



THE STANDARD BEARER

A Reformed
Sabbath Monthly
Magazine

Before time began he was begotten of the Father, in respect of his deity, and now in these "last days," for us and on behalf of our salvation, this selfsame one was born of Mary the virgin in respect of his humanness.

— Symbol of Chalcedon

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In This Issue ...

Christmas, family, and church are featured in this issue of the *Standard Bearer*.

Rev. Cornelius Hanko's meditation and the article by Herman Hoeksema, "No Room For Him," recall the history of Jesus' birth. Hoeksema's article first appeared in volume one of the *SB* in 1924. The "inn-door" is still closed against the Christ of Scripture and the Reformed faith. But the "poor babe of Bethlehem" Himself creates room for Himself in the world by His grace.

An interesting letter and the response to it take up the question, whether observance of Christmas by the Reformed church is permissible.

Mr. Gord Schipper, member and deacon in the Southwest PRC in Grandville, MI, introduces the office of deacon. Under the rubric, "Ministering to the Saints," men who have served in these offices will be writing on the exercise of the offices of elder and deacon in the church. Mr. Schipper points out that the office of deacon is the ministry of mercy by our compassionate high priest, Jesus Christ, on behalf of His church.

Rev. Kenneth Koole and Rev. Ron VanOverloop treat of important aspects of Reformed family life. Rev. Koole, in an article that will be continued, concentrates on family worship. This was restored by the Reformation. Rev. VanOverloop confronts covenant young people with their calling not to grieve their parents.

The editorial, reflecting on Christ's birth, combines the themes of Christmas, family, and church.

The cover photo is courtesy of Mr. Dave Moelker, member and officebearer in the Hope PRC, Walker, MI.

The staff of the *SB* wish our readers a joyful Christmas and a prosperous new year in the favor of the triune Father of Jesus Christ the Lord.

— DJE



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A Book of Remembrance

Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another: and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name.

Malachi 3:16

Jehovah's book of remembrance is the record of the lives of those who "fear the Lord," since they are most precious in His sight.

From His throne in heaven He listens to them when they are talking one with the other, pouring out their souls in times of deep distress.

Their thoughts and their words are of great concern to Him. He not only listens, but He also takes note and records in His book of remembrance what they think and what they say.

He restrains His strong desire to deliver them. For He is longsuffering toward them, awaiting the proper moment to deliver them and show them His salvation.

This book of remembrance is a guarantee that the Lord in His time will surely deliver Israel from all their troubles.

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They "that feared the Lord" are mentioned twice in our text, for they must be distinguished from those in Israel who defiantly turned away from the Lord into ways of wickedness.

Not as if these unfaithful showed no pretense of piety. They still brought their offerings to the temple, and the priests still accepted their sacrifices. But there was no fear of the Lord in their hearts. The unblemished yearlings they kept for themselves; the blemished, the sick, and the lame were brought to the temple to be presented to the Lord. The priests, instead of refusing and reprimanding the people, wearied God with such abominations. And when the Lord objected, they defiantly asked: "Wherein have we wearied thee?"

There were those among the priests and the people who profaned the holiness of the Lord by divorcing their wives to take to themselves heathen wives. Yet they dared to ask: "Wherein have we profaned God's holiness?" To which the Lord answered: "Thou hast dealt treacherously with the wife of thy youth: yet she is thy companion and the wife of thy covenant."

The Lord accused the people of robbing Him. Innocently, as it were, they ask: "Wherein have we robbed thee?" He reminded them that they failed to pay their tithes that they owed Him.

Yet there were still among them those who feared the Lord. This was not a slavish fear but a fear of love. They loved their God with a sincere, humble devotion. They realized their own insignificance and stood in awe at His majesty and glory. They also knew themselves as sinners who had forfeited their right to the least of God's blessing, and they marveled that God looked down upon them in favor in Christ Jesus.

As a devoted wife is submissive to her husband, and as a dutiful child honors his parents, so those who feared the Lord showed their reverence for God in holy adoration. They delighted in keeping His commandments and walking in His ways. In childlike trust they placed all their expectation in Him alone. Their hope for the future was fixed in their God.

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These were serious times, times which compelled the people of God to seek one another's company.

After the Jews returned from captivity, settled in Canaan, and restored Jerusalem and the temple, they did not return to their former idolatry but fell into the sin of sham piety.

The sect of the Sadducees arose, a group that can best be compared with today's modernists, who denied the angel world and a life hereafter. The sect of the Pharisees also made its appearance, a proud, self-righteous class of people who felt no need for a Savior. They were sufficient unto themselves and looked down on the masses that knew not the law. They proudly maintained that they kept the law to the letter, and even outdid its requirements.

Among them were the priests who controlled the temple worship and the scribes who taught the people. These were members of the Sanhedrin, who ruled the nation.

This was also the time of which Daniel had spoken in prophecy, the days in which the temple was pol-

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

luted by the abomination of desolation, the days when Antiochus Epiphanes prevented temple worship and slaughtered many people. Soon after, the Jewish nation completely lost its freedom under the power of Caesar of Rome. The heathen had come into God's heritage.

Added to all that, the voice of revelation was silent. For four hundred years after Malachi there was no inspired historian, no prophet, no vision, no dream. It was as if heaven were closed to the cry of God's people.

Those who feared the Lord sought each other's company to comfort and sustain each other in the faith. All they had left was the hope of the promise delivered to them from the fathers, which they cherished and discussed together.

We are fallen into similar times. All over the world there are those who love the truth and meet together in small groups, some worshiping in homes, to maintain the truth of the gospel. The Lord hearkens now, even as He hearkened then. And a book of remembrance is written before Him.



What was there unique about these people that God should remember them?

We are told that "they thought upon God's name."

God's name is God Himself as we know Him by His Self-revelation. His name is near, as His wondrous works declare.

The voice of the Lord is in the rumbling thunder, also in the beauty of the lily, and in the still small voice of the summer breeze. He speaks to us through the roar of the lion, but no less through the bleat of the lamb. All creation joins in singing the praises of our God. All history shows the unfolding of the counsel of the Most High as He carries out His purpose even through the defiant wickedness of evil men.

*The Lord
is always near
to those
who fear
Him.*

The Lord is always near to those who fear Him.

Yet we would never know nor understand, except for the fact that God has revealed the secrets of His heart in His holy Word. The Scriptures carry us from the dawn of creation to its end, from paradise to Paradise, unfolding before us the mighty work of salvation accomplished in Christ Jesus. All of which we know and understand only through faith wrought by the Spirit in our hearts.

Those that fear the Lord are deeply God-conscious. He takes first place in their lives. Their chief concern is for their God. They are deeply offended by the sinful words and deeds of evil men. They can only wonder that the holy God remains silent and does not seek vengeance. How long can He endure the dishonor to His great and blessed Name?

We think, for example, of childless Zacharias and Elisabeth, who in their earlier days had prayed so fervently for a covenant seed. How deeply offended Zacharias must have been by the carnal priests with whom he was forced to labor in the temple from day to day. How deeply concerned Elisabeth must have been while her husband was in that corrupt environment.

We think of Simeon and Anna, who were daily visitors in the house of God, seeking comfort from the Word, and yet failing to receive it from the leaders there. We can well imagine that these saints longed for the day when the promised Messiah would appear.

More zealously than ever they prayed: "Redeem Israel, O God, from all his troubles" (Ps. 25:22) and: "O that thou wouldest rend the heaven and that thou wouldest come down" (Is. 64:1).

We have a mental picture of the shepherds spending long nights under the stars discussing Israel's hope that cannot fail. They never wearied of encouraging each other to be

faithful even unto death.

And the Lord listened. He heard every word that was uttered. He took note of every sigh. Their tears did not escape Him. In all their affliction He was afflicted with them. It grieved Him to see them suffer. And the Angel of Jehovah sustained them.

It was all recorded in Jehovah's Book of Remembrance.



Suddenly, as in a moment, their waiting was rewarded. Numerous signs and wonders appeared. The angel Gabriel told Zacharias, whose name means "My God remembers," that he would be the father of the forerunner of the Messiah. Gabriel soon after appeared to Mary to tell her that she would bring forth the Christ-child. She went to Elisabeth, who herself was with child and informed Mary that the amazing wonder of the incarnation had already taken place. The Spirit of prophecy spoke through Mary, and later through Zacharias. Joseph was informed of the divine conception in a dream. Lowly shepherds were surrounded with heaven's glory as the first to be told of the Savior's birth, and the first to herald it abroad. Simeon and Anna met the Christ-child and his parents in the temple, and Simeon received the gift of prophecy. Among the Gentiles in the East a star appeared to lead the Wise Men to the Christ-child. Wonder upon wonder surrounded the inexpressible wonder of the Savior's birth, the fulfillment of the promise so long awaited, so intensely longed for.



All these things are written for our instruction.

We are reminded "that the Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness, but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance"

(II Pet. 3:9).

In these last days we are urged to seek our fellowship with those who look for the coming of the Lord. We must not allow ourselves to be deceived by false christs, false prophets, or cunningly devised fables, but must search the Scriptures in the company of the saints.

We are encouraged to "lay hold

on the profession of our faith without wavering: (for he is faithful that promised).... Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching" (Heb. 10:23, 25).

Our Lord assures us: "Behold, I come quickly, and my reward is

with me, to give to every man according as his work shall be" (Rev. 22:12).

To which we eagerly respond: "Come, Lord Jesus, yea, quickly."

In the meantime we heed the call: "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life" (Rev. 2:10). □

Editorial

The Holy Family

Christmas, you see, is about family. Christmas is mainly about family. Christmas is all about family.

This is the truth of Christmas only inasmuch as Christmas is the birth of the baby Jesus from the virgin. The child had no earthly father. As the angel announced to His mother, in accounting for her conception, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee" (Luke 1:35).

The virgin conception establishes that Christmas is about family, because conception by a virgin, without a male, is the sign and means of the incarnation. God the Son became a man in the womb of Mary (John 1:14). The eternal Son of God, who lies in the bosom of the Father, was born in the baby Jesus (John 1:18).

As the birth of Him who is the Son of God, Christmas is about family. It declares this family to be holy — pure, consecrated, awesome.

I do not refer to the earthly family. The family that Christmas is all about is not a husband, a wife, and some children enjoying everyday life

— roasting chestnuts over an open fire.

It is not even the covenant family of believing husband and wife with their baptized, sanctified children engaged in spiritual life — talking about the birth of their Lord and Savior in the stable in Bethlehem.

Neither is it the family that consisted of Jesus, His mother, and her husband. Popular piety in some circles makes much of this family as "the holy family." But Christmas does not center on this family. The proof is that this family, like every other earthly family in the past, has been dissolved. It was merely temporal, fleeting, passing. By death, Joseph and Mary are no longer married. By the death of the Christ, expressed in His Word from the cross, "Woman, behold thy Son! ... Behold thy mother!" (John 19:26, 27), Mary is no longer the mother of Jesus. Jesus Christ is no longer Mary's son. That family is no more. It has given way to a better one, the real human family.

Besides, Christmas is not mainly about men, women, and children. Christmas is about God. It was His deed. It made Him known. It calls

the attention of the believer to Him, in wonder, love, and thanksgiving.

The birth of Jesus Christ is about God the Holy Family. It makes known that there are in God two distinct persons who are Father and Son to each other and that this Father and this Son are bound together in love by a third distinct person, the Holy Spirit.

For the baby of Bethlehem lived before He was born. He lived in (and as) the being of God. He lay in the bosom of the Father. He lay there as the one eternally begotten of the Father, that is, as the Son. The birth of Jesus Christ was not His beginning.

He was *sent* into the world; the Father sent His Son (John 20:21). He *came* into the world; the Son came from His Father (John 16:28).

God is Father and Son in the Holy Spirit in Himself. This is family. The one, true, living God, made known as He really is by Jesus Christ, is family. This is the truth about God. This is the most profound, the central, the unique truth about God.

Theologically, this is the doctrine of the Trinity. But the meaning of

*The life
of God is
family-life.*

the Trinity is family, God as family.

The life of God is family-life. God does not merely exist; God lives. The God revealed in the child conceived in Mary's womb, His Son, is not the Great Hermit in heaven, existing in splendid solitude. Rather, He is the Father living with the Son and the Son living with the Father in the Holy Spirit. He is the Father loving the Son and the Son loving the Father in the Holy Spirit. He is the Father communicating with the Son and the Son communicating with the Father in the Holy Spirit. Father and Son are devoted to each other in the Spirit. Each seeks the other in the Holy Spirit, and not only Himself; each gives Himself to the other freely and fully.

In one word, the life of God — truly life! — is fellowship. Only, it must insistently be noted, this fellowship is *family-fellowship*.

Biblically, this family-life of God triune is the source, pattern, and nature of the covenant. The covenant is God's sharing of His own family-fellowship with His adopted sons and daughters, in Jesus Christ.

Christmas is mainly about the divine family.

But it is not exclusively about the divine family. For God sent His Son into the world in the act of incarnation: the eternal Son took to Him a human nature. The Son of God was conceived and born.

Family now enlarges.

There was, importantly, the earthly family made up of the child Jesus, His mother Mary, and her husband Joseph. Added in time were four (half) brothers and at least two (half) sisters of Jesus (Matt. 13:55, 56). God sent His Son into the world, not as a lonely visitor but as a member of a family. God entrusted His dear Son in human flesh to a holy mother and her godly husband. He saw to His rearing in a God-fearing home.

Evident in the carefully arranged circumstances of Jesus' birth is the importance to God of family. The God who is now at work in redemption upholds and honors the ordi-

nance that He Himself had made fundamental to human life in His work of creation: the earthly family of husband, wife, and children. Not all kinds of superstitious legends about the life of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, not a Christ-denying ascription of saving worth to Mary are the significance of Jesus' earthly family. Its significance is simply the fact itself of a godly family as the sphere in which God's own Son "increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man" (Luke 2:52).

God values family. God values family especially highly when the welfare of His own Son is at stake. He values family, ultimately, because this is who He is in Himself: Holy Family.

Because God is family in Himself, there are also our earthly families: believing husbands, believing wives, and baptized children. Christmas is indeed about the Christian family, even though it is not mainly about this earthly family. The family is holy. It is set apart by God to be consecrated to Him. It reflects His own life. It enables and enriches the life of each member, for it is not good that the man, or the woman, or the children should be alone (see Gen. 2:18). It produces and rears the church by virtue of the promise of the covenant, "I will be the God of your children."

The foundation of the covenant family is nothing less than the truth of God Himself as family that is revealed in the birth of Jesus. Christmas shows us (and never in history has the church needed the reminder more) that the Protestant Reformed defense of the family is grounded in the being of God. Our condemnation of divorce, our prohibition of all remarriage after divorce, our exhortation to the husband to love and to the wife to submit, our demand to parents to teach their children the truth as it is in Christ — all of this is founded finally in God, in God as family, in God as Father and Son in the Holy Spirit.

Cynical politicians, who have no interest in family whatever, whose own behavior, in fact, is destructive of the family, find it expedient today to speak out for family. A nation reaping the harvest of its undermining of the family, and finding that harvest exceedingly bitter, cries out in alarm for some return to "family values." The Reformed church bases her advocacy of the family, unchangingly and uncompromisingly, upon the God who gave His only begotten Son at Christmas.

Those who attack and weaken the family by divorcing and remarrying and by permitting divorce and remarriage are assaulting God Himself. He takes it personally.

God values family.

Christmas proves it, and

shows why. Christmas also assures the preservation of the covenant family despite devilish attacks upon it from within and without the church.

Still, the earthly, covenant family is not the broadest extension of family by the birth of Christ. Nor is it the best. Every earthly family, even the holiest, passes away.

His own spiritual family was the purpose of God with men and women at Christmas. The Elder Brother came to redeem, renew, and gather into the fellowship of an everlasting family all those eternally predestinated to be sons and daughters of God (Rom. 8:29).

Christmas is about this family — its fellowship with God and its fellowship among the members themselves.

This is the church.

A holy family. □

*God
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Christmas proves it,
and shows
why.*



— DJE

■ Observance of Christmas

I wish to thank you for your October 15, 1994 issue on "The Reformation and Worship." I found it a blessing and a challenge and have already made one change in our approach to worship because of it. Thanks!

But, I am also writing to ask two questions. I recently received a mailing from the Presbyterian Heritage Publications of Dallas, Texas. In it they list a booklet, "Christmas: A Biblical Critique," by Michael Schneider and Kevin Reed.

This booklet begins with Pastor Schneider's sermon, "Is Christmas Christian?" in which he challenges hearers to consider the unbiblical nature of Christmas celebration. Reed follows with an historical essay, revealing Reformed and Presbyterian opposition to the holiday in the past.

This booklet is in contrast to what was a brief reference to Calvin's attitude to Christmas in a recent issue and your December 15, 1993 Christmas edition.

My two questions are these:

1. Have you ever dealt with the position that this booklet presents in your magazine? If so, I would appreciate receiving copies if possible.
2. If not, I would appreciate knowing how you would answer the view of the above-mentioned booklet especially in view of the fact that you have not been afraid of challenging what you see to be unbiblical practices or views.

(Pastor) Ronald Johnson
Amesbury, MA

Response:

I have not seen the booklet that you mention.

The Protestant Reformed

Churches' practice of observing Christmas is a long and honorable tradition in the Reformed Churches that trace their spiritual descent to the Synod of Dordt. Article 67 of the venerable Church Order of Dordt (1618/1619) requires that the Reformed churches "shall observe in addition to the Sunday also Christmas...."

This observance consists of a public worship service on December 25. The elements of this service are the same as those that make up the congregation's worship on the Sabbath. The minister preaches on some aspect of the birth of Christ, usually, and preferably, the history in the gospels. The congregation hears the blessed gospel of the incarnation and praises God with appropriate psalms in congregational singing.

Objection against Dordt in this provision and practice is invariably in terms of the "regulative principle" of worship: observance of Christmas is not prescribed in Scripture.

But this is a misunderstanding of the "regulative principle." This is evident from the fact that Dordt permitted, indeed prescribed, observance of Christmas even though the great Reformed synod was committed to the "regulative principle" as laid down in Question 96 of the Heidelberg Catechism. Dordt saw no conflict between the requirement of the second commandment that we worship God only in the "way ... He has commanded in His Word" and the observance of Christmas at a Reformed worship service. The fathers of Dordt saw no conflict because there is none.

The "regulative principle" requires that the elements of public worship — the "how" of worship — be those, and those only, that God prescribes in His Word, whether the public worship be on the Lord's Day or on some special occasion. The "regulative principle" certainly does not forbid the church ever to gather

for worship on another day than Sunday or on another occasion than the regular remembrance of Christ's resurrection on the first day of the week.

The Heidelberg Catechism explains the fourth commandment as requiring that "I, especially on the sabbath ... diligently frequent the church of God." The Catechism does not say, "exclusively on the sabbath."

The Westminster Assembly likewise allowed for the observance of days of public fasting and of public thanksgiving in addition to the observance of the sabbath (see "The Directory for the Public Worship of God").

Calvin looked askance at the celebration of Christmas in his day because of the corrupting of that celebration by Roman Catholicism (see I. VanDellen and M. Monsma, *The Church Order Commentary*, Zondervan, 1941, p. 273). He did not, however, flatly forbid it as a transgression of the second commandment. As I noted in my review of Wulfert de Greef's *The Writings of John Calvin: An Introductory Guide* (Baker, 1993), Calvin went along with the Geneva church's observance of the four great feast days that did not fall on a Sunday, including Christmas. When the Council decided to abolish these observances, Calvin wrote a correspondent that, if he had been asked for advice, he would not have supported this decision (see de Greef, *The Writings of John Calvin*, p. 57; my review of the book appeared in the September 15, 1994 issue of the *Standard Bearer*).

This is the kind of wisdom that we defenders of the "regulative principle" must demonstrate in our application of the principle, lest we fall into a rigid, stifling (and divisive) legalism and, thus, imperil the principle itself.

— Ed.

■ The Electing Love of God

Each month we receive the *Standard Bearer* with joy, for in your articles and news you describe so beautifully the heart of the gospel, the five points of Calvinism.

Had it not been for the electing love of the triune God "... before the creation of the world ... in that in love He predestined us to be adopted as His sons through Jesus Christ..." I personally would never have sought Him. Only by a dramatic conversion by which He suddenly stopped me in my headlong

flight from the influence of a godly father and mother in a covenant home and through Christian education in Holland, MI — only through His will in Christ have I become a minister of the Christian Reformed Church for the last 39 years.

It is with pleasure that we recall the daily noon lunches with Homer Hoeksema in the little "dungeon" of Calvin College on Franklin Street.

How often we as a family above the hardware store on Washington Square would discuss the issue of common grace. It was with admira-

tion and affection that we followed the leadership of Prof. Herman Hoeksema those years long ago when Rev. Peter Jonker Jr., his seminary classmate, would tell us in catechism of his brilliance and godly erudition.

May God in His grace continue to bless the *Standard Bearer*, the seminary, and the Protestant Reformed Churches.

(Rev.) Nicholas Vogelzang
Executive Director,
Christ for Russia
Aurora, CO □

All Around Us

Prof. Robert Decker

■ Is "Word-Faith" Cultic?

That is what the critics of one of the cult-watching organizations recently said. When cult-watching organizations first appeared twenty or thirty years ago they concentrated mainly on exposing the non-Christian beliefs and alleged brainwashing techniques of such groups as the Unification Church, the Children of God, and the Way International. In addition they sought to expose the teachings of religious groups like the Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormons, whose teachings are incompatible with the essential doctrines of the Christian faith.

While these longstanding emphases have continued for many cult-watching groups (they number about 600 today), in recent years the counter-cult movement has increasingly focused its investigative energies on individuals and organizations that have a strong foothold in

certain segments of the Christian community.

This new emphasis was reflected in the title of a conference in Philadelphia last September sponsored by Evangelical Ministries to New Religions (EMNRR). The conference title was, "The Cults, Occult and Word-Faith Movement." At one of the plenary sessions of this conference a panel discussion dealt with the question whether the Word-Faith movement should be considered cultic?

Plenary speaker Hank Hanegraaff, president of the Christian Research Institute (CRI), explained that according to Word-Faith teaching, "faith is a force, words being the container of the force. And through the force of faith, you can create your own reality." Hanegraaff, whose best-selling *Christianity in Crisis* details the "erroneous teachings of Faith teachers," added that within a Word-Faith context, "when you're born again, you not only have salvation, but you have unlimited health and unlimited wealth. All you have to do is visualize it, speak it into existence."

That such teaching is rank heresy is obvious to the Reformed believer. In addition it may be said that the Word-Faith movement's

teachings are "laden with aberrant and heretical departures from sound Christian doctrine." They are shot through with Arminianism and neopentecostalism.

This means that the critics are correct. The Word-Faith movement is cultic. A cult, according to the dictionary, is "any religion regarded as unorthodox or even spurious," and is often characterized "by excessive devotion to some person, idea, or thing."

Among those identified as subscribing to some form of Word-Faith doctrine were Trinity Broadcasting Network president Paul Crouch, Korean megachurch leader David Yonggi Cho, and television preachers Kenneth Copeland, Marilyn Hickey, Fred Price, Benny Hinn, Oral Roberts, Rodney Howard-Browne, and Kenneth Hagin.

God's people ought to be aware of what these heretics are teaching. If that is to be true of God's people, then the pastors of God's church must carefully and diligently preach the sound doctrines of the Word of God, as those sound doctrines always stand against and expose the lie in its multitude of forms. Our pastors, in other words, must preach antithetically. The late Walter Mar-

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tin, a pioneer of the contemporary counter-cult movement, was right when he said, "Cults live on the unpaid bills of the church."

Christianity Today

■ Specialized Ministry To Gay and Lesbian Support Group

Since 1991 the Rev. Jim Lucas, a gay Christian Reformed Church (CRC) minister has headed the Grand Rapids chapter of the gay and lesbian support group AWARE. This group has existed for over a decade but was not widely known until recently. The first chapter was formed in Toronto following a decision by the CRC synod to oppose a decision of the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (GKN) to allow practicing homosexuals to become church members and officebearers.

According to a May 1994 report of Classis Toronto on homosexuality, "AWARE (which stands for As We Are) provides a Christian fellowship for Christian Reformed and other gays and lesbians and their families and other supportive friends. AWARE recognizes that Christians hold a variety of views on questions related to homosexuality, welcomes the participation of those holding different views, and encourages dialogue.

"Since AWARE includes some participants who live in committed homosexual relationships and others who are celibate, it may feel uncomfortable at first to visit, but acceptance of homosexuals as people and fellow believers is not the same as expressing approval of homosexual behavior," the Toronto report says. "A Toronto chapter of AWARE meets monthly at First CRC in Toronto. Don't be surprised if you meet someone you know there."

According to Lucas, AWARE now has three chapters: one in Toronto, one in London, Ontario, and one in Grand Rapids. The latter chapter meets in Eastern Ave.

CRC, though it is not in any way connected to the ministry of that congregation. About a year ago the Grand Rapids group formed a non-profit corporation called "As We Are, Inc." The corporation includes the Grand Rapids chapter of AWARE, but does not include any of the other AWARE groups. Lucas has been serving as chaplain of the Grand Rapids chapter since 1991.

According to its mission statement, "As We Are, Inc. is a Christian organization whose mission is to provide faith-based support for gay, lesbian, and bisexual persons and to promote a positive response within the Christian community." Lucas says, "We are not an ex-gay ministry, we're not trying to change people who are gay, we take an accepting, non-judgmental approach to people who are gay and we promote a positive response within the Christian community rather than a condemning judgmental response." Participants and board members of the Grand Rapids group are not limited to CRC members.

Rev. Lucas requested that Eastern Ave. CRC "call him to a specialized ministry with AWARE. In anticipation of this request Eastern Ave. overtured Classis Grand Rapids East in January of 1994 to establish a committee to study the appropriateness of various ministries to homosexual persons." Eastern Ave. told Classis, "We have informed Jim that we wish to wait until the study committee's report is received by Classis before requesting classical approval of a call to specialized ministry." Eastern Ave. requested Classis to extend Lucas' ministerial credentials and eligibility for call until September of 1995. If Classis East receives and approves the study committee's report, Lucas could be called by Eastern Ave. as early as January of 1995.

It grieves us to no end to observe developments such as these in our mother church. The Bible speaks so clearly to this issue. If we love homosexual persons we will tell them to repent and we will help

them in their struggle to overcome this terrible sin.

Christian Renewal

■ Christ Is Coming ... Soon

Religious leaders from thirty countries called for creation of a world council of religions. Meeting in Sudan last month the leaders said such a council would enable major religions — in particular Christianity and Islam — to join forces against materialist and secularist world views. Muslims are showing new interest in interreligious dialogue since September's United Nations population conference. Hassan Al Turabi, head of National Islamic Front of Sudan, said Christians and Muslims should form a coalition to "offer an alternative model of society" and a "new political world order."

Before our Lord returns, certain signs must take place (cf. Matt. 24). Just before the Savior's return the nations of the world will be united (in "a new political and religious world order") under the antichrist and the church will suffer great tribulation (II Thess. 2:3-4).

The conference cited above is just another indication that the day of the Lord cannot be all that far off. This is all the more reason why we must take to heart the instruction of I John 2:18: "Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time." □

*National & International
Religion Report*



Confident Beseeking in Farewell

(At the occasion of the farewell program for Rev. Carl Haak by Lynden Protestant Reformed congregation, Lynden, WA, on October 21, 1994.)

When Christ Himself was yet upon this earthly scene,
Pray ye, said He, the Lord of Harvest, when you see fields unto that harvest white.

That He the Lord send laborers there to reap
His Wheat and from the midst of chaff to separate and claim His own with might.

So do the saints in congregations in this age beseech, and so did we,
Almost a decade now, ago ... though we are startled by time's swift and urgent passing.

And Lord of Harvest heard our prayer for help,
and sent into our midst a reaper then
Made able, by His sending to this work, to preach the Word that men might hear, believe, and call on Him in faith.

This faithful servant preached the Word of comfort, and as lovely messenger of peace
Proclaimed the truth that all things viewed apart from God the Lord are vain,
But also that the words, acceptable and sought out by preachers wise, are upright
And from one Shepherd given, in order that His people, in these last days, might still be taught such knowledge for their light.

But now has Lord of Harvest made it clear to us through this His chosen vessel, preacher of His Word,
That he should, for the sake of other saints, not of this flock in Lynden, bestow his labor elsewhere for a season
And minister to them in all their needs, as he did here, from needs of little ones to needs of saints with hoary head,

And bring the Word of Gospel which, though not of his own making, is loved by him who bore it, sent out by Lord of Harvest as life into the dead.

What can we do now, as members of the congregation, but bid farewell
To preacher and his wife and children, too, who all have dwelt among us,
Though we are loathe to say goodbye to those we love, except we know it's Father's will
That they should go and we should stay where Lord of Harvest wisely knows the way
He'll save and bless with other reaper, sent forth by Him into this congregation dear.

May God continue now to place the Word of Gospel in your heart and on your lips, as from the Scripture taken,
So that the congregation there as well as here, the one you leave behind, may hear conclusion of the matter, clearly:
Oh saints! Fear God, His precepts and His good commandments keep! This is the whole of man!

For all your works has God into the judgment brought and paid for them upon the Head of His dear Son!

Now may the Lord Himself, in tender pity for the tears and fears that otherwise would overwhelm us,
Grant peace and courage, yes, and even joy to know that you and we are kept by Him whose goodness none can measure.

Henry W. Kuiper □

The Office of Mercy — Its Basis

The office of deacon is a vital office in the church. The church calls men to be officebearers. These men are ordained to be the official representatives of Christ. When these men, equipped by the Holy Spirit, bring the Word (and only when they bring the Word!), Christ is with His church.

In light of this vital truth, it is not surprising that there is a wealth of material that deals with the offices in the church. In preparing to discuss the office of deacon, I made use of several resources which I would like to acknowledge and recommend. I depend heavily on *Reformed Dogmatics* and *The Triple Knowledge* by Herman Hoeksema for their instruction concerning the office of Christ. I would also acknowledge *The Ministry of Mercy For Today* by P.Y. DeJong and *The Church Order Commentary* by VanDellen and Monsma. There have been many articles through the years on this subject in the *Standard Bearer*, but I would note in particular a series in volumes 32 and 33 by the Rev. G. Vandenberg, as well as articles in volume 67 by the Rev. R. Cammenga. These treat the articles of the church order that focus on the office of deacon. Finally, Prof. H. Hanko taught a series of classes in 1987 on the office of deacon. The audio cassettes of these classes provide the background for many of the concepts I hope to discuss.

Our Lord Jesus Christ is God's eternal Officebearer (cf. Heidelberg

Catechism, LD 12). As God's Officebearer, He is the visible representative of the invisible God. The Triune God sent the Christ that He might redeem the church and all creation through the deep way of sin and grace. Our Lord accomplished this purpose of God by going the way of the cross. His suffering and death satisfied God's justice. Through His atoning work all things are reconciled to God (Col. 1:20). Jesus Christ now sits exalted at God's right hand, where all power has been given unto Him to execute God's counsel. He sovereignly directs all things (even the forces of darkness) such that all things work towards the realization of the new creation when the tabernacle of God shall be with men, and when Christ shall be the glorious head over all (Rev. 21:3). To this glorious office Christ was ordained from before the foundations of the earth (Col. 1:17).

The triumphant church will be ruled directly by Jesus Christ. We will know Him as our chief Prophet, our only High Priest, and our eternal King. As Prophet, He will be the full revelation of the Triune God. As Priest, He will consecrate all of the new creation to the glory of God. And as King He will reign over all creatures in the name of God. Thus, the essential idea of the office of Christ is that He is God's representative. Ministers, elders, and deacons in the church militant stand in this office of Christ.

While the church is yet militant, Christ rules her by means of men whom He calls and equips to represent Him. In the Old Testament, the threefold office of Christ is

clearly evident in the prophets, priests, and kings in Israel. In the New Testament, the form (but not the essence) of these offices changed. Christ calls some to stand in the office of prophet. These are the ministers of the gospel, whose calling it is to reveal the full counsel of God. Men called to labor in the office of elder represent Christ in the office of king and govern the church. The priestly office of Christ is present in the church in the office of deacon. The deacons are called to represent Christ as the merciful High Priest of His people.

It is good to have a solid understanding of the office of Christ lest we have a superficial view of the corresponding offices in the church. It is my concern in this rubric that deacons and congregations realize the profound nature of the office of deacon. In the first place, we must see that the office of deacon is not the least bit inferior to the offices of elder and minister. Just as the priestly aspect of Christ's office is of equal importance with those of prophet and king, so also is the office of deacon of equal importance with the offices of minister and elder. This is not to suggest that deacons are not under the authority of the elders, or that a deacon should preach, but it is to say that the deacon is every bit as vital for the well-being of the church as are the elder and minister. The diaconate must not be thought (by deacons or congregation) to play a minor role in the church, or viewed as a stepping stone to the eldership. The office of deacon is a weighty and essential office. The office is not concerned

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chiefly with financial matters but is a profoundly spiritual calling. Deacons minister to the spiritual needs of the Lord's poor by bringing them financial assistance along with Scripture.

Secondly, Christ in the priestly aspect of His office is *the* Deacon in the church. When a deacon functions in his office, Christ is present in His church. When deacons come to the home of the poor, Christ comes! When the congregation sees the deacons collecting alms for the poor during the worship service, they must see Christ opening His hand to receive the offering. To the extent that the office of deacon is not active in caring for the poor, to that same extent Christ is not present in the church. To lose the office of deacon is to lose Christ. Deacons and congregations must lay hold of the profound importance of this office in the church. With these thoughts in mind, I hope to discuss the nature of the office in greater detail. I also intend to treat the attitude the poor must have towards the office, and the attitude the congregation must have for the Lord's poor through the office.

God has a special concern for the poor in the church. The Old Testament is replete with references to the poor as well as to "the fatherless and widows." The word "poor" appears 162 times in the Old Testament. God instructed the nation of Israel to care for them. God warns Israel that His "wrath shall wax hot" if the poor are afflicted and they cry unto God (Ex. 22: 23, 24). Indeed, the affliction of the poor by their fellow Israelites was an explicit ground for the punishment of both the northern and southern kingdoms (Amos 2:6, 7; Is. 3: 14, 15). Far from being the occasion for the affliction of the poor, we are to open our hands *wide* unto them (Deut. 15: 7-8). Think also of the many laws in the Old Testament which had as their focus the care of the poor. P.Y.

*When
a deacon
functions in his office,
Christ is present
in His church.*

DeJong notes that during the Sabbath years, fields were left uncultivated, and everything that grew might be freely gathered by the poor (cf. *Ministry of Mercy*, pp. 31-32). There are several passages that instruct the Israelites not to harvest their fields to the last kernel, but instead to leave something for the poor to glean (Lev. 19:9, 10; 23:22; Deut. 24:19). That God's blessing attended the sincere obeying of this law is abundantly evident in the touching account of Boaz and Ruth (Ruth 2).

In the new dispensation God maintains a deep concern for the poor. This is evident by the leading of the Spirit through the apostles. The institution of the office of deacon has as its immediate occasion the distress of the Grecian widows in Jerusalem (Acts 6: 1-8). The apostle Paul makes many references to the support of the poor, which we intend to examine in some detail in future articles.

Why does God have such a concern for the poor? A key passage in this regard is Deuteronomy 26. Here God calls His people to remember that they had been in bondage in Egypt. When under the cruel oppression and affliction of the Egyptians, they cried unto the LORD God. They were delivered "with a mighty hand, and with a stretched out arm, and with great terribleness, and with signs and with wonders; and (were brought into) ... a land that floweth with milk and honey" (Deut.

26: 7, 8). See also Deuteronomy 24: 17-22, where God states explicitly that the reason He requires Israel to care for the poor is directly connected to their deliverance from Egypt. This deliverance was accomplished through the judgment of the Egyptians by the Angel of the LORD, who passed over the Israelites whose houses were covered by the blood of the Paschal lamb.

The deliverance of Israel out of the iron furnace of Egypt is a pic-

ture of our deliverance from the iron furnace of our sin, guilt, and corruption (Deut. 4:20). God cared for us when we were poor. God delivered us from our desperate spiritual poverty and helplessness. He paid our debts with the blood of His own Son and made us rich in the blessings of salvation. Indeed, we are "bought with a price" (I Cor. 6:20). Christ, though rich in Himself, became poor for our sakes, that through His poverty we might be rich (II Cor. 8:9). Our care for the poor is evidence of the fact that we remember our deliverance from spiritual poverty.

God has a special concern for His poor in the church because they are usually those who have the most intimate communion with Him. Their prayers are fervent. They are sincere when they pray for their daily bread. They acknowledge their complete dependence upon their Father in heaven. Often their longing for the perfection of the kingdom of heaven is more focused, for they are not caught up in the materialism of the day. In a word, their financial distress drives them to an intense spiritual communion with their Father. Those who are weak in themselves find that God's grace is sufficient. Such children are the Father's delight.

Although the poor in the church are often very spiritual, it is also true that poverty brings with it unique temptations. Satan seeks to use the financial distress of God's people to tempt them to forsake God and the church. He will show them how much money is "thrown away" on kingdom causes. He will challenge the trust they place in God. After all, why would a loving God not take care of them? Satan will leverage our covetous nature to his advantage. Resentment can build against God and against fellow church members. This temptation to despair and to question God's love will be resolved by Christ Himself when He sends His representatives with financial assistance and the comfort of His Word. □

John 1:35-51

Christ's First Disciples

The central truth of these verses is very plainly that of Jesus gathering His first disciples and the way in which He brought them to Himself. We read here of the very first contact which five of the disciples had with Jesus. Other accounts (Mark 1:15-20; Luke 5:1-11; Matt. 4:18-22) inform us that at a later date Jesus called these same men to His service. This account in John is of a more personal nature. Here we see how they were personally and powerfully brought to the saving knowledge that Jesus was the Messiah. What rich instruction is given on the truth of how one is brought to union with Christ (cf. Canons III/IV, Article 11). Also the passage sets before us both the example and the duty of witnessing of Christ to others (cf. Heid. Cat., L.D. 32, Q. and A. 86).

It is very instructive to note how these first disciples were brought to Jesus. The first two heard a preacher proclaiming Christ as the "Lamb of God," and they followed Jesus. Simon Peter, the next one, was brought by his brother to Christ. Philip was found directly by Jesus. And Nathanael was summoned by Philip to "come and see," which resulted in Christ's making Himself known to him. In all of them we see the wonderful and irresistible grace of Christ drawing His sheep to Himself (John 6:44). Christ must

make disciples by revealing Himself to them as God's Messiah. God is sovereign through it all, yet He is pleased to use means. Those means are first the preaching of the Word, as we see John the Baptist proclaiming Christ. Then, having heard the Word, we are moved to witness to others to "come and see" Him themselves (John 4:42). Always it is Christ who draws and causes His sheep to hear His voice (John 10:27).

Finally we should see that Christ gathers men of widely different temperaments and callings. As the perfect Shepherd He knows His sheep and deals with each one according to his own situation. It is blessed to see here how the truth of Christ's gathering His church out of every type and personality among men is so strikingly illustrated. Consider these first five disciples:

John: Unnamed in verse 35, as is John's custom in this gospel narrative. He is the disciple of intense devotion and affection who leaned on the Master's bosom. He was "the disciple whom Jesus loved" (John 13:23), and the only one of the twelve who stood by the cross.

Andrew: A man who seems to be of a practical frame of mind. Whenever we see him in this gospel narrative he is bringing someone to Christ (John 6:8; 12:22).

Simon Peter: Strong-headed, impulsive, full of zeal.

Philip: Philip would show himself to be skeptical at times (John 6:5, 7; 14:8).

Nathanael: Evidently of a meditative and retiring disposition. A man of an open and frank nature,

one "in whom there was no guile," trustworthy.

"Yet each of these men found in Christ that which met his need and satisfied his heart!" (Arthur Pink).

Outline of John 1:35-51

1. John, Andrew, and Peter are brought to Christ (vv. 35-42).

A. John the Baptist heralds the Lamb of God to two of his disciples (vv. 35, 36).

B. John and Andrew are questioned by Jesus and abide with Him (vv. 37-39).

C. Andrew witnesses to Simon, his brother (vv. 40-42).

2. Philip and Nathanael are brought to Christ (vv. 43-51).

A. Jesus calls Philip (vv. 43-45).

B. Philip finds Nathanael (vv. 45, 46).

C. Jesus and Nathanael (vv. 47-51).

Questions for Further Study and Discussion

1. Discuss the truth of how men are brought to Christ.

a. Does the preaching of Christ as the only sacrifice for sin (Lamb of God) always play a crucial part?

b. How does the wonderful providence of God and the truth of irresistible calling fit together so beautifully? Can you give examples?

c. Show how Christ Himself must speak and reveal Himself personally to a person before that person can know Him as the Messiah.

d. Does not the reality of being made a follower of Christ always result in a witness to others of Him?

2. Show from John the Baptist's

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ministry that the content and the vital truth to which the church must always witness in her preaching is the sacrificial work of Christ.

3. Why did Jesus ask the two disciples of John, "What seek ye?" (v. 38).

4. What is signified in their reply, "Where dwellest thou?"

5. What important truth is seen in Andrew's witness to Peter? What can we learn from this about our

calling to witness? What is the relationship between witnessing of Christ and the preaching of the Word?

6. What is the significance of Jesus' renaming of Simon? Discuss the truth that in reality every saint in Christ Jesus is like Simon Peter.

7. What important idea is found in Christ's words to Philip, "Follow me"?

8. What attribute of Christ was demonstrated to Nathanael? How is this related to the confession he makes about Christ?

9. What did Nathanael mean by his remark about Nazareth? (See Matt. 2:23.)

10. What is meant by, "In whom there was no guile"?

11. What greater things was Nathanael to see? (v. 51). □

Special Article

Herman Hoeksema

No Room For Him

Because there was no room for them in the inn.

Luke 2:7b

Evening was falling.

The shadows were growing longer.

Twilight's hush was spreading a still expectancy over the country surrounding Bethlehem. The landscape's rich and manifold colors had not as yet been utterly defaced, but the deep blue of Palestine's heaven, the shining green of the olive and the pale tint of the almond were fast being swallowed up by the dusk and blending in the gray of evening. Even at this late season, for it was winter in the Promised Land, the rich fields, vine-clad hills, and terraced gardens around the City of David presented a picturesque view.

Two weary travelers were approaching the ancient city of Israel's most renowned king, a man revealing the vigor of youth in spite of his evident weariness, and a woman scarcely having passed the thresh-

old of womanhood. Judging by their outward appearance, one should not have classed them with the rich of the land. For even though a careful observer might have been reminded of long forgotten royalty and nobility by the features of these two strangers, yet the man made the impression of being a common tradesman and the woman was dressed in the garb of the common Israelitish woman. A long journey lay evidently behind them, for they did not pause to take in the beauty of the evening, and a sigh of satisfaction escaped their breast as, leaving behind them the gardens surrounding the city, they entered the city of their fathers.

In the little town all was astir. For the same command of the mighty Caesar that had brought Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem caused the city to be overcrowded with visitors that had come to be enrolled. And so it happened that every home was lodging its strangers, that even the inn was filled to capacity, and that no choice was left to the strangers from Nazareth but to turn to one of the caves on Bethlehem's outskirts, to seek lodging for the night in a place where passing caravans would stable their cattle.

Night had fallen when there they prepare to make their abode for the night.

Because there was no room for them in the inn.

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There was no room for them.

And one of them was the blessed among women! Thus the angel had greeted her, when he had visited Mary's lowly dwelling in Nazareth, with the wonderful message on his heavenly lips that a virgin should bring forth a Son! Thus also had Elisabeth recognized Mary when the latter visited her cousin: "Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb." And the silent Mary, wont to hide things beneath the quiet surface of her profound heart and given to still pondering, had broken forth in joyous strain: "My soul doth magnify the Lord and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. For He hath regarded the low estate of His handmaiden: for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed."

Supremely blessed among women was Mary.

Blessed she was, not simply because of the glad expectation of approaching motherhood. Surely, also

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this blessing was hers in that night of nights when Joseph and she were crowded out of Bethlehem's inn and sought lodging in a place for cattle. Gladness fills the heart of the parent, and the sorrows of a laboring mother are soon forgotten for the joy of possessing a child in the world. In anticipation of this happiness Mary took up her abode in the stable that night. Yet, nothing distinguished her in this regard from any mother in the world. Besides, the mere joy to bring a child into the world and for the world is far from unmixed. Expectation of mere motherhood did not make Mary the supremely blessed among women.

Greater joy filled the heart of Mary because of the fact that as mother she might take her place among Israel's women, who in bringing forth their children labored in the blessed hope of the realization of the promise made to the fathers in times of yore. In the midst of sorrow the eye of these covenant-women, believing the promise and looking for a heavenly country with faithful Abraham, looked hopefully far beyond the present and the things of this world, toward the blessed and everlasting reign of David's mighty Son. In this hope shared Mary. She looked forward to the realization of Israel's hope. But even this, though distinguishing her from so many thousands of women that labored in vain because they were laboring merely for the world, was not the cause of Mary's supreme joy and blessedness.

For even among these covenant-women and believing Israelitish mothers, Mary occupied a place of unique distinction. Had not the angel that stands before God, mysteriously dropped the message from heaven that she would be mother though still a virgin? And had he not explained upon her anxious query how these things might be, that the power of the Most High would overshadow her and that He who was to be her Son would be called the Son of God and sit on David's throne forever? Were they,

by heavenly injunction, not to call the name of her Son Jesus, because He would save His people from their sin? Mother of Israel's Savior Mary was to be, the King of kings was to assume her own flesh and blood! This was her unique privilege from the Lord.

And this glad hope was to be realized that very night!

But there was no place for them, not even in the inn. And because there was no place for them, there was no room for Him to whom she was to give birth.

Thus it happens that even at the very moment of His birth, Jesus is crowded out to the very edge of the world. Born in a stable, laid in a manger!

Because there was no room for Him in the inn!

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No room for Him!

Strange, yet prophetic incident!

Full of strange and mysterious contrasts is that manger in Bethlehem's stable. Is that babe not Israel's King, yet was ever a king born in circumstances less suggestive of royalty, more beggarly and abjectly poor? Is that babe not Mighty God, infinitely glorious, whom the heavens and the heaven of heavens are not able to comprehend; yet is He not wrapped in swaddling clothes and held by a manger? Was it not the angel's injunction from God that He must be called Jesus because He was to save His people from their sins? Yet is He not crowded out by the very people He came to save? Israel's King in miserable poverty! God in swaddling clothes! The Savior crowded out to the very edge of the world!

Yet, that crowded inn is prophetic of the world's relation to Him that was born in the stable.

There is no room for Him.

No room there is for Him in Israel. No place for Him, the carpenter's son, in His home town, and presently they push him to the edge of the precipice for the purpose of thrusting Him out of the

world. No place for Him in the hearts and minds of the worldly-minded bread-seekers of Capernaum and they forsake Him, offended by His speech. No place for Him in Jerusalem that killeth the prophets, among priests and elders, in secret counsel or Sanhedrin. And all this world ultimately crowds together and unites in shouting: "Away with Him, away with Him!"

And they crowd Him to the accursed tree.

Because there was no room for Him in the inn of the world.

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But is not the relation toward Him different in the world of today?

Superficially considered it would seem so.

For who does not adore the Master in the modern-religious world and swear by His name? Who, on glad X-mas day, does not take his children to that sweet little baby in its manger-cradle, to teach them how a poor boy with all things against him from his very birth may become a truly great man? Who, in the modern world, refuses to follow the good Man of Galilee on His travels through the country of His people, to take as his example all the good He did for society, to listen to His remarkable reformatory discourses full of love, to watch Him feed the hungry, help the sick, express His sympathy with the poor and needy and invite publicans and sinners into His company? Or, what is more, who would refuse to follow to Golgotha to take an object lesson that, even as He, so must we be ready to lay down our lives for our fellow men. Surely, the world adores Jesus, the Good Man, the Master who revealed to us the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of man, who taught us to beat our swords into ploughshares and our spears into pruninghooks, the Prince of Peace.

The inn-doors of the world are thrown open wide and all the inside crowd are beckoning Him to take His place among them.

But they labor under an illusion.

For it is a Jesus of their own imagination, a Phantom-Man, a dream.

For speak now of the Christ of the Scriptures, whose poverty is ours, who humbled Himself even unto death and shed His life-blood because of God's justice and our iniquity. Go now to the door of that world-inn and let Jesus speak of sin and righteousness and judgment, and tell the inside throng that they must be washed in His blood and that Christ is nothing to them, no Example, no Master, no Good Man, and no Teacher, if He is not first their Redeemer, who purchased them as His people and must wash the guilty stains from their heart and mind. The inn-door will be closed, and from within you will again here the murmur of the Galilean bread-seekers: "This speech is hard, who can hear it?"

The world of today is as the world of His own day.

There is no room for Him in the inn.

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No room!

How proper it should be thus!

For, on the other hand, in the world's inn they serve the world's Prince. He has dominion there. Under his dominion darkness blinds their eyes so that they cannot see

the light shining in their midst. Enmity fills the hearts against God and His anointed. And because their works are evil they love darkness rather than light. He is the Light, mercilessly exposing the dark hypocrisy of the human heart and opening the whitewashed sepulchre of the pharisee's soul. Without hesitancy He deprives every man of all his boasted glory and self-righteousness, and brings him naked to Him that judges righteously and whose eyes burn through to the deepest recesses of the soul. That dark and hostile world, unless changed by His own gracious power, must refuse to let Him in, cannot but crowd Him out.

And, on the other hand, no flesh may glory in His presence.

For, surely, this poor babe of Bethlehem for whom there was no place in the inn is destined to have room in the world. But it is room, not given Him by the world, but created for Him by the very wonder of His own grace. The glory is all His. From the very edge of the world in the humiliating stable, He pushes His way into the world. Over the cross and through the grave He steadfastly advances till He is received in the highest heavens, angels and principalities and powers

being made subject unto Him. Thence, as the Lord of heaven and having become the quickening Spirit, He edges His way into the hearts of thousands from all nations and tongues and tribes, exposing sin, breaking sinful pride, making humble publicans of conceited pharisees, cleansing and justifying and dwelling in them even as the Father dwells in Him. Thus, by the irresistible power of His grace, He realizes the spiritual temple of God's covenant: "I in them and thou in me, that we may be perfect in one."

And presently all things will be united in Him, things in heaven and things on earth, and God shall spread His tabernacle over all.

No room for Him in the inn.

Such was the sad beginning.

But He makes room for Himself. Room in your contrite and broken heart, room in your weary and laboring soul, room in the hearts of all that are given Him by the Father, room in heaven and earth, till the Kingdoms of the world shall be His.

Then there will be room for Him, and for His, and for no other. And all this shall be forevermore attributed solely to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Solely of grace. □

When Thou Sittest in Thine House

Rev. Ronald VanOverloop

"Grieve Not"

My parents have invested a lot of time and effort in me. Also much prayer.

They sought to fulfill the vows they took before God and before His church when I was presented for

baptism. Those vows consisted of their promise to instruct me in the doctrine which is contained in God's holy Word and which was and is taught in the church of which they were members (Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church). These vows they willingly took upon themselves, even though it demanded so much of them, and that to the best of their ability. They willingly took this

same vow five more times when each of my brothers was baptized.

My parents put a lot of time and effort into teaching, training, and guiding me. They did so because they believed God's promise that He usually uses such efforts of godly parents as the means to work faith in their children. So gracious is this promise and so worthy is the goal, that they considered no amount of

Rev. VanOverloop is pastor of Georgetown Protestant Reformed Church in Bauer, Michigan.

effort to be too much. In support of their efforts they joined other like-minded parents to establish schools which would teach and train their child(ren) in the truth. This was done at great expense and with great sacrifice. But for them the goal was worth it. For them the effort was worth it.

Most parents invest much into their children. Whether or not faith abides in the heart of the parents, they are inclined to do everything they can for their children. When a mother drowns her two children, it is seen as rare and the exception. (Somehow, a distinction is made between a mother killing her child before it is born, and her killing it after it is born.) Often their love for their children goes beyond proper bounds and they "spoil" the child.

Parents, even unbelieving parents, invest much in their children.



When a child does something which is contrary to all the instruction the parent gave it, then the parent is "grieved."

Grief is a word which is usually used to describe the frame of mind of those who have had a loved one die. But it is not too strong a word to describe what a parent experiences when a child does or says something that is opposed to their prayers. Grief is a sharp emotional pain which cuts deeply. It takes a long time to recover from grief.

The Bible speaks of this. "A foolish son is a grief to his father, and bitterness to her that bare him" (Prov. 17:25). "He that begetteth a fool doeth it to his sorrow: and the father of a fool hath no joy" (Prov. 17:21). "Whoso keepeth the law is a wise son: but he that is a companion of riotous men shameth his father" (Prov. 28:7).

Sadly, most children never think of the grief they might be causing their parents. They are usually unaware of what effect their actions have on their parents. Normally they do not think of the sword they

are thrusting into the souls of their parents. Children are often thinking only of themselves. They are out for their fun and enjoyment. And many times, if they want to do something which is contrary to parents' instruction, children think only of how backward and old-fashioned the "old man" and "old lady" are, and do not think of what it will mean to their parents. They do not consider the shame and embarrassment they will cause those who have given so much of themselves for them.

The grief caused by children who act contrary to their parents' instruction is so great that sometimes they could better shoot their parents than do something that would cause this grief and sorrow of heart.

This grief does not stop when the children reach a certain age. It continues. The verses of Scripture quoted earlier in this article set no time limit. Regardless of our age, when we go contrary to our parents' wishes and instructions we hurt them. Believing parents may be so old that they have one foot in the grave, but they still feel the hurts caused by wayward children.



Think about what you are doing or plan to do from this perspective. Consider how much your parents have invested in you.

After all they have done for you, you owe it to them. Do not be inconsiderate of how they feel.

Consider how many of your diapers they must have changed. Consider how long your dad had to work for all the food you ate. Consider how many times your mother had her sleep interrupted by your crying for food or when you were sick. Think of how many times your mother picked up after you.

Think of how many times your parents prayed for you.

You owe your parents. From this perspective, you owe them, at the

very least, respect and consideration.



If you are a believer, it is not only your parents that you grieve when you sin. When believers sin, they also grieve the Holy Spirit of God. "And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption" (Eph. 4:30).

To grieve the Holy Spirit of God is far worse than grieving loving parents. The grief a child brings upon his parents is the picture the Bible uses to describe the grief God's child causes the Spirit, who is in him, when he sins.

Like parents for their children, the Spirit does a lot for the regenerated and justified child of God. The Spirit of Christ applies to each of the elect the salvation Jesus earned through His suffering and death. It is the presence of the Spirit in one that makes him a child of God. "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his" (Rom. 8:9). It is only through the Spirit working in him that one is able to confess that Jesus is the Christ and is his Lord (I Cor. 12:3).

The Spirit takes up His dwelling place inside those whom God elected and for whom Christ died. It is His presence in us which makes us temples of God. "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you" (I Cor. 3:16)? "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own" (I Cor. 6:19)?

Like parents for their children, the Holy Spirit does much for believers. He enables them to believe! He regenerates and converts. "When God ... works in them true conversion, He ... powerfully illuminates their minds by His Holy Spirit, ... by the efficacy of the same regenerating Spirit, pervades the inmost recesses of the man; He opens the

*Sadly,
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closed, and softens the hardened heart, ... infuses new qualities into the will, which though heretofore dead, He quickens ... that like a good tree, it may bring forth the fruits of good actions" (Canons, III/IV, 11).

The Spirit's initial work of converting is below the consciousness of the recipient. Much of the later work of the Spirit is in perfect harmony with the nature of man. He works in believers without violating their will. He gives faith, and is the instrument through which we have communion with the ever-blessed God (Rom. 8:14, 15). Through the Spirit we are given to know God (I Cor. 2). The Spirit leads us to confess that we belong to Christ (I Cor. 12:3). The Spirit sanctifies all those whom He occupies (Tit. 3:5; I Pet. 1:2).

When we sin, then we grieve the Holy Spirit of God. When we act in an unholy manner, then we wound the Spirit.

This implies that the Spirit is a real person, and not just some power of God or a divine influence. Grief is not experienced by a thing, by a power, but it is experienced by a person.

What a terrible thing to do to One who has invested so much into us!

Thankfully, we never kill the Spirit. Our sins, no matter how grievous, never cause the Spirit to leave us. He never stops performing His sanctifying work in us. In fact, by Him we "are sealed unto the day of redemption" (Eph. 4:30). Our sins are not able to chase Him out of us. He will be grieved, but He will not leave. Believers do not commit *the* sin against the Holy Spirit. They cannot.

Nevertheless, we cause grief to the Holy Spirit of God when we sin.

Children often do not consider the effect their sins have on their parents. Believers do not often think of what their sins do to the Spirit in them.

Young and old, when we, be-

lievers, sin, then we grieve the Holy Spirit of God which is in us. The context of Ephesians 4:30 teaches us that the sins of believers which grieve the Holy Spirit in them are not just those we would measure as being great. Rather, the context teaches that a sin which grieves the indwelling Holy Spirit is the sin of lying, of letting the sun go

*Believers
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down on our wrath, of stealing, and of unedifying, "rotten" talk (Eph. 4:25, 26, 28, 29). The indwelling Spirit is grieved by the sin of bitterness, wrath, anger, the lack of tenderheartedness, and the refusal to forgive as God has forgiven (Eph. 4:31, 32).

Many of these sins are the kind that are frequently committed in our homes, when we sit in our houses.

The Spirit in believers is "holy." He works in us and through us to make us holy. It is not that our sinning makes the Spirit impotent and His work in us inefficacious. But a sin or a walk in sin does displease Him; it does remove from us the consciousness of His presence and the joy of our salvation.

The indwelling Holy Spirit is grieved when His sanctifying work in believers is hindered by our abuse of the very gift God gives to further our sanctification.

Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God.

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Preachers and parents often admonish young people not to sin by trying to scare them, by putting fear into them. In Ephesians 4 the Spirit inspires the apostle Paul to use a different tact. The apostle tells the Ephesians that they are saved, and that their salvation is secure, even to the day of final redemption of their bodies. They are told that they will not lose their salvation. Then comes the admonition to be holy.

Some would say that this approach is like walking on thin ice. It is dangerous to tell God's people

that their salvation is secure, because then they will sin as they please.

The Scriptures repeatedly declare the preservation of the saints, and they do so unashamedly. The Spirit that seals to the day of redemption is the Holy Spirit. He sanctifies. And He often sanctifies through the consciousness of gratitude. He shows us what Christ has done for us so we will be eternally grateful. He declares Jesus' undying love, so we will walk in the obedience of a thankful love.

To prick us unto a holy talk and a forgiving spirit, we are admonished, "Grieve not the holy Spirit of God" who dwells in us.

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We grieve our parents when we sin.

Worse, we grieve the indwelling Holy Spirit of God. Grieve Him not! □

*"And grieve not
the holy Spirit
of God,
whereby ye are
sealed
unto the day
of redemption."*

Ephesians 4:30

The Reformation and Family Worship

The Reformation was many things. It was a return to the supreme authority of the Scriptures. It was a restoration of preaching to its place of primacy. It was a revival of true, heartfelt worship. It was a "re-formation" of the church institute, a re-emphasis of the doctrines of sovereign grace, and more besides.

But one of its greatest contributions was its restoration and revival of the blessedness of family life. Here we come to the full harvest of what the Spirit worked in the Reformation.

God's chief purpose in the Reformation was not to revive preaching for its own sake, so we could have great works of preaching to admire and discuss. The great purpose of the Reformation was to restore preaching that would restore *godliness*, godliness in the lives of believers, and to produce Christian homes.

Permit me the use of an extended metaphor. The church of Christ at the dawn of the Reformation was like a great oak tree standing dormant under the cold, dark, European wintry-blast of the Middle Ages. Then came the springtime of the Reformation. And from the roots of the Scriptures the Spirit began to send His life into the church, stirring its sluggish sap and sending His vitality — first into the trunk of the preaching, then on into the branches of the sanctuaries and congregations, and at last producing the blessed foliage and fruit of the God-fearing family and home.

And when you think of it, in many ways this is the very goal and purpose of God's saving Word altogether, namely, the salvation of believers and their seed who live together and confess and praise the same Jehovah God. This follows from the fact that God is a covenant God.

It is these families that would come and fill the sanctuaries of the church, worshiping God as His great congregation.

One is reminded here of the very last promise found in the very last verse of the very last prophet of the Old Testament, Malachi, as he speaks of what would characterize Messiah's great kingdom and church. "And he (i.e., the second Elijah) shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse" (Mal. 4:6).

What a striking promise with which to end the Old Testament! A covenant promise, a promise that speaks of the revival of family ties. It speaks of fathers with children, no longer estranged, but worshiping one and the same God through the Mediator sent.

And this is what the Spirit accomplished in the tree of the church by means of the Reformation — the flourishing again of godly and pious family life; family life that is itself centered in God's Word and worship; family life in which the father (not to exclude the mother, but we speak of the ideal), as head of the home, understands his spiritual calling, and leads in prayer and instruction and praise.

This was no small gift to the

church through the Reformation.

That the Reformers should be used by God to reintroduce family worship into the lives of believers is a striking thing. It is striking because, if there was one thing that seems to have been absent from the lives of the early Reformers, it was their being raised in what we would call God-fearing homes, homes in which the Word of God ruled, homes where there was family worship. I am speaking of men of such stature as Wycliffe, Huss, Luther, Calvin, Tyndale, Knox, Zwingli, and others besides.

The Reformers were voluminous in their writings. Yet one looks in vain for references to themselves as being the products of spiritual, God-centered homes. Such references are conspicuous by their absence.

In a couple of instances you do have favorable mention of the piety of their mothers, namely, of Luther's and Calvin's. They had mothers to whose religious sincerity one is attracted, though even the piety of these mothers was mixed with great ignorance and superstition.

Calvin, for instance, had an early memory of his mother walking with him for two hours to enter a cathedral (when he was three years old) and then lifting him up to kiss the supposed skull of St. Anne, Mary's mother. It indicated devout zeal, but not according to knowledge.

As for Luther's and Calvin's fathers, they were members of Rome's church. Luther had a great deal of respect, one might say dread, for his father, and he did recall seeing his father praying. But the general impression of the fathers of the Reformers is that their church mem-

bership a was a matter of economic wisdom more than anything else. It was a matter of livelihood.

The Reformers were raised in typical Roman Catholic homes of the time.

We should pause here for the praise of women!

It is a striking thing that even in the most spiritually barren times of the history of the church, when not a man can be found in Israel, still women, mothers, were quietly, patiently laboring to preserve some piety in the home. Women, mothers, seem always to be the one great constant in church history. So often they are found laboring with little help, and with no leadership or encouragement from their husbands.

The spiritual home-fires burned at low ebb. That they burned at all was due to the mothers, not the fathers.

The absence of being raised in sound, God-fearing homes was apparently characteristic of the lives of the Reformers. And yet from such homes came the men that God used to restore spirituality to the home, and family worship itself.

The homes of the early Protestants were markedly different from the homes of their Roman Catholic neighbors.

The primary reason?

Protestant homes had fathers who began to function as heads of their homes — not only in financial matters (what trade their sons were to pursue) but also in spiritual. They began to function as spiritual heads of their homes. They took it upon themselves to provide leadership in the spiritual development of their children. They became New Testament Joshuas — “As for me and my house....”

The Reformation served to revive the hearts of the fathers for their children. Men became spiritual leaders in their homes. Such involvement paid rich dividends in the spiritual climate of the home and for the church herself.

All this raises a deeper question, namely, what was it that prompted

these “sons of the Reformation” to take this sudden interest in the spiritual quality of their families and to provide the leadership?

One could say, the Holy Spirit. That is true enough.

But what truth and doctrine did the Spirit use to prompt men to see what their task and calling and qualifications were?

Here we run into the rediscovery of the truth of the priesthood of all believers. This is what had been stolen from God’s people along with God’s Word. And that robbery left the members of the church destitute, spiritually lethargic, and chained in their own ignorance, convinced it could never be otherwise.

All knowledge, all understanding of God’s Word and ways had to be left to the professional priesthood of the church. They alone had the spirit of understanding and interpretation. No one could approach into the presence of God without a priest acting as his mediator, or giving him temporary permission to do so.

The Reformation changed all that.

There is but one Mediator, the Lord Jesus Christ. All believers have His good and Holy Spirit. He is the Spirit of knowledge and understanding to all, young and old. And, having the Spirit and anointing of Christ, one has the right of direct access to the Father and the throne of grace.

This was of practical importance.

This meant that the Protestant husband did not simply turn his family over to the church and her priests. Rather, he understood his own office and task as spiritual head of the home. He took it upon himself to lead his family in the ways of God and into His presence.

The fruit of the Reformation was found in its widespread effect on home-life across the map of Europe.

James W. Alexander, in his book entitled *Thoughts on Family Worship*, wrote of a wide prevalence of household piety found across the map of Reformation Europe. He states that “... in no country did the light of the

dwelling burn more brightly than in Scotland.... Probably no land, in proportion to its inhabitants, ever had so many praying families...” (p. 22).

Having stated that “in Scotland especially the humblest persons, in the remotest cottages, honoured God by daily praise...” (p. 25), Alexander goes on to quote a Mr. Hamilton.

I have sometimes seen family-worship in great houses, but I have felt that God was quite as near when I knelt with a praying family on the earthen floor of their cottage. I have known of family-worship among the reapers in a barn. It used to be common in the fishing-boats upon the friths and lakes of Scotland. I have heard of this being observed in the depths of a coal-pit.

There is historical evidence to substantiate this description of the land of John Knox.

This family worship is the legacy of Calvin, who taught, “Every family of the pious ought to be a Church” (*Commentaries*, Genesis, I, p. 455).

Luther, who married and had children and a lively household, took the time to draw up a “Small Catechism” with the specific intent that it be taught to children. At the heading of its first part are the words written large, *as the head of the family should teach them in a simple way to his household*. In this section he includes such basic items as the Ten Commandments, the Lord’s Prayer, and the Apostles’ Creed, with simple explanations of each point.

Luther also included a section entitled, “How the Head of the Family Should Teach His Household to Pray Morning and Evening.” Here he composed what he calls some “little prayers” for children to recite for various occasions, to be taught by parents.

The very Heidelberg Catechism with which we are so familiar was written with the instruction of the youth in mind. This instruction was to be promoted in each and every home.

We see then that the Reformers

were conscious of the need for parents (and for fathers in particular) to serve as "teaching-priests." They gave not only exhortation here, but also direction and assistance. The

fruit of their promptings could be seen in the vigorous growth of godly homes. They were homes not only of doctrinal knowledge, but of personal piety and family worship.

Around mealtime and bedtime large sections of Europe took on a different face. Praises to God could be heard as you walked down the village lanes. □ (to be continued)

"Apples of Gold"

The Church Walking with the World

The church and the World walked far apart
On the changing shore of time;
The World was singing a giddy song,
And the Church a hymn sublime.
"Come, give me your hand," said the merry World,
"And then walk with me this way."
But the good Church hid her snowy hand
And solemnly answered — "Nay,
I will not give you my hand at all
And I will not walk with you:
Your way is the way of eternal death
And your words are all untrue."

"Nay, walk with me a little space,"
Said the World with a kindly air,
"The road I walk is a pleasant road
And the sun shines always there.
Your way is narrow and thorny and rough
While mine is flowery and smooth;
Your lot is sad with reproach and toil,
But in rounds of joy I move.
My way, you can see, is a broad, fair one
And my gate is high and wide;
There is room enough for you and me
And we'll travel side by side."

Half shyly the Church approached the World
And gave him her hand of snow;
And the false World grasped it, and walked along
And whispered in accents low,
"Your dress is too simple to please my taste.
I have gold and pearls to wear;
Rich velvets and silks for your graceful form
And diamonds to deck your hair."

The Church looked down at her plain white robes
And then at the dazzling World,
And blushed as she saw his handsome lip,
With a smile contemptuous curved.
"I will change my dress for a costlier one,"
Said the Church with a smile of grace;

Then her pure white garments drifted away,
And the World gave in their place
Beautiful satins, and fashionable silks
And roses and gems and pearls;
And over her forehead her bright hair fell
And waved in a thousand curls.

"Your house is too plain," said the proud old World.
"Let us build you one like mine
With kitchen for feasting and parlour for play
And furniture ever so fine."
So he built her a costly and beautiful house —
Splendid it was to behold.
Her sons and her daughters met frequently there,
Shining in purple and gold;
And, fair and festival — frolics untold
Were held in the place of prayer.
And maidens, bewitched as sirens of old —
With world-winning graces rare,
Bedecked with fair jewels and hair all curled —
Untrammelled by Gospel or Laws,
To beguile and amuse and win from the World
Some help for "the righteous cause."

The Angel of mercy rebuked the Church
And whispered, "I know your sin."
Then the Church looked sad and anxiously longed
To gather the children in.
But some were away at the midnight ball
And others were at the play;
And some were drinking in gay saloons,
And the Angel went away.

And then said the World in soothing tones —
"Your much loved ones mean no harm —
Merely indulging in innocent sports."
So she leaned on his proffered arm,
And smiled, and chatted and gathered flowers
And walked along with the World;
While countless millions of precious souls
Were hungering for truth untold.

"Your preachers are all too old and plain,"
Said the gay World with a sneer;
"They frighten my children with dreadful tales
Which I do not like to hear.
They talk of judgments and fire and pain
And the doom of darkest night.
They warn of a place that should not be
Thus spoken to ears polite!
I will send you some of a better stamp,
More brilliant and gay and fast,
Who will show how men may live as they list,
And go to heaven at last.
The Father is merciful, great and good,
Loving and tender and kind;
Do you think He'd take one child to heaven
And leave another behind?"

So she called for pleasing and gay divines,
Deemed gifted, and great, and learned;
And the plain old men that preached the cross
Were out of her pulpits turned.
When Mammon came in and supported the Church
And rented a prominent pew;
And preaching and singing and floral display
Soon proclaimed a gospel new.

"You give too much to the poor," said the World,
"Far more than you ought to do;
Though the poor need shelter, food, and clothes,
Why thus need it trouble you?
Go take your money and buy rich robes
And horses and carriage fine;
And pearls and jewels and dainty food,
The rarest and costliest wine.
My children, they dote on all such things,
And if you their love would win
You must do as they do, and walk in the way —
The flowery way they're in."

Then the Church sat down at her ease and said,
"I'm rich and in goods increased,
I have need of nothing, and naught to do

But to laugh and dance and feast."
The sly World heard her, and laughed within,
And mockingly said aside,
"The Church has fallen — the beautiful Church,
Her shame is her boast and pride."

Thus her witnessing power, alas, was lost,
And perilous times came in;
The times of the end, so often foretold,
Of form and pleasure and sin.
Then the Angel drew near the mercy seat
And whispered in sighs her name,
And the saints their anthems of rapture hushed
And covered their heads with shame.
A voice came down from the hush of Heaven
From Him who sat on the throne;
"I know thy works and what thou hast said,
But alas! thou hast not known
That thou art poor and naked and blind,
With pride and ruin enthralled;
The expectant Bride of a heavenly Groom
Is the harlot of the World!

Thou hast ceased to watch for that blessed hope —
Hast fallen from zeal and grace;
Soon now, alas! I must cast thee out
And blot thy name from its place."
But out from the side of the harlot Church,
While she sleeps in indolent shame,
Will be taken the remnant who keep God's Word
And honour His holy name.
By the word of their testimony, and the blood of the
Lamb,
They overcame the World.
They prayed for the day when their enemy strong
Would be into the abyss hurled.
For those who keep their garments clean
Shall walk with Him in white.
In the day when He comes to claim His own,
To make them jewels bright.

Matilda C. Edwards

News from Our Churches

Mr. Benjamin Wigger

Minister Activities

The congregation of the First PRC in Edmonton, AB, Canada extended a call to Rev. Michael De Vries, currently serving as pastor of

the Edgerton, MN PRC, to serve as their next pastor. With Rev. DeVries on that trio were the Revs. W. Bekkering of Pella, IA and A. den Hartog of Hope PRC in Redlands, CA.

The Lynden, WA PRC also formed another trio from which to call a pastor. This trio was made up of the Revs. W. Bruinsma, of First in Holland, MI, S. Key in Randolph,

WI, and C. Terpstra in South Holland, IL. From that trio a call was extended to Rev. Terpstra.

Mission Activities

In the middle of November, Rev. R. Moore and Mr. Don VerMeer, an ex-elder in our Hull, IA PRC, left for a period of seven weeks to visit with contacts that our churches' Foreign Mission Committee has estab-

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

lished with a number of men in Ghana. Many of these contacts were first made when the FMC visited Ghana in 1992. It was hoped that among other things this current visit would enable our churches to learn more about these men and the groups they represent and whether we are in agreement or disagreement in areas of doctrine, practice, mission work, and worship.

Congregational Activities

(Correction — The speaker at the Fall Ladies' League Meeting held in Doon, IA was incorrectly identified as Rev. R. Dykstra in our November 15 News. It was in fact Seminarian Doug Kuiper, who is doing his internship in Doon.)

Once again this year our Hudsonville, MI PRC, through the combined efforts of their deacons and "helping hands committee," has organized a food drive to take place between the holidays for distribution to those in need in their congregation. Gifts of any non-perishable grocery items or gift certificates or money were encouraged.

At a mid-week Bible study in the Trinity PRC in Houston, TX, the members of that group had the added bonus of hearing Dr. Charles Finney, a missionary to India, speak about his ministry to the lost sheep in that part of the world.

After much delay the building committee of the Peace PRC in Lynwood, IL has received revised church building plans from their architect. These plans have been submitted to the City of Lansing. If they are found to be satisfactory, a building permit will be issued to Peace. However, according to Peace, they simply do not know how long the city will take to evaluate their plans. It could be a long time, and, for that matter, they are still left wondering if their plans will even be approved or if they will be rejected. Remember Peace as they patiently wait upon God to accomplish His perfect will.

The September 18th afternoon worship service of the Immanuel

PRC in Lacombe, AB, Canada was advertised not only in the *Lacombe Glove*, but also in the *Red Deer Advocate*. The subject of the sermon of that service was "An Exhortation Concerning the Second Coming of Our Lord," based on II Thessalonians 2:1-3. This topic was chosen at that particular time especially because a well-known Reformed Bible teacher and radio broadcaster had predicted that Christ would probably return sometime during the last two weeks of September, 1994.

While on classical appointment to our vacant congregation in Lynden, WA, Rev. A. denHartog also graciously agreed to speak at a Reformation Lecture. On October 31 he spoken in Lynden's sanctuary on the theme, "The Importance of the Reformation for Us Today."

Evangelism Activities

The radio call-in program, "Reformed Perspectives," sponsored by the Reformed Witness Committee of the Doon, IA, Edgerton, MN, and Hull, IA PRC seems to be doing rather well. So far topics discussed on this twice-monthly program, heard over KTSB 93.9 FM, have included interpreting Scripture, and Bible versions. There was even a promise made in one bulletin from Hull that there is planned more time

for calls, indicating perhaps that interest continues to be strong.

School Activities

On the evening of November 4, the community of Randolph, WI was invited to a public Open House of the Faith Christian School, which had opened its doors for the first time this Fall.

The advanced band of the Hope PR Christian School, located in Walker, MI, traveled to the South Holland, IL PR Christian School on November 18 for a joint practice and concert. The band left Hope School around 8:30 A.M. and returned that night at about 11:30 P.M.

Young People's Activities

On November 20, the Federation of Young People's Societies held their annual Thanksgiving Mass Meeting, hosted this year by the Young People's Society of the First PRC in Holland, MI. Rev. W. Bruinsma, pastor at First, spoke on the theme, "Thanks for Nothing."

Food For Thought

"Deny the virgin birth of Christ and you must relinquish the authority of the Bible; accept the virgin birth and you may continue to regard the Bible as the very Word of God."

— J. Gresham Machen
"What Is Christianity?" □

ANNOUNCEMENTS

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Mary-Martha Society of Hope Protestant Reformed Church in Redlands expresses their sincere sympathy to fellow members Jeanne Jabaay, Laurie Jabaay, and Janine Meelker, and families, in the loss of their mother-in-law and grandmother, **MRS. JENNIE JABAAY.**

May the family be comforted in the beautiful words of Psalm 23, "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever" (Ps. 23:6).

Rev. A. denHartog, President
Jeanne Karsemeyer, Secretary

NOTICE!!!

Please note the following changes of address and phone number in your 1994 yearbook:

page 198:

Rev. denHartog's area code should be 909.

pages 200 and 220:

Rev. J. Kortering, Blk 517 #10-234, Serangoon North Avenue 4, Singapore 1955, Republic of Singapore. Phone: 011-65-484-0378.

page 221:

First Evangelical Reformed Church, 652 Yio Chu Kang Road, Singapore 2678, Republic of Singapore. Phone: 011-65-452-4388; Fax: 011-65-452-4638.

THE STANDARD BEARER

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NOTICE!!!

With thankfulness to God, the faculty of the Protestant Reformed Seminary informs the churches that it has licensed Seminarian Richard Smit to speak a word of edification in the meetings for public worship. The scheduling of Mr. Smit's speaking in the worship services will be done by the Seminary.

For the faculty,
Prof. David J. Engelsma, Rector



NOTICE!!!

Please note the change in our masthead for the charge for announcements. It has, as of October 1, 1994, increased to \$10.00 per announcement. Please include payment when you send us your announcement (at least one month prior to publication date).

Studies in I Thessalonians Studies in II Thessalonians

The Reformed Free Publishing Association has just printed these two excellent study guides. The two epistles to the Thessalonians were written to instruct the Thessalonian believers concerning Christ's second coming. A study of this portion of God's Word is very profitable, therefore, for all Christians, for we see in our day many signs pointing to the end of the world.

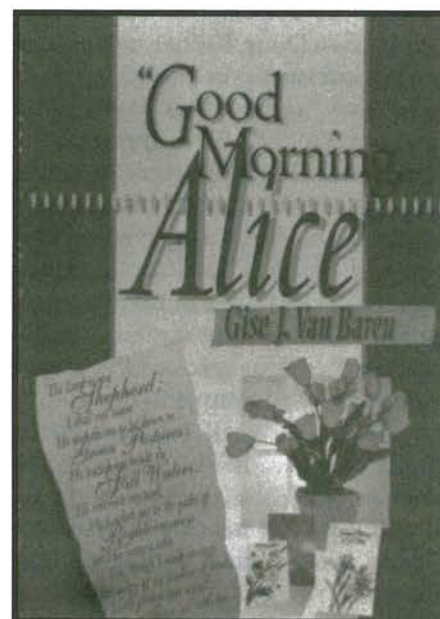
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c/o Daniel and Sharon Kleyn
P.O. Box 2006
Grand Rapids, MI 49501



Good Morning, Alice

In this book, a series of cards written to Alice by an anonymous friend is set into the framework of the story of Alice's struggle with Lou Gehrig's disease. Alice's brother, Rev. G.J. VanBaren, writes her story in an interesting and personal way.

In the cards, Alice's friend shares her thoughts on certain passages of Scripture, and brings comfort to the reader through close contact with the sovereign God, who does all things well. Both a devotional and a story, this book will be interesting and beneficial for readers of all ages.

Available for \$11.50 in the U.S. and \$12.50 outside the U.S. (prices include shipping).

