIV displace the KJV as the ver-

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



sion of choice among God's people? Want an answer? Then write Southwest Church at 4875 Ivanrest Ave., Grandville, MI 49418 and ask for a free tape.

### Denominational Activities

There was a Spring Ladies' League meeting held on April 21 in the auditorium of the Edgerton, MN PRC. Rev. M. DeVries, pastor at Edgerton, spoke to the ladies on the subject, "The Last Enemy: Facing Death."

Rev. Bruinsma was the featured speaker at this spring's annual league meeting of the Mr. and Mrs. and Adult Bible Societies. He spoke at Faith PRC in Jenison, MI on the very interesting and timely subject, "Busy Fathers: Where Are Our Priorities?"

All young people, high school seniors and older, were recently invited to a local Spring Retreat held in western Michigan at Camp Michewana. Rev. A. Spriensma, pastor of the Grandville, MI PRC, spoke on "Christian Liberty."

On April 24 and again one week later, April 30, there were choir programs given by a PR mass choir comprising some 170 voices. Their first concert was at Sunshine Ministries in Grand Rapids, MI, followed by one at Dimnent Chapel on the campus of Hope College in Holland, MI. What concerts those were! It was truly a blessing to sit in the audience and listen, as I am sure it was also to be part of that choir.

### Minister Activities

On the evening of May 4, the congregation of the Hudsonville, MI PRC met together to bid farewell to their pastor, Rev. G. VanBaren, his wife, and one daughter. The Lord willing, Rev. VanBaren will take up his labors in the congregation of the Loveland, CO PRC on Sunday, May 22.

Between special numbers from Hudsonville's choir and Sunday School, and a trio from the newly-organized Georgetown PRC, were

letters of farewell written from the congregations of Byron Center PRC and Georgetown PRC (two congregations organized as daughter congregations from Hudsonville), the Hudsonville PRC, with a letter of farewell coming from the Covenant Reformed Fellowship of Northern Ireland as well.

Rev. VanBaren noted that in his 16 years at Hudsonville he officiated at 42 weddings, baptized 238 babies, was present to hear 82 confessions of faith, and spoke at 29 funerals.

On Sunday evening, May 8, Rev. VanBaren preached his farewell sermon in Hudsonville based on II Thessalonians 3:4,5 and entitled "Doing the Things Commanded."

### Food For Thought:

*"Repentance begins in humiliation of the heart and ends in the reformation of the life."* □

— John Mason

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### TEACHER NEEDED

The Free Christian School in Edgerton, MN is in need of a teacher for grades K-4. Please contact Andy Brummel, Box 176, Edgerton MN 56128 (phone: [507] 442-5201), or Dennis Bleyenbergh, RR. 1 Box 23, Edgerton, MN 56128 (phone: [507] 442-7551).

### WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On June 1, 1994, D.V., our beloved parents,

#### JOE and BEA MEYER,

will celebrate their 45th wedding anniversary. We are thankful to our heavenly Father for bringing them together, keeping them in His care, and also giving them to us as faithful and God-fearing parents.

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

- John and Mary Meyer
  - Neil and Connie Meyer
  - Helen Meyer
  - Al and Alice Kaptein
  - Randy and Connie Maycroft
- 25 grandchildren

Grand Rapids, Michigan

### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Council of the Protestant Reformed Church of South Holland, IL expresses its heartfelt sympathy to the following members of the congregation: Lamm and MaryBeth Lubbers, George and Monica Lanting, Jeremy and Lynn Lubbers, Menno and Sadie Smits, Joel and Debbie Smits, Rev. and Verna Terpstra, Todd and Valerie Terpstra, in the passing of their father, grandfather, brother, and uncle,

#### MR. DEWEY ENGELSMA.

May the families be comforted in this: "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints" (Psalm 116:15).

Raymond L. Bruinsma,  
Vice-President  
Bert Worries, Jr., Clerk

### NOTICE

The annual *Standard Bearer* staff meeting will be held at 7:30 on Monday evening, June 13, in the Protestant Reformed Seminary. Department editors are urged to attend if at all possible.

### WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On June 10, 1994,

**MR. and MRS. TED LOOYENGA,** will celebrate 45 years of marriage. We, their children and grand-children, rejoice with them in this celebration. We give much thanks to our heavenly Father for giving us God-fearing parents to be our examples. May God continue to bless them richly and keep them in His tender care.

"If thy children will keep my covenant and my testimony that I shall teach them, their children shall also sit upon thy throne for evermore. For the Lord hath chosen Zion; he hath desired it for his habitation" (Psalm 131:12, 13).

- Joe and Mary Brummel
  - Randy and Pat McCollough
  - Larry and Kathy Looyenga
  - Bob and Kathy Looyenga
  - Randy and Lindy Looyenga
  - Nancy Feenstra
  - Doug and Melissa Looyenga
  - Mark and Sara Looyenga
  - Karen Looyenga
- 24 grand-children

Grand Rapids, MI



## WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On June 10, 1994, the Lord willing, our parents and grandparents,

**MR. and MRS. JOHN DYKSTRA**, will celebrate their 40th wedding anniversary. We rejoice with them. We thank our heavenly Father for them; and for His love, care, and instruction given to us through them. Our prayer and trust for them is: "The Lord shall bless thee out of Zion: and thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem all the days of thy life. Yea, thou shalt see thy children's children, and peace upon Israel" (Psalm 128:5, 6).

- Don and Cindi DeJong  
Dan, Christiana, Carl, Jeremy,  
Aaron, Larisa, and Brent
- Dan and Lori Pastoor  
Brad, Nathan, Bryan,  
and Jonathan
- Doug Dykstra

Walker, Michigan

## CALL TO SYNOD!!

Synod 1993 appointed Faith Protestant Reformed Church, Jenison, MI the calling church for the 1994 Synod.

The Consistory hereby notifies our churches that the 1994 Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America will convene, the Lord willing, on Tuesday, June 7, 1994 at 9:00 A.M. in the Faith Protestant Reformed Church, Jenison, MI.

The Pre-Synodical Service will be held on Monday evening, June 6, at 7:30 P.M. Rev. Slopsema, president of the 1993 Synod, will preach the sermon. Synodical delegates are requested to meet with the Consistory before the service.

Consistory of  
Faith PRC  
Andrew Brummel, Clerk.

## REMEMBER!

The *Standard Bearer* is published only once each month during the months of June, July, and August.

## WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

The fiftieth wedding anniversary of our dear parents and grandparents,

**GERRIT and ELEANORE BOL**, will be celebrated, the Lord willing, on June 16, 1994. Their desire to walk together in faith with the Lord has been imparted to five covenant children given to them in their marriage, and to thirteen grandchildren who now love the Lord. With special joy we look back over their fifty years of memories of both happiness and pain, and we see the Lord drawing them, and us, closer to Himself.

So we look ahead with even more pleasure to the time not limited by anniversaries, when they and their children's children will share an eternal promise among the saints in glory. "Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light" (Colossians 1:12).

- David and Barbara Bol  
Kristin, Matthew, Kara
- Mark and Ruthellen Hoeksema  
Stephen, Michael, Sarah, Philip
- Stephen Gary (b. 1-23-51;  
d. 4-8-51)
- John Patrick and Priscilla  
MacGraw  
Molly, Daniel, Megan
- Jonathan and Barbara Bol  
Nathan, Audra, Adam

Grand Rapids, Michigan

## WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On June 9, 1994 our parents, **OTTO and BETTY KAMMINGA**, celebrate their 45th wedding anniversary.

We thank our covenant God for the way in which He has used them to train us in His fear. We pray that God will continue to bless them and keep them in His loving care.

- Terry and Ellen Kamminga
- David and Wanda Kamminga
- Randy and Bev Kamminga
- Brian and Lori Kamminga
- Rob and Lynne Huizinga

Holland, MI

## NOTICE from the CONTACT COMMITTEE

The Committee for Contact with Other Churches has received the following letter from the Session of First Evangelical Reformed Church of Singapore:

Dear brethren in the Lord:

We thank you for your love offering of US\$1,323.22 to our Church Building Fund.

Part of our church building is ready for occupancy, but due to some structural problems, we have yet to receive permit from our government to use the church for temporary worship.

We are greatly touched by your constant support and extension of fellowship given to us. May the Lord continue to bless you richly as we labor for Him joyfully.

Yours faithfully,  
Gabriel Choo (Treasurer)  
for the Session of the FERC

The Committee also calls the attention of the churches to the fact that no more collections need to be taken for the Tasmanian Student Fund. The two students who have studied with us have completed their studies and are returning to Australia to take up their work. The Committee expresses to the churches its sincere thanks for the generous support which has been given.

The Committee also reminds the churches that the collections for the Singaporean Student Fund will continue. Mr. Cheah Fook Meng will be with us, the Lord willing, another two years. All the collections under the supervision of the Contact Committee must be sent to our Synodical Treasurer, Mr. Joel Zandstra.