



# *THE* **STANDARD BEARER**

**A Reformed  
Semi-Monthly  
Magazine**

If there were to be a record of your godliness and fear of God, would a biographer take his sole example from your home life? Is your godliness manifested as much in your home life as it is in the rest of your life? It should be! Our godly conduct in our homes should be the center of our piety.

See "Sanctifying our Children" — p. 232

Vol. 71, No. 10  
February 15, 1995



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## In This Issue ...

Prominent in this issue of the *Standard Bearer* is the life of the instituted church.

The church contends for the faith once delivered to the saints. "A Cloud of Witnesses" gives the second installment on Franciscus Gomarus, defender of the Reformed faith in the Netherlands at the time of the Synod of Dordt. Prof. Hanko describes him as one of the company of those who "fought for truth and right." Through them, the true church was valiant for truth. Through them, Christ has preserved His true church.

Prof. Decker calls attention to serious concerns surfacing in the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA). Within this church, a group has formed itself as "Concerned Presbyterians." "All Around Us" also notes further developments of strife and division in the Christian Reformed Church (see "Banned from Christian Reformed Pulpits").

The church goes into all the world in missions. Rev. Jason Kortering is a minister-on-loan from the Protestant Reformed Churches (PRC) to the Evangelical Reformed Churches of Singapore (ERCS). He begins what promises to be not only an informative and interesting series, but also profitable one on "the Gospel in Southeast Asia." Not only are the ERCS themselves mission churches, but also they have contacts in Malaysia, Indonesia, India, and Myanmar.

Rev. Ron Cammenga treats an aspect of the denominational life of the church. He explains the articles of the Dordt Church Order that deal with particular synods and synodical deputies (see "Decency and Order").

A slice of the denominational life of the PRC appears in Jon Huiskens's "report of Classis East." This brief report of a routine classis shows the mutual care and supervision of churches in the Reformed federation.

Two announcements calling for men to study for the ministry and making available financial help indicate the indispensable cooperation of churches in a denomination.

Office in the Reformed church is the subject of the book reviewed by Prof. Hanko, *Order in the Offices*. Are there three offices or two?

All of this is important to every reader, since, as the Belgic Confession declares in Article 28, "all men are in duty bound to join and unite themselves with (the true church) ... serving to the edification of the brethren, according to the talents God has given them."

—DJE



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# Entering Into and Enjoying Salvation

*I am the door: by me if any man enter in he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.*

John 10:9.

No matter who we are and where we live, physical death will sooner or later come upon us. It may come unexpectedly by what is called an accident. It usually comes because organs of the body wear out and cannot function anymore, causing the heart to stop its beating.

However, as believing children of God we have the comforting truth which our Savior gives to us in the verse quoted above. Through the apostle John, our Savior Jesus Christ presents Himself as the door through which our souls enter into the blessed life of His kingdom of heaven.

This He told the Pharisees who had questioned His words, and had sarcastically asked Him whether He considered them to be blind. For Christ Jesus had caused a blind man to see all the things that were round about him. To him our Savior said: "For judgment I am come into the world, that they which see not might see; and they which see might be made blind" (John 9:39).

Those Pharisees were moved to ask our Savior, "Are we blind?"

That was a sarcastic question put to our Savior, who had said that He is the door of the sheepfold. And in response Jesus declared that they were thieves and robbers who were spiritually blind. What we must bear in mind is the fact that we live in a world wherein there are many churches that have spiritual leaders who are thieves and robbers and are spiritually blind.

Today there are many spiritual thieves and robbers who vigorously fight to steal away the truth which our Savior implanted in other churches. Today, in some churches, those who call themselves Christians definitely are antichristian. Not only by their teaching but also by their walk of life they manifest themselves to be antichristian. This is so very evident today, not only by the false doctrines they maintain, but also by the walk of life they defend. Therefore we do well to consider this truth that Christ is the door that keeps all of the elect safe, enabling them to go in and out and find fruitful pasture. Let us also then bear in mind that Satan, hating Christ, also hates all who believe in Christ as their Savior. Our calling is to agree with Christ Jesus that He is the door that keeps us safe from the thieves and robbers that are in the church world.

Still more, let us keep before our minds every Sabbath day that Satan is trying through so many things and people, and by all means through their preaching, to turn us away from Christ as our Savior. Satan works hard in his way to get us con-

cerned only with a salvation from what hurts our flesh; and he strives to get us concerned only about salvation from punishment, not from sin itself. Christ, however, is not the door through which Satan wants us to go, except for deliverance from the punishment which we deserve.

Now our God, the day Adam and Eve fell into sin and died spiritually, presented salvation as enmity against Satan and all that he does and wants us to do. Our calling is to be thankful for that work of God's grace whereby He makes us able to walk in love towards Himself.

We do well therefore to bear in mind that Christ Jesus is the door, through which all the elect enter into the holy kingdom of heaven. Now the door through which the elect enter is Christ Jesus, who lets His elect enter but also enables them to do so.

However, we do not open that door into the kingdom of heaven. With our souls we have the blessing of being made able and willing to enter the kingdom of heaven; and Christ Jesus is that door. He opens the way for us to be saved from Satan and sin, and to be made able and willing to serve Him in love. As the text states, we shall be saved so that we shall go in and out and find pasture.

Now let us bear in mind that sheep have enemies who want to steal them, or even to kill them. The thieves and robbers want to steal them, and profit by selling them to others, while the wolves want to eat

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them, and benefit themselves in that way. Both of these, the wolves and the thieves and robbers, make it very necessary that we, as sheep of Christ, the Almighty Shepherd, are kept safe.

Our salvation has two basic elements which we should appreciate and believe by God's grace. We are by that grace protected, being brought where these wolves, thieves, and robbers cannot steal us away from Christ our Good Shepherd. But likewise we should appreciate the blessed fact that our Savior feeds us with the bread of life, which we need spiritually. Christ, as the Door, protects us, keeping us safe when Satan tries to capture us by those who believe false doctrines, and merely want earthly advantages rather than heavenly communion with God.

But Christ Jesus, the Door, opens up for us the way to be fed with the Bread of Life. Knowing this and enjoying it we can and will sing, enthusiastically and spiritually, what we find presented in Psalm 23, and sung from our *Psalter* number 55 in these words:

The Lord my Shepherd  
holds me  
Within His tender care,  
And with His flock He folds me,  
No want shall find me there.  
In pastures green He feeds me,  
With plenty I am blest;  
By quiet streams He leads me  
And makes me safely rest.

The sad thing, however, is that our Savior is presented by some as a door which we open. The Arminian lie is that Christ wants to be the door, and will be so if we let Him serve us that way. There is much false preaching that claims that Jesus offers us salvation, and realizes it, if we let Him be such for us. But we do well to take note here that He presents Himself here as the Door, not as a possible door that serves us when we let Him do so, while many whom He wants to let in do not let Him do so. But the text

states that He is the Door. He not only desires to open the way for us to blessings, He does so by causing every one of His elect to want it.

We are saved from the evil, devilish love of sin into which Satan led Adam and Eve, and thus the whole human race. In Ephesians 2:8-10 we read: "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." Christ does not try to make us desire salvation. As our Savior He makes us desire salvation, and we owe Him thanks for that desire as well as for all the rest of that salvation.

What is more, here in the verse quoted at the beginning of this meditation, our Savior says, "By me if any man enter, he shall be saved." We do not save ourselves from the punishment which we deserve. Christ does that. We do not save ourselves from that carnal nature wherewith we were born. And we do not want salvation until God fulfills His promise and puts enmity in our hearts against Satan. Christ does not merely save us from the punishment which we deserve, He saves us from our love of sin, making us want to walk in love toward God.

We do well also by taking note of the fact that our Savior tells us that we shall be saved. First of all, we need the desire to be saved from our sinful nature wherewith we were born. To get salvation we need to have been already saved in our hearts by the desire, which He already worked in us. He already caused us to believe that Christ is the Door that makes us safe, free from Satan's devilish desire for us to walk in sin.

As surely as we have no power to save our physical lives from death, we have no power to change our hearts and minds into the desire to be saved from spiritual death. As we so sing correctly from the

*Psalter*, number 383: "All that I am I owe to Thee. Thy wisdom, Lord, hath fashioned me."

Those Pharisees that asked Jesus whether they were blind revealed their blindness. They did not see their spiritual blindness and did not desire and trust in Christ as Savior. Every day we need Christ as the Door that opens and lets us enter salvation, as a gift of His grace.

The evidence of our spiritual rebirth is that we thank God for *every bit* of our salvation, including the desire for it. Desiring salvation reveals that God has already begun it in us. And let us not believe or teach the lie that Christ will save us if we already saved ourselves from the carnal desire wherewith we were born. Let us rather sing humbly but joyfully that Christ, the Door, made our salvation possible, and began it in us.

By God's grace we will confess His Son to be the Door through which He brings us out of our love of sin, and into love of Himself; and He has made us able to be citizens that love Him.

Sing then the truth that He is the Door which gives to our souls the desire to serve and glorify God, by giving all the credit of our salvation to God. For by His grace we will soon enter in and enjoy the blessed salvation wherein we shall have covenant fellowship with God through Christ, and will enter into and enjoy salvation as His free and wonderful gift to us in His grace.

When saved we give all the credit of it to God, who eternally planned it and realized it in time. Call Christ the Door, and praise Him from whom all blessings flow. □





# Jelle in Wonderland (2)

"Curiouser and curiouser!"

This was Alice's response to developments in Lewis Carroll's topsy-turvy world, Alice's wonderland.

This, likewise, is our response to Rev. Jelle Tuininga's fantastic presentation of relations between his Alliance of Reformed Churches (ARC) and the Protestant Reformed Churches (PRC).

Jelle's wonderland!

The more this world unfolds in Rev. Tuininga's article, "Future Federation and Ecumenical Relations," in the December 26, 1994 issue of *Christian Renewal*, the "curiouser" does it become.

## Upside Down Church History

The Rev. Tuininga proceeds to turn church history upside down. With some vehemence, and no little sense of injury, he declares:

I could live in a church where there was freedom to disagree about common grace, but if I have to deny common grace in order to be a member of the same church, then the game is over. And that is even more the case with the well-meant offer of the gospel. I, and I'm sure the majority of independent churches, simply are not going to do that.

In the wonderland, a church is forming. The PRC are involved. They demand that the Rev. Tuininga adopt their doctrines of particular grace in the preaching, the total depravity of the unregenerated sinner, and the work of the Spirit producing good works only in the elect be-

liever. Since Rev. Tuininga is an ardent defender of the doctrine of common grace, the PRC are excluding him from the church that is forming. They say to him: "(You) have to deny common grace in order to be a member of the same church."

How high-handed!

How intolerant!

How fantastic!

Jelle in a church-historical wonderland!

## Church-Historical Reality

Let us cut for a merciful moment to reality — reality as it is etched in history, as it stands before the Reformed churches in North America, and as it will be (and already is being) judged by the reigning Christ.

We ignore here the fact that the PRC are in no way involved with the ARC in the forming of a new church, and are, therefore, in no position to make demands upon Rev. Tuininga or anyone else in the ARC. This was pointed out in the previous editorial.

In 1924, the Christian Reformed Church (CRC) synodically adopted three points of doctrine affirming that Christ is gracious in the gospel to everyone who hears, that by a work of the Holy Spirit within him the unregenerated sinner is only partially depraved, and that reprobate unbelievers are able by the grace of God to perform good works. This was, and is, her doctrine of "common grace." The CRC declared that this doctrine is confessional. She made it a confessional issue with

then CR ministers Herman Hoeksema, George Ophoff, and Henry Danhof and with their consistories, demanding that they subscribe and submit. The CRC made this doctrine binding. Because Hoeksema and the others could not and would not accept this doctrine of common grace, the CRC deposed them from office and set them outside the church.

Pleading for his ecclesiastical life and, as he was convinced, for the life of the CRC as a truly Reformed body, Hoeksema besought the CRC that no binding decision be taken, but that there be freedom of teaching, discussion, and study. To no avail. Those who then were forced to begin the PRC were put out, stripped of office, membership in the church, property, and, not insignificantly, name.

Now for Rev. Tuininga to suggest, with some indignation, that it is the PRC who are to be criticized for demanding that the independent CR churches deny common grace, under penalty of being excluded from some (imaginary) church, is not so much wrong as it is fantastic. It is a feature of a world that rivals Alice's wonderland.

Add to this that Rev. Jelle Tuininga, as a minister in the CRC, was for more than 25 years contentedly responsible for all the decisions and actions of his church expelling those who then formed the PRC. Indeed, there is no reason to think that he does not remain responsible to this day. That this man can become indignant, apparently sincerely, with



the PRC for binding a denial of common grace upon him defies comprehension.

Jelle in wonderland.

### The Issue of Grace Remains

Playing in the background of Rev. Tuininga's indignation with the PRC (if there is any sense in his wonderland at all) is the notion that the departure of the independents from the CRC should be reason enough for the PRC forthwith to abandon their long-held convictions concerning the one, sovereign, particular grace of God in Christ Jesus and to cast in their lot with the independent CR churches.

Truly, Jelle is deeply in his wonderland.

Why, pray tell?

Why should the leaving of the CRC by certain ministers and churches over issues of women in office, evolution, and even the fallibility of Scripture affect the PRC whatsoever? Our controversy with the CRC, forced on us by the CRC, has never been, and is not now, women in office, evolution, or even the fallibility of Scripture, although we are convinced, and have demonstrated, that every one of these recent errors in the CRC arises, at least in part, from the doctrine of common grace adopted by the CRC in 1924.

Louis Berkhof and the others who created and made binding the three points of common grace were staunch advocates of infallibility and creation, and, I would imagine, stalwart opponents of women in office. They were those who would today be considered the "conservatives" in the CRC, not those who are being called "liberals."

The controversy between the PRC and the CRC has always been, and is today, the sovereign particularity, or the particular sovereignty, of the grace of God in Jesus Christ the Lord in the gospel. Our controversy concerns the heart of the Canons of Dordt and, therefore, the heart of the Reformation, the heart of Augustinianism, and the heart of

the gospel of salvation by grace alone.

What does objection to women in office have to do with this fundamental issue? Pelagian Rome opposes women in office. Multitudes of free will fundamentalists restrict office to males, champion creation, and defend inerrancy.

In comparison with the issue of particular grace versus the common grace of the three points adopted by the CRC in 1924, the issue of women in office is relatively unimportant. I write foolishly for a moment (working in the atmosphere of a wonderland has this effect). If I were marooned for a Sabbath in a place where there is no PR congregation, say, Lethbridge, Alberta, Canada, and had to choose to worship in a church where the male minister proclaims that God in the gospel loves, is gracious to, and sincerely, but ineffectually, desires to save every human without exception (that is, the theology of the "well-meant offer") or in a church where a female minister expounds that God in the gospel loves, is gracious to, sincerely desires to save, and effectually does save the elect in Christ alone (that is, the gospel of sovereign grace), I would be found in the church with the female (my eyes being tightly closed).

The independents in the ARC are CR churches that dislike women in office, evolution (although I like to hear from them once how they explain the "day" of Genesis 1), errors in the Bible, and synods. But they maintain, strongly, the doctrine of common grace adopted by the CRC in 1924. Rev. Tuininga frankly tells the entire Reformed world in North America, in his article in *Christian Renewal*, that he embraces common grace and, especially, the well-meant offer; that he judges the PRC to be "dead wrong" in their confession of particular grace; and that he is speaking for the majority of the independent churches.

To suppose that the PRC should join with these independent CR churches, no questions asked and no

issues addressed, is nonsense. It is the nonsense of Jelle's wonderland.

We have a standing controversy with our mother, the CRC.

It is church political: major assemblies exercised the keys of the kingdom that Christ gave to the local, autonomous church, by disciplining officebearers and others.

It is ethical: the CRC cast out of the church men and women, acknowledged by her to be Reformed in the fundamentals, because these men and women confessed the truth of sovereign grace.

It is practical: the teaching that the elect church and the reprobate world share the grace of God works the worldliness of that institute and its members where this teaching prevails.

It is above all doctrinal: Common grace, especially the "well-meant offer," is the denial of irresistible grace.

The Rev. Jelle Tuininga holds with the CRC in this controversy. He holds with the CRC, and against the PRC, openly and vehemently: "I consider our Protestant Reformed brothers to be dead wrong on these matters." This is not surprising in the least. He is a Christian Reformed theologian who happens to be outside the CRC.

But it should be obvious to him that the PRC, then, have a controversy with him and his likeminded alliance, and that he has a controversy with the PRC. This is the same controversy that the PRC have with the CRC, and the CRC with the PRC. Rev. Tuininga must not entertain the odd notion that the mere fact of his being outside the CRC has changed anything as regards this controversy. He certainly must not become indignant when the PRC respond to his invitation to participate in his alliance by asking for time to discuss the "real issues" between us.

The controversy between the PRC and Rev. Tuininga does not mean that there can be no contact, just as the controversy between the PRC and the CRC does not mean this. We can talk. The PRC have



always been willing to talk. But we must discuss the issues. If the ARC, like the CRC, refuses to do this, responsibility for the separation lies with them. And the PRC are perfectly ready to go on by themselves alone, manifesting themselves as true churches by the marks laid down in Article 29 of the Belgic Confession, maintaining the gospel of free, sovereign, unconditional, particular grace that has ever been the hallmark of the Reformed church in the world, and developing the truth in various, important ways.

If only God will go with us — yes, if only God in mercy will go with us, also in our generations.

### Independent Federation

One other feature of Jelle's wonderland deserves notice. It is the mention of "federation" and "ecumenical relations" and the implied rebuke of the PRC for sin against these expressions of the unity of the church of Christ. Rev. Tuininga speaks of the "Protestant Reformed brothers ... join(ing) in federation" and of "work(ing) together toward federation." The heading of the article in which he sets forth his wonderland description of the relations between the PRC and the ARC is "Future Federation and Ecumenical Relations."

The context of Rev. Tuininga's reference to "federation" is the present refusal of the congregations of the ARC to band together synodically, the virtual decision of the ARC that any future association will repudiate the authority of the major assemblies as expressed by the phrase "settled and binding" in Article 31 of the Reformed Church Or-

der of Dordt, and Rev. Tuininga's own dismissal, in this very article, of any biblical basis for classes and synods. Tuininga writes: "one looks in vain in the Scriptures for what we know as classes and synods. It simply isn't there.... It's a far fetched conclusion."

Here things become serious in the wonderland of Jelle Tuininga. Things become deadly serious. For words are given a new and different meaning. Crucially important words are given a new and different meaning. Specifically, the words "federate" and "ecumenical relations" are given a new and different meaning.

This is where things become serious in Alice's wonderland. All of a sudden, the smile fades from the reader's face.

"I don't know what you mean by 'glory,'" Alice said.

Humpty Dumpty smiled contemptuously. "Of course you don't — till I tell you. I meant 'there's a nice knock-down argument for you!'"

"But 'glory' doesn't mean 'a nice knock-down argument,'" Alice objected.

"When I use a word," Humpty Dumpty said in rather a scornful tone, "it means just what I choose it to mean — neither more nor less."

In a wonderland, words mean anything that the master of wonderland wants them to mean.

In the solid, biblical, creedal, and church political world of the Reformed faith, words mean what the standards define them to mean.

In the real world of the Re-

formed faith, "federation" means congregations uniting in the bond of a synod whose decisions are "settled and binding, unless it be proved to conflict with the Word of God or with the articles of the church order." "Ecumenical relations" means relations between ecclesiastical bodies.

In the wonderland of Rev. Tuininga, "federation" comes to mean an association of independent churches apart from the Reformed synod. "Ecumenical relations" now is connection with the ARC.

By remaining aloof from the ARC, the PRC are guilty of disregarding "federation" and "ecumenical relations." They are sinning against the unity and catholicity of the church of Christ. So it is suggested in wonderland.

"Ecumenical relations," with what? The ARC? The ARC is not an ecclesiastical body according to Article 29 of the Church Order of Dordt: "Four kinds of ecclesiastical assemblies shall be maintained: the consistory, the classis, the particular synod, and the general synod."

"Federation," how? By associating with independent congregations that neglect or repudiate major assemblies with the authority of "settled and binding" decisions? This is condemned as independency by Articles 29, 30, and 31 of the Church Order of Dordt, and independency is the opposite and enemy of Reformed federation.

Independency chides a Reformed denomination for lack of interest in "federation."

Only in a wonderland.

Jelle's wonderland. □

— DJE

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### The Trial and the Refuge

Be comforted, O heart of mine,  
God ever lives and loves,  
Yea lives and loves eternally,  
As day by day He proves.  
And so His love and peace shall be  
Thy portion constantly,  
As well along life's rugged way  
As in eternity.

This little roughness in the path,  
What matters it? Ere long  
'Twill all have passed, and thou  
shalt sing  
The everlasting song.  
Without Him thou canst nothing do,  
There why not leave it all?  
For with Him all things may be done  
Though they were great or small.

The fruit of trial's always sweet  
To Him who's ever near.  
The Comforter's untiring work  
Is to allay each fear.  
Then seek thy refuge, O my soul,  
In thine eternal God.  
Rest in His everlasting arms,  
And feed upon His Word.  
*Standard Bearer*, August 15, 1933



# Oath

As partaker of Christ's anointing, and in the office of believer, the child of God speaks on three different levels. In general conversation he is called to speak the truth in love, avoiding all lying as the proper work of the Devil. At certain times he makes vows: confession of faith, marriage, baptism, and installation into church office. When we speak a vow unto the Lord we must not defer to pay it (Eccl. 5:4). Occasionally, the child of God is required to swear an oath. The Catechism, in Lord's Day 37, instructs us that we may swear religiously by the name of God "when the magistrates demand it of the subjects; or when necessity requires us thereby to confirm fidelity and truth to the glory of God and the safety of the neighbor." A lawful oath is one sworn in the name of God who alone knows the heart, understands the truth of every matter, and both can and will punish those who swear falsely.

Scripture warns us against swearing in the name of a false god or by any creature (Jer. 12:16), despising an oath (Ex. 16:59), loving a false oath (Zech. 8:17), swearing carelessly (Matt. 14:9), or using an oath among brethren (Matt. 5:34ff., James 5:12). So serious is an oath that it binds the soul (Num. 30:2), must be kept even when it leads to our own hurt (Ps. 15:4), and if broken involves one in sin which must be confessed (Lev. 5:4).

When men swear an oath they swear by the greater, and such an oath is to them an end of all striving and disputation; they simply place the matter in the hands of God for His righteous disposition. When God makes promises He swears by Himself because He can swear by no greater (Heb. 6:13ff.). In the Old Testament we read over forty times that God swore an oath to the fathers concerning His covenant and the land that He would give them for an everlasting possession. Once we read that God swore in His wrath that the people of Israel would not enter into His rest (Heb. 3:11). In that God swore by Himself many times, we under-

stand the oath to be His institution and to be legitimate in certain circumstances.

The priests who served under the old covenant were made priests without an oath, but God made Christ a Priest with an oath, when He said unto Him, "The Lord hath sworn and will not repent, thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchizedec" (Ps. 110:4; Heb. 7:21). This makes Christ a better Priest of a better covenant. Although this oath, recorded in the Scriptures, is for our instruction and assurance, it also had great significance for Christ to whom it was spoken. During the difficult years of His ministry, and especially when He was betrayed, denied, rejected, and forsaken, our great High Priest could recall the eternal oath of God. He found consolation for His weary soul, and strength for the final descent into hellish agonies.

But the oath of God is also our strong consolation. God wills that His people live a robust, vibrant life of faith, that they stand upon His promises, that they lay hold of the hope that is set before them, and that they flee for refuge in Christ. Accordingly, God has given us two precious things in which it was impossible for Him to lie: His immutable counsel with Christ and His church at its very heart, and the confirmation of that counsel with an oath. Receiving these two things, counsel and oath, we have a strong consolation! Let the oath of God, then, be the end of all strife, doubt, and disputation that can go on between the old and the new man in us; let consideration of God's oath upon His promise still our fears and give us the answer of a good conscience toward God.

As we live together in the church, "let our yea be yea, and our nay nay, for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil" (Matt. 5:37). Let us honor one another as saints in whom the Holy Spirit works a love for all truth as well as for the brotherhood. And when it is required of us to swear an oath, let us do that boldly in the name of our God, who has instituted it for the glory of His name, the welfare of His church, and the good order of society. □

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## ■ CONCERNED PRESBYTERIANS

Back in the early 1970s a new denomination emerged in the southern United States. This denomination came out of the Southern Presbyterian Church which has since merged with the Northern Presbyterian Church (healing a breach that existed since the Civil War) to form the Presbyterian Church U.S.A. The new church in the South, calling itself the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA), began with only a few congregations but has grown rapidly. It now numbers over one thousand congregations, with about a quarter of a million members, making it the second-largest Presbyterian denomination in the United States. The PCA was formed because of liberalism in the Southern church. This relatively young denomination is one of the fastest growing churches in the Presbyterian and Reformed tradition. The PCA is a member of the North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council and is a church in "ecclesiastical fellowship" with the Christian Reformed Church.

Recently a number of both ruling and teaching elders of the PCA formed an organization called "Concerned Presbyterians." Included in the membership of this conservative organization are men who were leading figures in the formation of the PCA, Dr. Morton H. Smith of Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary among them. The Concerned Presbyterians are troubled by several phenomena in the spheres of

worship, doctrine, and practice that are occurring in the PCA.

The Concerned Presbyterians held a special meeting last year on September 30 to discuss the question, "When is it appropriate to leave a denomination?" A call for secession was not issued at this meeting. Rather, the Concerned Presbyterians took a decision to "call the PCA to be what she said she would be." "Recognizing that not all presbyteries are Biblical, the Steering Committee also authorized a committee to make plans for a 'Biblical Presbytery.'" According to the official statement, "The Steering Committee further determined to have a study committee make a presentation at the March 1995 Concerned Presbyterian Day." The third annual "Concerned Presbyterian Day" is scheduled to meet on March 3, 1995.

The keynote speaker at the March meeting is Dr. George W. Knight III, professor at Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary. Dr. Knight has been deeply involved in denominational affairs in the PCA. For nearly twenty years he taught at the official PCA seminary, Covenant Theological Seminary in St. Louis, Missouri. Before accepting the professorship at Greenville, Knight also served as an administrator at Knox Theological Seminary, which was founded by Dr. D. James Kennedy of Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida.

If the question, "When is it appropriate to leave a denomination?" is being addressed, and if men like Drs. Smith and Knight are involved, there must be reason for concern within the PCA. We shall continue to monitor developments.

*Reformed Believers Press Service*

## ■ BANNED FROM CHRISTIAN REFORMED PULPITS

Classis of the Heartland (located in Northwest Iowa) has sent a letter to every classis in the Christian Reformed Church (CRC) informing them that two former CRC ministers, Dr. Nelson D. Kloosterman (professor at Mid-America Reformed Seminary) and Rev. Ralph Pontier (former pastor of First CRC, Orange City, Iowa) have no right to preach from any CRC pulpit.

Kloosterman and Pontier are two of three pastors who have recently left the CRC in Northwest Iowa. The other is the retired minister, Dr. Richard Venema. Dr. Venema left the CRC and joined the Presbytery of the Dakotas of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. Rev. Pontier, as reported earlier in these columns, led a group out of First CRC Orange City and formed an independent congregation called Redeemer Alliance Reformed Church. Dr. Kloosterman, a member of First CRC Orange City, left that congregation to become a member of the newly formed independent church.

All three ministers had submitted letters to the December 7 meeting of the classis requesting that they be released from the ministry of the Word in the CRC. The council of First Orange City also sent a request to classis asking that "Classis Heartland acknowledge the resignations of Revs. Kloosterman and Pontier as ministers of the Word in the CRCNA and hereby declare them as being released from their active ministerial service in the CRCNA." Among the grounds for this request, First Orange City told classis that no discipline had been imposed by the

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council on the two ministers.

Instead of ruling in favor of this request, the classis accepted the recommendations of the Classical Interim Committee and ruled that Venema and Kloosterman be "dismissed" from their offices and that Pontier be declared to have the status of one deposed from office.

In a letter dated December 8, Classis of the Heartland stated clerk, Rev. Jack Gray, informed all other classes in the CRC that "Richard Venema has a right to Christian Reformed pulpits through our ecclesiastical fellowship with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, but neither Nelson Kloosterman nor Ralph Pontier have any right to a Christian Reformed pulpit." The ground for considering Rev. Pontier as having the status of "deposed" according to classis is the fact that he created schism in First Orange City CRC.

The practical effect of the ban remains unclear, since in 1904 the CRC synod decided that, "ministers of other denominations are permit-

ted to preach in the churches provided that the consistory is convinced that such a minister is committed to the Reformed confessions" (*Acts of Synod 1904*).

Meanwhile, as of this date, the CRC tolerates some seventeen of her churches which allow women elders. In addition, two classes (Lake Erie and Chicago South) have licensed seven women to expound in their churches, and two congregations of the CRC, Trinity in Mt. Pleasant, Michigan and First CRC Toronto, Ontario, have women as full-time expounders.

*Reformed Believers Press Service*

## ■ NEWS BRIEFS

☛ All ten positions on the Christian Booksellers Association (CBA) Bible bestselling list for the month of December were published by Zondervan Publishing House. All are variations of the New International Version (NIV). Among these are the *New Student Bible*, *Women's Devotional Bible*, *Adventure Bible*,

*Life Application Bible*, and the *Teen Study Bible*.

The NIV is now the most popular Bible translation in America. Some 100 million copies have been distributed since the NIV New Testament was first published in 1973.

☛ Attendance at all of Cuba's Protestant churches has tripled in the past three years according to recent reports. Some eighty percent of former church members have been brought back to the church. Many families are now looking for pastoral help because they want to give their children the values which materialism cannot provide.

This, coupled with the fact that the church continues to flourish in Communist China, is evidence of the truth that Satan has never been able to harm, much less destroy, God's church by means of persecution. Indeed, God by the power of His grace in Christ Jesus uses persecution to strengthen and bless His church! □

*The Church Herald*

*A Cloud of Witnesses*

*Prof. Herman Hanko*

# Franciscus Gomarus: Stubborn Champion of God's Glory (2)

## Controversy With Arminius

It may surprise our readers somewhat that Gomarus fought hard against the appointment of Arminius as professor in theology. But this surprise will evaporate when we realize that Arminius was under strong suspicion for his views before he was considered for a professorship. After he completed his studies, Arminius became minister

in the church of Amsterdam. It was not long after the beginning of his ministry that he began a series of sermons on the book of Romans. In connection with his treatment of Romans 7:14-25, Arminius took the position that Paul was describing in this passage his spiritual state prior to his conversion. One can readily recognize that this implies that Paul, before being converted, was able to

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will the good: "The good that I would...." And such a view was a denial of the total depravity of man.<sup>1</sup>

These views were challenged by Plancius, one of Arminius' fellow-ministers in Amsterdam. A controversy arose in the church there, which intensified when Arminius got around to preaching on Romans 9. It was in the middle of the controversy that the appointment came which Gomarus, aware of the controversy, opposed. But Arminius had powerful friends in the highest reaches of government and his appointment went through.

In the end, Gomarus agreed to the appointment. A conference was held, prior to the final approval of Arminius, sponsored by the States General of the Dutch government, between Gomarus and Arminius. The interpretation of Romans 7 was discussed, but Arminius so managed to hide his true beliefs that Gomarus was satisfied and approved the appointment. Gomarus later spoke of regretting that approval.

The controversy broke out again on February 7, 1604 when Arminius propounded various theses on the doctrine of predestination. The sum of these theses can be found in the following quote from them.

Divine predestination is the decree of God in Christ by which he has decreed with himself from eternity to justify, adopt, and gift with eternal life, to the praise of his glorious grace, the faithful whom he has decreed to gift with faith. On the other hand, reprobation is the decree of the anger or severe will of God, by which he has determined from eternity, for the purpose of showing his anger and power, to condemn to eternal death, as placed out of union with Christ, the unbelieving who, by their own fault and the just judgment of God, are not to believe.<sup>2</sup>

It is my guess that the majority of our readers might be hard-pressed to find any fault with this statement of Arminius. The difficulty in finding its error is probably due in part

to the fact that Arminius was capable of cloaking his error in a deceptive way to make it appear Reformed; but the difficulty in detecting what is wrong may also, sadly enough, be explained by the lack of theological sensitivity in today's church.

At any rate, the problem lies in the fact that Arminius is teaching in this paragraph a conditional predestination: "[God] has decreed ... to justify ... the faithful...." That is, God has decreed to justify those who have faith — which makes faith a condition to election. And: "Reprobation is the decree ... of God ... to condemn ... the unbelieving...." That is, also reprobation is a conditional decree, the condition of which is unbelief.

Gomarus attacked these statements, and the result was bitter and prolonged controversy. Arminius continued to present himself as a faithful defender of the Reformed faith, while attempting to cast Gomarus in the bad light of an enemy of true Calvinism. It is not hard to understand that Gomarus received a bad reputation for his opposition to Arminius. After all, the point seemed insignificant, as even the leaders in government were later to say. Why fight about it? And Arminius was such a nice man! He protested his innocence time and again and assured everyone that he was soundly Reformed and deeply committed to the confessions. How could Gomarus, that man who never smiled, be such a stubborn man?

The controversy swirled about for four years and finally engulfed the churches. In 1608 Gomarus and Arminius conducted a public debate before the Supreme Court of the Hague in an effort on the part of the government to resolve the problems. At the conclusion of the debate, Barneveldt, a friend of Arminius and head of the government, in a short address to the two combatants, declared that he thanked God that their contentions did not affect the fundamental articles of the Christian religion. To this Gomarus replied in characteristic fashion, "I would not

appear before the throne of God with Arminius' errors."<sup>3</sup> The Court judged the matters in dispute to be matters of little significance.

In further efforts to resolve the disagreements, a conference was arranged, at which Gomarus and Arminius were to submit papers outlining their respective positions on the doctrine of predestination. Each was given 250 guilders to cover the expense of preparing the papers. The conference was never held because Arminius died of what was probably tuberculosis in 1609.

It is not our purpose in this article to trace the history of the controversy any further than Gomarus' involvement in it. As anyone with even a passing knowledge of the controversy knows, the issues were the great issues of salvation by sovereign grace alone vs. salvation based on the works of man. Ten years after the death of Arminius the controversy was settled at the Synod of Dordrecht, where Gomarus' position was vindicated.

In 1611 Gomarus resigned from his position in the University of Leyden. The reason for his resignation is not known, but it may be that the controversy and the support of Arminius by the government wore beyond endurance the strength of the old warrior. At any rate, upon his resignation, he became pastor of a Reformed congregation in Middleburg, where he also lectured in theology and Hebrew in the local University.

In 1614 he went to Saumur in France, where he became professor of theology.<sup>4</sup> In 1618-1619 Gomarus

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<sup>1</sup> Strangely enough, this same view has recently been defended by some Reformed theologians such as Herman Ridderbos and Anthony Hoekema.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted from *Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature*, McClintock & Strong, III, 920.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> The school in Saumur not very long after Dort became a hotbed of Amyraldism, a heresy not unlike the Arminian heresy.



was at the Synod of Dort along with other professor advisors. He took an active role in the Synod's proceedings and was instrumental in the victory of the truth of Scripture on that great Synod meeting.

An interesting sidelight to Gomarus' role at the Synod was his work on a committee to investigate the teachings of Maccovius. Maccovius also held strongly to the doctrine of sovereign predestination, but was charged with carrying the doctrine to such an extreme that he made God the author of sin. The Synod handed the case to government representatives who were unable to resolve the conflict. A committee was appointed to deal with the matter, on which committee Gomarus served. Later in the proceedings of the Synod, the committee reported that the matter had been amicably resolved and Maccovius was cautioned not to make radical and biblically unwarranted statements.<sup>5</sup>

After the Synod, Gomarus went to the University of Groningen, where he became professor of divinity and Hebrew. In 1633 he took part in the revision of the translation of the Bible, which work was done in Leyden. During these meetings he argued strenuously against including the Apocryphal books in the Bible, but was overruled.<sup>6</sup> Here he stayed till his death on January 11, 1641.

### Concluding remarks

There can be no question about it that Gomarus was a difficult man, hard to get along with, prone to extreme statements, sometimes violent in his opposition to Arminius and Arminianism. He never "beat around the bush." He never left any doubt in anyone's mind as to what he believed. He never worried about "stepping on people's toes" or offending them if they were not heart and mind committed to the truth.

Sometimes descriptions of him are biased, and bitterness against his staunch defense of the faith pours out in diatribes against his person-

ality. Thus one author can write:

[He] displayed a most violent, virulent, and intolerant spirit, and endeavored by various publications to excite the indignation of the States of Holland against his rival.<sup>7</sup>

But some of all this was true. Even Junius, later related to Gomarus through marriage, said:

That man pleases himself most wonderfully by his own remarks. He derives all his stock of knowledge from others; he brings forward nothing of his own: or, if at any time he varies from his usual practice, he is exceedingly infelicitous in those occasional changes.<sup>8</sup>

There is a story somewhere, whether true or apocryphal it is hard to say, that at the Synod of Dort, one elder was appointed to sit alongside Gomarus to tug him back into his seat when he leaped to his feet and rather too forcibly made a point.

In any case, Gomarus was a staunch defender of the faith. Perhaps it took a man such as he to stand against the growing tide of Arminianism. God's providence prepares men who are "stubborn" about the right things. And if this seems to condone their sins, the fact is that, though it does not, God can, as the proverb has it, draw a straight line with a crooked stick. And sometimes only very strong language will do to put to flight the clever designs of heretics.

At the Synod of Dort Gomarus defended not only orthodoxy but supralapsarian orthodoxy. And, although his views in this respect did not prevail on the Synod, for the Canons are infralapsarian, his supralapsarianism was not condemned by the Synod and his defense of the faith was of inestimable service as the Synod struggled with the errors of Arminianism.

Gomarus cared about only one thing: the glory of God. Gomarus

would allow only one book to determine his theology: the sacred Scriptures. In a sort of album in which he kept various letters, tokens of friendship, and something of a diary, he had written in Hebrew: "Thy (God's) Word is Light."

He was of the stripe of Calvin, Gottschalk, Augustine, and Athanasius. He was the forerunner of others to follow, of whom one has got to be Herman Hoeksema. We need not always approve of the way in which they did things (although we can take a long and hard look at ourselves in this respect), but we ought to thank God for them, for they were men of courage and conviction who fought for truth and right against all odds. To concentrate on their weaknesses and foibles,

so as to condemn their defense of the faith, is to be unfaithful to the truth. To look beyond personalities and weigh all in the light of Scripture is to be faithful. To fight is the courage of faith. May God grant men like these to the church today — even if they sometimes have difficult personalities. The church needs more than nice men. □

*God's providence prepares men who are "stubborn" about the right things.*

<sup>5</sup> See Wagenaar's excellent book on the Synod of Dort and its preceding history: *Van Strijd en Overwinning*.

<sup>6</sup> The translation was the one ordered by the Synod of Dort, which became known as the *Statenvertaling*, and which was to the Dutch what the KJV was (and is) to the English.

<sup>7</sup> *Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature*. See also some of the characterizations of Carl Bangs in his book, *Arminius*.

<sup>8</sup> Quoted from *Arminius*, by Carl Bangs. It is to be hoped that Junius made these remarks in exasperation, and that he took a more favorable attitude towards Gomarus when he became a relative.



# The Gospel in Southeast Asia (I)

Obviously, this is a big subject and needs refinement. We have been asked to focus on this part of the world because of our ministry in Singapore. The Evangelical Reformed Churches, among whom we labor as minister on loan, rejoice in that they also have contacts in Malaysia, Indonesia, India, and Myanmar. We will focus on Singapore for this series and begin in part one to consider a general picture of the society and culture, and then say a few words about its religious makeup. In part two we will consider what kind of people this culture has produced, and tell a few of their stories. Then in part three we will discuss how this particular setting affects the way the gospel is brought to God's people.

Flying in and out of Singapore has become somewhat routine for us. Nevertheless, I am moved in my soul every time the plane circles the island city-state in preparation for landing at Changi Airport. The comparatively small island of 23 miles by 10 miles holds almost three million people. It is not as I had anticipated, arriving for the first time, that the island would be one mass of high-rise buildings and cluttered streets. From the air you see parks, reservoirs, tree-lined boulevards, even undeveloped land. What attracts attention is the expansive oil refining industry on the western part, the huge container shipment

industry on the southwest as row upon row of the world's largest vessels await unloading, and the ship refurbishing business on the south and north. The business district is attractive because it is literally circled by some of the world's tallest hotels and is skirted on the east by the financial district, which includes banks from all over the world.

The rest of the island is made up, as you guessed, by housing. There is some landed, private property, which is sold by the government on a bid basis. This makes it very expensive, for there are plenty of people who have the money to out-bid those who have less. A small, single-dwelling bungalow, starts at one and a half million U.S. dollars. Most people live in government housing, which they buy from the government with a 99-year lease. The average cost of such a flat now is about US\$125,000.00. These blocks (they go up, instead of stretching out on a street) are between 12 and 28 stories high. They are built-in estates, much like cities. Today the government is working harder at making them varied in height, with attractive designs and more fanciful architecture.

Even though autos are expensive to own, the streets are filled with autos, buses, motorcycles, bicycles, and lorries of every size and shape. The government purposely controls the number of available licenses, places a huge tax on just the right to own a car, adds a sizable tax to take it on the road, and charges high prices for petro in order to control

the number of cars on the road. If we wanted to spend about US\$50,000, it would hardly buy a used car on the level most of you drive in the States. Singapore offsets this with an excellent public transport system of both buses and trains.

If you would join us in taking the bus to our flat from the airport, the first thing that might attract your attention is the variety of people. This is increasingly true throughout the world. The races and nations are mixing continually. Here in Singapore this has been going on for many years and is entrenched within the culture itself. The big difference we notice is that, while in most countries different races and cultures live alongside each other, separate from one another, in Singapore there is more complete integration of the races and cultures than I have seen anywhere else. There is, for example, a real mixture of the races in public transport. In the specially reserved seat for the elderly (right by the door) sits a grandmother. She still dresses in her old-world attire, dark-colored high-neck blouse with black slacks. Probably sitting next to her is a young career woman on the way to the office. She is carrying her black leather case and is smartly dressed in a business suit with mini-skirt. A few seats over is an Indian gentleman, literally wrapped in what looks like a white bed sheet, called a choti. Sitting next to me is a Muslim woman with her children. She could be wearing a scarf and sarong and her children playing in their

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jeans. This is not a special holiday, this is every day. We are literally surrounded with such displays of dress and culture.

If we take note of the schools that we pass, we would notice that there are some separate schools for Chinese, Indians, and Malays (Muslim); but most of them are integrated. The children do not wear their own culturally distinct clothes to school however. They all wear the same uniform, which was designed for their particular school. For the children, it is shorts and shirts for the boys, and skirts and blouses for the girls. School is operated on two shifts, one group of students attends morning class from about 7:30 A.M. - 1:00 P.M. and the afternoon group follows till about 6:30 P.M. Families which have children in both shifts have children in school for about 12 hours a day. Imagine what that does to family and church life.

Most striking to westerners who visit Singapore are the religious places of worship. They are everywhere on the island. Though there are mosques, temples, synagogues, and churches in almost every country, the significant difference in Singapore is that one cannot escape taking note of them here. Sure, there may be a mosque down the road from First Church in Grand Rapids, but how many even look in that direction? However, when the Muslims worship here in Singapore on Friday, you can hardly catch a bus near the mosque. The overflow of worshipers fills the sidewalk and even streets. A huge pile of slippers is mounted just within the compound next to the trough used for foot washing. If you go to Covenant with us on Sunday morning, we would pass through a narrow street with a large Buddhist temple. The whole area is filled with chanting so loud that the whole neighborhood hears it. The smell of incense fills the air; and it has happened that by the time my wife and I arrive at church our clothes smell of burning, and even flecks of black soot have

to be brushed off. From time to time we meet Buddhist monks with shaved heads, dressed in saffron robes as they walk toward their temple. You cannot travel or live in Singapore without some interaction with the peoples of different cultures and religions.

Finally we arrive at our own place of residence. We take the lift to the 11th floor and walk down to the 10th. We pass along a narrow corridor along the outside edge of the building past two other residences until we reach our flat. You can be sure that you will be greeted by two little Chinese girls who will say, "Hi," or "Bye." They are our immediate neighbors. Whenever we ask the many questions, they don't answer. Perhaps "Hi" and "Bye" is the extent of their English skills. Their parents work every day, and grandpa and grandma come to spend the day with them. Their parents are career oriented, speak good English, and are gone long hours. Their grandparents speak no English, only Mandarin. This is a typical Singapore family situation, one encouraged by the government. Our neighbors burn two joss sticks every morning, so the sweet aroma filters into our flat every day.

Right now, as I write this, I look out the front patio over against the block situated right across from us. There are 110 flats in that block. About 50 feet separate our two blocks. Both are 12 stories high. I counted the altars with offerings on them, which were within my view, and it came to 33. The altars are immediately discernible for their bright red and gold colors, auspicious for good luck. Besides that, there are the many joss-stick holders. That would give some indication of the preponderance of Chinese practicing their religion. We can pick out a few Muslim households by the writings about their doors. Hindus are harder to discern, for they have their own prayer rooms inside. The breakdown of religion in Singapore is about 53% Chinese religion (including Buddhists),

3% Hindus, 15% Muslim, 14% Christian, and the rest a mixture of other religions or people who are secular.

Since most of the people are Chinese and to some degree practice their own interesting mixture of religion, we should say a brief word about that.

True as it may be that the older Chinese people practice this religion, the fact remains that the Buddhists are working hard in the temples to indoctrinate the younger generation. When we visit the Chinese temples we see children worshipping. Also, we must remember that the Chinese Christians were almost all brought up in homes where this religion was practiced. This religion is not to be dismissed as of little consequence. It is pervasive and, even now, only the grace of God can deliver one from the lasting evil effects of it.

It would not be correct to say that what is called the Chinese religion in Singapore is the same thing as Buddhism. There are Chinese Buddhists here. In fact, they are growing in numbers. The religion of the Chinese contains elements of Buddhism, especially its concept of life after death. The soul leaves the body and goes into the spirit world. They even describe eighteen stages of hell. If paper money, autos, or houses are burned, a deceased person will have them available as he moves through the spirit world. Eventually the soul is reincarnated into the physical body of a man, plant, or animal, determined by how good a life a person lived and by the Law of Karma. The only escape from this endless cycle is to attain nirvana by enlightened meditation, and by abstaining from worldly desires. Out of the Buddhist writings come the mythological gods of the Chinese. These include the Monkey God, Dragon God, Kitchen God, Goddess of Mercy, and such like.

Confucianism is a philosophical system of thought. It too has had an impact upon Chinese religion. The impact of this philosophy is seen in its emphasis upon filial responsibility. This has tremendous over-



tones. Family and social responsibility come before individual desires. A parent loses face if a son should violate any of the five virtues: live a principled life, be faithful to friends, be loyal to the state, be honest in official duty, and be courageous on the battlefield.

Finally, there is the animistic element introduced by Taoism. This addition includes such things as oc-

cultism, astrology, mediums in the temple, communication with the dead, and mystical superstitions. My wife and I were struck with this when a young man stopped the entire process of trimming the tree behind our flat in Happy Mansion in order to build a temporary altar at the base of the tree, lest cutting its limbs would offend the spirits in the tree.

In our next article, D.V., we will examine in a little more depth how this affects the entire culture and society within which the gospel is being preached and also give some examples of how personal lives have been affected. Then we will be more appreciative of the gospel, which comes not in word only, but also in deed and in power (I Thess. 1:5). □

## John 3:22-36

# Jesus is Magnified by His Forerunner

In these verses we have the final and beautiful testimony of John the Baptist to the excellency of Christ as the Son of God and true Messiah. It is marked by self-effacing humility, faithful clarity, and great weightiness. John declares that Jesus is the Son of God sent down from heaven and that to believe in Him is to have everlasting life.

The first thing called to our attention is the *setting* in which John's tribute to Christ was given. In general, we are informed that after the Passover and discussion with Nicodemus, Jesus remained in the land of Judea for an extended period of time. ("He tarried with them...," v. 22). Both Jesus and John the Baptist, with their respective dis-

ciples, are engaged in baptizing, although at different locations. Specifically, John's beautiful testimony of Jesus was given over against the jealousy his disciples showed towards Jesus. It began over a question (argument) between the Jews and the disciples of John over "purifying," that is, whether the baptism of Jesus or the baptism of John had the superior cleansing power. Along with that comparison between the two baptisms was the fact that the crowds were dwindling before John and growing before Jesus. John's disciples see Jesus and John as rivals, and they come to John alarmed over the situation.

John gives a wonderful, self-effacing answer in which he performs the task given to him to magnify the Son of God and point to Him as the Christ. He begins by reminding his disciples that heaven assigns to each one his place and honor. We must not presume to find fault when others have more acceptance than we do. John is clear concerning his place. He is not the

Christ, but the forerunner, who must decrease when the Lord has come. He compares himself to being the best man at a wedding, whose joy it is to see the bride go to the groom. More, the excellency of Christ is that He is from above, and, as the One whom the Father loves, bears testimony of the things that He has seen. The ones who are given to receive His testimony will also affirm that the witness that God has given of His Son is true. It is Christ who speaks the words of God, for the Spirit has been fully given to Him.

The climax of John's magnification of Christ is in verse 36. To believe in the Son is to have everlasting life, and to reject the Son is to fall under the wrath of God.

Perhaps for the last time (publicly) in his life John proclaims Christ as the One worthy of all honor and praise. Nowhere are more honorable things written concerning Jesus than these words spoken by John. Let us follow in the path of John and magnify the Son of God by speaking of His praises and honor.

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## Outline

1. The setting for John's final testimony to the excellency of Christ (vv. 22-26).

a. The notice that both Jesus and John are baptizing in the regions in and near Judea (vv. 22-24).

b. The jealousy of John's disciples towards Jesus provoked by a question about purifying and the crowds turning from John to Jesus (vv. 25, 26).

2. John's beautiful testimony of the greatness of Jesus (vv. 27-36).

a. One's honor and place comes from heaven (v. 27).

b. John's place is to go before the Christ and direct the bride to her Bridegroom (vv. 28-30).

c. Christ's greatness is found in the fact that He comes down from heaven and testifies of what He has seen and heard (vv. 31-33).

d. The Father has entrusted all things to the Son and has given Him the fullness of the Spirit (vv. 34, 35).

e. To believe in the Son is everlasting life, and not to believe Him

is to fall under the wrath of God (v. 36).

## Questions:

1. Compare verses 22 and 26 with chapter 4:2. We would get the impression from this chapter that Jesus Himself baptized, although He did not. What can we say concerning the work and authority of Christ's servants in the light of this?

2. Why are we informed in verse 23 that there was much water where John was baptizing? Is this an argument in favor of immersion?

3. Compare verse 24 with Matthew 4:13, 14 and explain the significance of this verse in the understanding of the chronology of John the Baptist's life.

4. What was the question debated between the Jews and John's disciples?

a. Who were these "Jews"?

b. Show that jealousy was at the bottom of John's disciples coming to their master as they do in verse 26.

5. What practical truth does John teach in verse 27 concerning jealousy in the church?

6. Discuss the meaning of John's example of the bridegroom, bride, and friend of the bridegroom, which John gives to explain the relationship between himself and Christ, between Christ and His people, and between John and God's people.

7. What is the difference between Jesus as the One from above and John as one of the earth?

8. Explain the meaning of verse 33.

9. Discuss the meaning of verse 34. What can we say about the relationship of the Holy Spirit and Christ?

10. Show how John magnifies Christ in the way he refers to Him throughout the passage.

11. What does verse 36 teach us about the blessing of faith? What is faith according to this verse?

12. What place must the magnification of Christ have in our lives?



*When Thou Sittest In Thine House*

*Rev. Ronald VanOverloop*

# Sanctifying our Children

What motivates a parent in the training of a child? Why do we want our children to behave? What motives should a godly parent have for rearing a child?

And what should be the goal in godly child-rearing?

Or is talk about motives and goals too abstract? Is it not true that

motives and goals are the farthest thing from the parents' mind at the moment they are disciplining a child who has just embarrassed them?

You want your young child to behave in the grocery store — why? You worry about what your teenager is doing on a Friday or Saturday night — why?

What should motivate believing parents? What should be the goals godly parents try to keep in mind when they are raising their children? How can we keep the right motivation and the right goals? It is nice

to talk about these things, but how can we apply them in a real and practical way. We do not want only to talk about right goals and motives. We want to live them!



We are helped and guided in establishing our goals and motives by the example of the patriarch Job. The book which is named after him opens with a most remarkable description of him. He is said to be "perfect and upright, and one that

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feared God and eschewed evil" (1:1). Later God uses these same words to describe Job to the devil.

This description is followed by an example from Job's life which indicates that he was upright, feared God, and eschewed evil. This example is taken from his home life. It is interesting to note that out of all of the activities in which Job was involved (and we can assume that he was perfect, upright, and feared God in all of them) the only example recorded for us is taken from his home life (Job 1:4, 5). If there were to be a record of your godliness and fear of God, would a biographer take his sole example from your home life? Is your godliness manifested as much in your home life as it is in the rest of your life? It should be! Our godly conduct in our homes should be the center of our piety.

From this one example of Job's uprightness and fear of God we can learn what are to be the motives and goals in Christian child-rearing. The example of Job's godliness taken from his home life is that he "sent and sanctified them (his children), and rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt offerings according to the number of them all: for Job said, It may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts. Thus did Job continually."

Job had great concern for his seven sons and three daughters. That in itself is not unusual. Even unbelieving parents have great concern for their sons and daughters. But Job's concern was for his children's holiness. That is not the first thing we might list when expressing our concerns for our children. We might have concern for our children's health, for their proper diet and exercise. If they are ill, then this really becomes a concern. We might have concern for our children's happiness, whether they are moody or whether they are creative. We might be concerned about our children's development, whether they crawl before they walk or whether they learn to read easily. We have concerns for our children's

future, that they marry someone with whom they will be truly happy, that they are able to find a good and stable job. We have all sorts of concerns.

But Job was concerned about the holiness of his seven sons and three daughters. That is unusual. But it is most wonderful.

That Job was concerned about his children's holiness indicates that Job had an even greater concern, namely, his God. Job's concern for his children's holiness was motivated by his fear of God. He was not working for his children's happiness, health, riches, job opportunities, or marriage prospects. Rather Job was concerned about his children's relationship to God. Job was more concerned about God than he was about his children. Not that he had no concern for his children. He had great concern for them, but it was not separated from his concern for God. Therefore he was concerned about his children's relationship to God. Therefore he was concerned about his children's holiness. To be sanctified, or to be holy, means to be separated from sin and to be dedicated to serving and glorifying God.

Notice how great Job's concern for his children's holiness is: he was concerned about the mere possibility that his sons and daughters "may ... have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts" (1:5b). That this was his concern makes it obvious that Job was concerned more for God's glory than for the welfare of his own children. God's glory motivated him more than his children's salvation. Job was motivated by concern for God first, and then for his children. And his concern for his children was related to his concern for God, namely, maybe they sinned against God! Maybe they cursed God instead of blessing Him.

Job's concern for his children's relationship to God revealed itself in a concern about a specific activity. Job knew what activities his children were engaged in. The context indicates that Job's children were liv-

ing on their own, in their own houses. The Bible shows that Job was not concerned about the specific activity they were involved in, namely, feasting. Rather Job's concern was for the spiritual dangers which he knew threatened them in those activities. Job knew what his children were doing, but he did not show his concern by being nosy. Nor did Job show his concern by worrying or being anxious — something which would accomplish nothing for his children and only give himself headaches and ulcers.

Job's children were involved in the legitimate pleasure of feasting. They would get together every day for a meal. The seven sons took turns hosting, one a day, inviting the three sisters to join them.

Job's concern for God's glory showed itself in that he was aware of how it is possible to sin, even while doing something which was not wrong in itself. Job knew there was always the possibility that his children, like any other people, might sin and curse God in their hearts (Job 1:5b). This statement makes it obvious that Job was more concerned about God, and about God's being blessed, than he was about his children and their happiness, education, or well-being. Job truly did fear God. He was very concerned whether his children would sin and whether they would curse God in their hearts.

Are you? Who is more prominent in your concerns: God or your children. Are you, like Job, concerned only when you believe your children are involved in illegitimate activities? And then, what is it that motivates that concern: personal embarrassment, or the fear of God and whether He is blessed or cursed in their hearts?

Job was concerned only about the mere possibility of his children sinning: "may be" (Job 1:5b). And Job was concerned about the root, whether they might be sinning "in their hearts." He wanted them to be holy, not just in their outward life, but especially in their inward



life. Job desired the fear of God *in* them; he wanted them to be blessing God in their hearts.

When we are concerned about the fact or possibility that our children have sinned or may be sinning, then we must do something about it. But what should we do? Job "rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt offerings according to the number of them all" (Job 1:5). Rising early indicates urgency. Is the fear of God an urgent matter in your life? Is your children's holiness that which would make you rise up early? If these concerns do not grip your heart, then you have failed in child-rearing, no matter what else you do. If your children's lives indicate that they do not fear the Lord, but you were concerned about their holiness, then you have not failed in child-rearing. You did all God required of you. You will hear, "Well done."

Job rose early to offer burnt offerings. Burnt offerings are different from sin offerings. Sin offerings were for actual sins. Burnt offerings were for the general sinfulness of our depraved human natures. Job sought forgiveness, not of specific sins, but for the sinfulness of his children's depraved natures, which natures Job himself gave to his children. Job asked God to forgive them of all of their sinfulness as well as for any sin they may have committed. By seeking that forgiveness with an offering, Job was showing that he sought that forgiveness in the blood of the Lamb which God promised to send, namely, the Messiah. He made it clear that forgiveness was needed, but that forgiveness was not going to be found anywhere else but in God. They could not find it in themselves or in anything else — just in the promised Messiah, whose sacrifice would provide salvation.

Job performed the activity of offering burnt offerings in the sight of his children. And Job did this continually. On a regular basis his children observed him offering sacrifices on their behalf. They had to be im-

pressed with the seriousness of their sinfulness and of the possibility of sin in their hearts. They also had to be impressed with the awareness of forgiveness in God's Lamb.

Job offered a burnt offering for each of his children.

On a regular basis we should teach our children of God, of His high demands, and of the forgiveness He provides in His Son. Bringing our children to the worship services is one very good way of doing that. The pure preaching of the gospel shows them the seriousness of sin, of their heart's activity, and of forgiveness in Christ. In catechism and in the worship services the children, along with older people, are called to exercise faith in Christ and to receive forgiveness and righteousness through faith in Him.

In our homes parental example and instruction should do the same. It is very important that we always show them the blood, but this is especially so when they have sinned. Instead of only shouting and "laying down the law," we should chasten in love and show that forgiveness is found in the mercy of God. The cross of Christ is powerful to work in their hearts the fear of God, love for God, and a willing desire to serve Him out of gratitude.

Pray for your children that they be forgiven if they have sinned. And pray that they will not sin, but will fear and bless God. Pray more for their fearing and blessing God than you pray for their physical health. Do this praying with earnestness and urgency, rising early because the matter is so important to you. Do this praying with concern for the particular needs of each child (Job did so "according to the number of them all"). As the parent, you know the weaknesses of each child. As the parent, you know better than anyone else the potential sins of each child. And do this praying as Job did: "continually." The sanctification of our children is a lifelong struggle. When you receive the gift of a child, you begin a struggle which will not end until you or the

child leaves this earthly life.



God promises to bless. The fruit of our concern and efforts for our children's holiness God blesses. We do not read that Job tried to sanctify his children. Rather we read that he "sanctified them." Job's concern and great efforts bore fruit. This does not mean that Job himself made his children holy. That no human can do. Only God, through the Holy Spirit, can make a person holy. In fact, we show that we are fully aware of the fact that we cannot make our children holy, and that it is only God who can make them holy, when we pray to God for them and when we take them to worship services and to catechism instruction. Only God can work in the heart, which is where holiness must begin. As parents, all we do is touch the outward appearance of their lives, and that we do so imperfectly. We cannot, but God can!

God reveals in His Word that He will make holy our children, but not necessarily all of them, and not only them. But He will make holy the elect, spiritual seed among our children. And God makes them holy through the instrumentality of our parental concerns and efforts. God is pleased to use our concern and efforts for His glory in our children as His means. This is the norm. Godly parents teach their children the fear of the Lord, which instruction God uses to work faith and repentance in the hearts of the elect, spiritual seed among them.

God did not make Job's children healthy and well. Soon Job would bury all ten of them. Rather God used Job's continual instructional activity as His means to destroy more and more the power of sin in their lives.



God usually blesses our efforts and prayers with the holiness of our children. This is a tremendous



mercy. He uses weakest means to fulfill His will. Parenting is a hard work. It is difficult, spiritual work. It is not easy to rear children in the

fear of the Lord. It is difficult to establish a godly home. In the consciousness of this difficulty every godly parent willingly takes a vow

to God before his and her fellow-saints, that they will use "the utmost of (their) power." □

*Decency and Order*

*Rev. Ronald Cammenga*

# Particular Synods and Delegates *Ad Examina*

*(Every year [or if need be oftener] four or five or more neighboring classes shall meet as a particular synod, to which each classis shall delegate two ministers and two elders. At the close of both the particular and the general synod, some church shall be empowered to determine with advice of classis, the time and place of the next synod.)*

*Church Order, Article 47.*

*(Each synod shall be at liberty to solicit and hold correspondence with its neighboring synod or synods in such manner as they shall judge most conducive to general edification.)*

*Church Order, Article 48.*

*(Each synod shall delegate some to execute everything ordained by synod both as to what pertains to the government and to the respective classes, resorting under it, and likewise to supervise together or in smaller number all examinations of future ministers. And, moreover, in all other eventual difficulties they shall extend help to the classes in order that proper unity, order, and soundness of doctrine may be maintained and established. Also they shall keep proper record of all their actions to report thereof to synod, and if it be demanded, give reasons. They shall also not be discharged from their service before and until synod itself discharges them.)*

*Church Order, Article 49.*

## Overview

Articles 47-49 of our *Church Order* deal with particular (regional, or provincial) synods. These articles are in parentheses in our *Church Order*. The explanation for this is that we do not have particular synods in our denomination. We have only a general synod. Strictly speaking, these articles do not apply to our ecclesiastical situation.

Nor is it likely that we will ever have particular synods. The smallness of our denomination makes this

prohibitive. Neither are particular synods necessary in our day when it is completely feasible for the general synod to meet every year. Our present ecclesiastical structure serves us well.

This is not to say that there is nothing in Articles 47-49 that applies to us. On the contrary, there is something in each of these articles that has application to our churches, even though we do not have particular synods. It would be better, however, that a future revision of our *Church Order* removed the stipulations in these articles that do apply to us and included them under other articles.

## Article 47

Article 47 describes the nature of particular synods. Particular synods are made up of groups of classes, usually four or five classes, in one region. The particular synods are to meet at least once a year, a stipulation that we now apply to our general synod. To the particular synods are to be delegated two ministers and two elders from each classis.

As is the case with our general synod, a calling church is designated to convene the particular synod. Usually the synod will meet in the facilities of this church. The consistory of this church will call and oversee a special worship service

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prior to the meeting of the synod. The "Rules of Order" for the Synod of our Protestant Reformed Churches require that on the evening preceding the beginning of synod "... a prayer service, in charge of the convening consistory, shall be held in the city in which synod is to meet. The members of synod are expected to attend this service in a body." Ordinarily the president of the preceding synod leads this pre-synodical service and preaches an appropriate sermon.

Article 47 provides for the convening of an early or special particular synod. Usually this would be due to difficulties that a classis could not satisfactorily resolve. How this special synod would be convened is not specified. Generally, the rule is that the classis desiring the special meeting of synod would contact the other classes and explain their reasons for such a special meeting. If the majority of the classes are in favor of the special meeting, the particular synod is convened by the calling church. The "Rules of Order" of our general synod state: "When a classis desires an early synod, it shall apply to the convening church, whose consistory in turn shall seek the approval of the other classis."

#### Article 48

Article 48 provides for correspondence between particular synods. The article merely says that each particular synod shall be at liberty to solicit and hold correspondence with its neighboring synods. Clearly, however, Article 48 intends to encourage such mutual correspondence. Denominational unity demands this.

In our situation, Article 48 applies to our classes. There ought to be mutual correspondence between our classes. That mutual correspondence ought to include: exchange of minutes; notification of the other classis of significant decisions, decisions that are of significance to the denomination broadly; even sending observers to the meetings of the other classis who can then briefly

report on the proceedings of the neighboring classis. More could be done in this area than is presently being done.

#### Article 49

Article 49 empowers the particular synod to appoint various committees. The article speaks of "delegating some to execute everything ordained by synod."

These committees may be either standing committees or temporary committees. Our general synod has several standing committees: Domestic Mission Committee, Foreign Mission Committee, Committee for Contact with Other Churches, Theological School Committee, Emeritus Committee, Student Aid Committee, Catechism Book Committee, Emeritus Committee, Student Aid Committee, Catechism Book Committee, Finance Committee, Yearbook Committee, and Board of Trustees.

Besides these standing committees, synod may appoint special study committees or committees to implement a particular synodical decision. In recent years, our synod has appointed a committee to index past synodical decisions and a committee to investigate the health insurance needs of our clergy.

It used to be the case that our synod had a standing "Synodical Committee," just as each of our classes has a "Classical Committee." Some years ago, however, this committee was discontinued. The committee had no work regularly and when synod had a particular task to be performed, this task was assigned to a special committee.

Article 49 also calls for a committee "to execute everything ordained by synod ... as to what pertains to the government...." This provision reflects the state-church arrangement that was in place in the Netherlands when our *Church Order* was written. Any future revision of the *Church Order* should remove this provision.

#### Delegates Ad Examina

The most significant stipulation

of Article 49 concerns the appointment of delegates *ad examina*, or synodical deputies. "Each synod shall delegate some ... to supervise together or in smaller number all examinations of future ministers. And, moreover, in all other eventual difficulties they shall extend help to the classes in order that proper unity, order, and soundness of doctrine may be maintained and established."

Article 49 does not specify the number of delegates *ad examina* that are to be appointed. Each of our classes appoints three ministers as *primi* delegates *ad examina* and three ministers as *secundi* delegates *ad examina*. Each of these appointments is for a three-year term.

Other articles in our *Church Order* refer to the delegates *ad examina*,

- They must be present at the pre-emptory examination of candidates for the ministry, Article 4.
- They must be present at the admission of ministers from other denominations, Article 9.
- They must be present at the release of a minister under Article 11.
- They must be present when a classis considers a minister's request for emeritation, Article 13.
- They must be present when new congregations are organized or received into the denomination, Article 38.
- They must be present at deposition proceedings, Article 79.

Our synod has adopted the following "Rules for Synodical Delegates *Ad Examina*":

- I. At the conclusion of the examination, at which they shall have the privilege to cross-question the candidate, these delegates shall submit a joint report and their reason for their advice.
- II. If the vote of the classis is contrary to the advice of the delegates, and no agreement can be reached, the question of admission shall be decided by synod. Until such time



the ordination of the candidate shall be postponed, and in the meanwhile no congregation of another classis shall have the right to extend a call to him and no classis shall be permitted to examine him. III. The delegates for examination shall submit a report of all their activities to synod.

Significantly, Article 49 also makes the delegates *ad examina* available to a classis in case of difficul-

ties. The church visitors are available to a consistory in case a consistory is experiencing difficulties. In much the same way, the delegates *ad examina* may serve a neighboring classis that is experiencing difficulties. In this case, of course, they have no right to impose themselves on the classis. They must be summoned by the classis. And they serve only in an advisory capacity.

The synodical delegates *ad*

*examina* play an important role in safeguarding the unity of the churches. By their involvement in examinations, in admission of new congregations, and in assisting classes in difficulties, they see to it that the fundamental basis for the unity of the federation is maintained — the pure doctrine of the Scriptures, the Reformed faith. Theirs is a serious responsibility! □

## Book Reviews

*Order in the Offices*, Mark R. Brown, ed. Duncansville, PA: Classic Presbyterian Government Resources, 1993. 304pp. N.p. (paper). [Reviewed by Prof. Herman Hanko.]

Although I knew that the question of two offices or three offices in the church was often debated among Presbyterians, I had no idea of the extent of the disagreement and the divisive character of it. Presbyterians take it with great seriousness.

The debate was more extensive in the last century, and involved basic disagreements between Charles Hodge on the one side and Thornwell and Dabney favoring the two-office idea. One of the great debates of post-reformation times took place on the General Assembly over this question, with Hodge defending the three-office position and Thornwell the two-office idea. One wishes one could have been a witness to that debate.

This book is a collection of fifteen essays written by men of the last century and men active in the ministry today who are intent on defending the three-office position. To the editor and writers it is an important position to defend because there is confusion over the question today and because the three-office position has fallen into neglect. The editor writes: "The Southern Presbyterian church and its confessional successor, the Presbyterian Church

in America, have basically followed the Dabney-Thornwell theory. The Orthodox Presbyterian Church, the confessional successor to the Northern Presbyterian church of Charles Hodge, has not shown much interest in her ecclesiastical roots" (p. 116).

It might seem to us that the question is relatively insignificant because, whether one holds to the two-office or the three-office position, one still believes that Christ has appointed ministers, elders, and deacons in the church. The difference is that ministers and elders are said, by two-office people, to hold the same office. That is why it is customary in the PCA to speak of TE's (teaching elders) and RE's (ruling elders).

But the authors of these essays show that the issue is one of great importance and one that strikes at the very roots of Presbyterian church government. The debate revolves around the teaching concerning offices in both the Old and New Testaments, the teaching concerning this question in the Westminster Confessions, and the teaching of historical Presbyterianism in its various books of church order.

While we cannot go into all the issues involved, it is interesting to note a few of them. The three-office people maintain that the words "bishop" and "presbyter" in the New Testament always refer to the min-

isters of the gospel and never to elders. It is argued that Calvin also followed this practice and, therefore, supported a three-office position.

Three-office people point to the fact that the issue is basically one of parity, i.e., equality between the offices of minister/preacher/pastor and elder. They argue that there is no parity between the offices, that, indeed, to insist on parity is to introduce into the church an egalitarianism which is destructive of the offices.

From this position of non-parity, other conclusions follow. The ministers in the church, with their credentials in presbytery (classis) rather than in the local congregation, constitute the *essence* of the church. Elders are *representatives* of the congregation in something akin to an ecclesiastical republic.

The book is replete with references to dozens of Old Testament and New Testament texts and careful exegesis of many of them. For example, I Timothy 5:17 is repeatedly discussed, for it becomes a crucial passage in the argumentation of two-office people. The intent of the book is to clarify the issues and deliver the present churches within the Presbyterian orbit from confusion and practices which are inconsistent. The book succeeds admirably in forcing one to ponder the biblical idea of office, especially as it applies to the church.



While those within Reformed churches have a different church political heritage and while all the issues confronted in this book are not germane to Reformed churches, the book brings up questions and problems which ought to be answered within our tradition as well. No one ought to write again on the matter of offices in the Reformed tradition

without reading this book and studying the questions which are raised.

I cannot refrain from including one quotation, found in a footnote, and really having nothing to do with the issues at hand. It refers to Thomas Smyth, an Irish Presbyterian from Belfast, a minister in the States for a number of years, and an ardent defender of the three-office position. In the course of his life he

had acquired a library of 20,000 volumes, one of the largest in the country at that time! But he cautioned: "Beware of a passion for books and a blind chase of a large library. It is as a general thing vain and useless. I feel I was an exception to a general rule. I have felt a special call to collect a large library not for myself but for posterity" (p. 95). □

## Report of Classis East

January 11, 1995  
Southwest Protestant Reformed Church

Classis East met in regular session on Wednesday, January 11, 1995 at the Southwest Protestant Reformed Church. The church history class of Covenant Christian High School was present for about an hour of the morning's session. Rev. R. Cammenga chaired the meeting. Each church was represented by two delegates.

Classis heard the reports of the Stated Clerk, the Classical Committee, and the church visitors. There was one matter relating to the church visitors' report that was dealt with in closed session.

Overtures to synod were sent by First Church, Grand Rapids, and Grandville. First Church is asking for a change in the calculation of families for synodical assessments. They wish to exclude those members in nursing homes who are unable to contribute financially to the church. This overture was sent to synod with the disapproval of classis on the same grounds that synod gave to other overtures from First Church dealt with by the Synods of 1983 and 1984.

The Grandville overture requested that the duties of the synodical stated clerk be expanded to include the following: "to inform those individuals, consistories, classes, committees, and organizations addressed or affected by a synodical decision of that decision. This shall be done within two months af-

ter synod adjourns." The overture was sent to synod with the approval of classis on the grounds that this is good order and will deal with those affected by synod's decisions in a brotherly way.

Classis heard the report of its special committee to investigate, at the request of synod, the continuing support, at present levels, of small, needy churches, giving special attention to the church extension work by these small churches. The committee reported on its visit to Covenant PRC, Wyckoff, NJ to discuss this matter with its consistory. The committee recommended that Covenant be given an adjustment in its subsidy for 1995 (\$2,500) and for 1996 (\$5,000) so that this congregation would have sufficient money to carry out a church extension program. Covenant presented classis with its proposed program to carry out such work. The classis approved the work of its committee and decided to forward its recommendations to synod.

Classis approved subsidy requests for 1996 from Kalamazoo (\$9,000) and from Covenant (\$38,500). Classis also approved Covenant's request to contact the churches in Classis East for collections for their building fund.

Classis elected the following delegates to synod: *Ministers: Primi:* W. Bruinsma, B. Gritters, D. Kuiper, J. Slopsema, R. VanOverloop;

*Secundi:* R. Cammenga, M. Joostens, K. Koole, A. Spriensma, B. Woudenberg. *Elders: Primi:* D. Doezeema, J. Kalsbeek, Jr., C. Kuiper, E. Ophoff, Sr., A. Rau; *Secundi:* K. Doezeema, K. Elzinga, D. Lotterman, K. Schipper, T. Spriensma. In other elections, Rev. R. Cammenga was elected to a three-year term as *primus* delegate *ad examina* and Rev. J. Slopsema to a three-year term as *secundus* delegate *ad examina*. Rev. Koole was elected to a three-year term on the Classical Committee; Revs. Kuiper and Slopsema were chosen as church visitors with Rev. VanOverloop as alternate.

Classis granted classical appointments to Byron Center PRC as follows: (Evening service only) January 22 — Joostens; January 29 — Woudenberg; February 5 — VanOverloop; February 12 — Kuiper; February 19 — Gritters; February 26 — Cammenga; March 5 — Bruinsma; March 12 — Koole; March 19 — Slopsema; March 26 — Spriensma; April 2 — Joostens; April 9 — Woudenberg; April 16 — VanOverloop; April 23 — Cammenga; April 30 — Gritters; May 7 — Flikkema; May 14 — Kuiper.

The expenses of classis amounted to \$1,165.00. Classis will meet next at First PRC, Grand Rapids, on May 10, 1995.

Respectfully submitted,

Jon J. Huiskens,  
Stated Clerk



## School News

In their monthly newsletter the School Board of the Covenant Christian School in Lynden, WA informed their supporting families that the teachers and students of Covenant wanted to do something special for someone — a sort of children's valentine, if you will. Students and parents alike were asked to begin saving their loose change, dollars, or whatever they could, this time not as a gift *to* their school, but rather as a gift *from* their school. We suppose that, since the time of that note, Covenant has been doing just that, so that by this time they have already sent a gift, as they intended, to the new fledgling Faith Christian School in Randolph, WI.

We should also include here that the student body of the Hope P.R. Christian School in Walker, MI had opportunity to donate toward their annual Christmas collection. This year's collection was for our small, struggling Edgerton Free Christian School in Edgerton, MN.

In their newsletter dated December 23, 1994, the Board of the Association for Protestant Reformed Secondary Education in Lansing, IL informed their membership that if they make sufficient progress in their plans, they will recommend to their Association that they approve an attempt to purchase 9.5 acres of property in Lansing, immediately adjacent to the proposed building site of the Peace PRC. The Board also planned on presenting a proposal at their annual Association meeting in March to raise the necessary funds.

The student body of the

Loveland Christian School in Loveland, CO marked this past holiday season by rendering their annual all-school Christmas program, on December 20. The program was entitled, "Unto Us a Son Is Given."

## Evangelism Activities

The Evangelism Committee of the Bethel PRC in Elk Grove Village, IL reported to their congregation on upcoming plans. First, they are planning to advertise their February 19 evening service to encourage visitors to attend. Rev. C. Haak, pastor at Bethel, plans to speak that evening on the subject, "How do I get to Heaven?" Plans are also in the works to obtain a guest book for visitors to sign. Plans also call for an update of Bethel's church brochure as well as their bulletin covers.

Looking ahead just a little to the month of April and the conference on Reformed Evangelism sponsored by our Trinity PRC in Houston, TX, we are happy to report that plans seem to be coming together nicely. It appears that the response by way of registration has been greater than even Trinity had dared hoped. As of January 15 there were 170 registrants for this conference, which promises to be a major event in the history of Trinity and their small but growing congregation.

The Church Extension Committee of the Lynden, WA PRC has ordered two *Standard Bearer* subscriptions for their church, in order to make the magazine available for all visitors and others who might be interested. They have also purchased a subscription for the Lynden Christian Rest Home in cassette tape form that is now sent to them on a bi-monthly basis.

## Congregational Activities

The Adult Bible Study of the

Grandville, MI PRC met recently to hear Dr. Elton Bruins, professor emeritus at Hope College, give a slide/lecture presentation on his trip this past summer to Greece, which retraced the journeys of the apostle Paul.

The Voices of Victory, a male quartet from two of our West Michigan churches, provided the program for the annual combined societies' Christmas Bible Study at the Hudsonville, MI PRC.

A new Kawai Baby Grand piano has been installed in the sanctuary of the Southwest PRC in Grandville, MI. This piano was made possible through a generous gift from the estate of a deceased member of their congregation.

At last year's annual congregational meeting, the members of the Hope PRC in Redlands, CA approved a couple of proposals concerning their fellowship hall — the first to re-carpet it, and the second to purchase movable partitions for it.

## Young People's Activities

A new Bible Study started January 29, meeting the last Sunday of every month, at the Faith PRC in Jenison, MI. This Bible study, sponsored by the Federation Board, was intended for all young people out of high school. Rev. W. Bruinsma was scheduled to lead the first session.

We also cannot help but notice that again this past December many of our churches' young people's societies set a night aside to visit with their congregation's widows, widowers, shut-ins, and others, to bring greetings either by way of a card, or fruit basket, or simply a song. We would encourage them, as well as all of us, to continue to remember these special saints throughout the rest of the year.

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



## Minister Activities

Rev. C. Terpstra, pastor at the South Holland, IL PRC, declined the

call he received from the Byron Center, MI PRC to serve as their pastor.

### *Food for Thought*

The principal work of the Spirit is faith. The principal exercise of faith is prayer.

— John Calvin □

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### CALL TO ASPIRANTS TO THE MINISTRY

All young men desiring to begin studies for the 1995 - 1996 academic year in the Theological School of the Protestant Reformed Churches should make application at the March 16, 1995 meeting of the Theological School Committee.

A testimonial from the prospective student's consistory that he is a member in full communion, sound in faith, and upright in walk; a certificate of health from a reputable physician; and high school and college transcripts must accompany the application. Before entering the seminary, all students must have earned a bachelor's degree and met all of the course requirements for entrance to the seminary. These entrance requirements are listed in the seminary catalog available from the school.

All applicants must appear before the Theological School Committee for interview before admission is granted. In the event that a student cannot appear at the March 16th meeting, notification of this fact, along with a suggested interview date, must be given to the secretary of the Theological School Committee before this meeting.

All correspondence should be directed to the Theological School Committee,  
4949 Ivanrest Avenue  
Grandville, MI 49418.

John Buiter,  
Secretary

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The Protestant Reformed Seminary admits students of any race, color, and national or ethnic origin.

### FINANCIAL AID FOR STUDENTS NOTICE!!

All students enrolled in the Protestant Reformed Seminary, who will be in need of financial assistance for the coming school year, are asked to contact the Student Aid Committee Secretary, Mr. Larry Meulenberg. (Phone 453-8466.) This contact should be made before the next scheduled meeting of April 11, 1995, D.V.

Student Aid Committee  
Larry Meulenberg,  
Secretary

### TEACHER NEEDED!!!

The Hope Christian School in Redlands, California, is in need of teachers. Either Class 1-2 or 3-5 are available at this time. Please mail resume to

Hope Christian School  
1309 E. Brockton Ave.  
Redlands, CA 92374.

Or please contact Ron Van Voorthysen at (909) 794-6457, Steven Feenstra at (909) 794-5933, or Ed Gritters at (909) 792-4923.

### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Martha Ladies' Aid Society of the Hull Protestant Reformed Church expresses her sincere Christian sympathy to her fellow members, Mrs. Dena Blankespoor and Mrs. Sally Kooiker, in the loss of their husband and father,

#### **MR. HENRY BLANKESPOOR.**

May they be sustained by God's grace and comforted in His Word: "The Lord will give strength unto his people; the Lord will bless his people with peace" (Psalm 29:11).

Rev. Richard Moore, President  
Mrs. Jack Andringa, Secretary

### CORRECTION

In the "Congregational Statistics" of the 1994 Acts of the PRC, the telephone number of Rev. Koole is incorrectly listed as 667-1378. It should be:

457-8720 (home)  
457-5848 (study)

### NOTICE:

The new address of  
Rev. Ronald VanOverloop is:  
4510 Bridgeville Court  
Hudsonville, MI 49426  
(telephone: 616-662-0257)