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Editorially speaking ...

The *Standard Bearer* has readers in the South. They may appreciate knowing that the Trinity Protestant Reformed Church of Houston, Texas distributes Protestant Reformed and other sound books and pamphlets. They call their service the Reformed Book Nook. Materials can be ordered by mail from Shirley Meulenberg, 3102 Randy Lane, Katy, TX 77449. The telephone number is (713) 579-7421.

Those who are in the area can look over the stock at the church. The address is 214 Barker-Clodine Rd., Houston.

There will soon be an opportunity to be in the area. The Trinity, Houston church is sponsoring a "Reformed Evangelism Conference" on April 3-5, 1995. Although registration is filled, reliable word has it that no Southerner will be denied, indeed that all interested Southerners are still encouraged to attend. Write the church at 214 Barker-Clodine Rd., Houston, TX 77094, or call (713) 492-0844.

One of the pamphlets available from the Reformed Book Nook is a new publication of the Southwest Protestant Reformed Church Evangelism Committee, "NIV or KJV?" Written by Rev. Ronald Cammenga, the 16-page pamphlet compares these two Bible versions. It demonstrates that there are solid reasons why a Reformed church must reject the NIV and ought to use the KJV. The pamphlet can be ordered from the Southwest Protestant Reformed Church, 4875 Ivanrest Ave., Grandville, MI 49418.

With other Reformed churches that are bound by the Church Order of Dordt, the Protestant Reformed congregations will observe the annual Day of Prayer on March 8. The article in this issue is fitting, "Thoughts on Prayer." It is a combination of two articles by Prof. George M. Ophoff in the March 15 and May 1, 1932 issues of the *Standard Bearer*.

— DJE

Grace to the Humble

"For God resisteth the proud and giveth grace to the humble."
I Peter 5:5b

In the wild mountain regions mighty giants of granite proudly rise heavenward, peak upon peak, contesting as it were with one another for superiority, striving to attain the most exalted position, whence they may display their proud forms in the thin and clear atmosphere to the far distant world around.

Down in the valley grows the lowly lily, well nigh hidden in oblivion, humbly retreating with its pure beauty from the world's admiring gazes in the still recesses of the ravine.

Yet, the most arrogant mountain peaks, though rising high into the deep blue canopy of the heavens to meet as it were the golden flood of the sun, receive none of its benevolent warmth. And though with their rocky heads they pierce the soft cloud-blanket, they fail to profit from its gentle showers. In the brightest sunlight they stand frigid and bare, clothed in eternal ice and snow.

Down the icy slopes glides the golden sunbeam, descending and searching till it creeps into the fra-

grant bosom of the humble lily below, to brighten its beauty in the recess of the valley. And the gentle rain, passing the hard arrogance of the rocky giants, descends till it can lavish all its blessing upon the lowly flower, clothing it with a beauty such as Solomon never possessed.

A silent nature-picture this is, of the deep spiritual reality expressed in the text above.

For men rise and exalt themselves, like those rocky peaks, in arrogant conceit, till they claim to be as God and disclaim any God above them. And other men hide in the deep valley of humble contrition and repentance, in their self-abasement before God not daring to raise their eyes to heaven. But none of the benevolent influence of God's grace, none of the blissful communion of His friendship is experienced by the former; and all the sweetness of His loving-kindness is lavished upon the latter. For God resisteth the proud and He giveth grace to the humble.

Grace is always particular.

It does not embrace and bless the wicked and the righteous, the proud and the lowly, the evil and the good alike. These it embraces and enriches; those it resisteth and passeth by. For God is not common to both. And He is the sole Fountain of all grace. Apart from His communion there is no grace. And in the blessed embrace of that sweetest communion there are only the humble. Whatever is proud and haughty, lofty and exalted cannot dwell in the presence, cannot taste the communion of the Most High.

These He resists, and He giveth grace to the lowly.

Grace is never common.

♦♦♦♦ ♦♦♦♦ ♦♦♦♦ ♦♦♦♦

How utterly detestable is pride!

For who is great beside God? Or where is the creature that can pretend to be anything or to possess anything apart from God?

God alone is great, infinitely, inexpressibly, incomprehensibly great. His Name alone is exalted above all. Combine all the greatness of power and authority, of wisdom and ingenuity, of beauty and glory of all the world, in all ages, of men below and the angels above, and you have not begun to approach the measure of His greatness whose name is Wonderful. Nay, all comparison is utterly impossible and the attempt to compare blasphemous. For whatever there is of power and authority, of human or angelic glory and beauty in all the wide creation, it is all of Him and none of us. Beside Him there is no God. All things are of Him and through Him and to Him. If He withdraws, men's glory and beauty utterly vanish, their greatness collapses. God alone is great and there is none great beside Him!

And how infinitesimally small are we! Compared with Him not even a drop of the bucket or a dust of the balance. Deemed as nothing are we. Without Him we have no being, constantly we exist only in Him. Without Him we cannot move, continually we move only

Herman Hoeksema was the first editor of the Standard Bearer. "Grace to the Humble" appeared 70 years ago, in the March 1925 issue.

through Him. How utterly foolish, then, is self-exaltation before Him. Has the clay a claim of glory because of the beauty of the vessel formed by the potter? Less than clay in comparison with the potter are we before God. Shall the mirror claim for itself the beauty of the image it only reflects? Much less is it becoming for the creature to boast before the Highest of a beauty or glory or power that is not its own.

How deeply contemptible, then, is self-exaltation in the eyes of Him who alone is great and the sole Fount of all greatness.

God resists the proud. God and the self-conceited creature cannot dwell in harmony. All that is high and lofty must be abased and brought low before Him. The arrogant creature cannot live in His presence, cannot dwell in His tent, cannot taste His communion, cannot receive grace from Him. He resists, He repels them to the utmost. He meets them with His holy wrath. He brings the wicked low.

Even to outer darkness and low-est hell!



But are we not all so detestably haughty by nature?

We are. And there is not one exception, no not one. Humility in the true sense is the virtue of no natural man.

Man may have a vain show of humility and lowliness of heart and mind. There is much of this in the modern world. They tell us that Christianity is service! They assure us that Christ, the Servant of all, is our Example, and following Him we must serve one another. And the modern man loves to go about in slave's garb, equipped with dish and towel to wash the soiled and weary feet of his fellowmen.

Yet, the heart of the natural man is not clothed with humility before God. It assumed a certain attitude

in Paradise when it inclined to listen to the lie of the Tempter: Ye shall be as God! It is the attitude of self-exaltation and enmity. In that same attitude the natural heart still stands. It is not possessed of humility but filled with horrible pride before the eyes of Him who judges righteously.

Ah, it is comparatively easy to put on a cloak of humility for a time. Men even take pride in doffing voluntarily the master's attire and donning the slave's garb. But these same natural men, walking about in the world with a vain show of humility, with a cloak of lowliness which becomes the object of their very pride, ready to offer their service to mankind and to wash the feet of all, would never acknowledge that they are in need of a footwash by the Master, would never confess to the filth and corruption of their own heart, and humbly bowing before the throne of grace in penitence and contrition earnestly desire to be washed in the blood of the Lamb of God!

There is not one lowly, no not one.



Yet, though proud in ourselves, we are lowly in Christ.

For humility itself is the gift of God to His people. It is His gift to them in Christ Jesus. He is the lowly Servant of Jehovah in a preeminent, unique sense of the word. The form of a servant He assumed though He esteemed it no robbery to be God's equal. And in the form of a servant He humbled Himself, becoming obedient to the Father in all things even unto the accursed death of the cross. And God's people are in Him. They are given to Him from before the foundation of the world. They are reckoned in Him according to the counsel of the Eternal. Unfathomable, everlasting grace made them one with Him. His humility is theirs, a free gift to them from God. And

though in themselves they are not lowly but filled with arrogant pride and sinful conceit, yet, reckoned in Him they are the humble and the lowly, who may dwell in the tent of the Holy One and taste His grace.

Neither is this all.

God's people are not only reckoned in the humble Servant of Jehovah as their Head and Redeemer, but they are also made partakers of the Spirit of their Lord. His lowliness is imputed unto them, and they are made recipients of it. The Spirit of Christ enters into their hearts and minds to dwell there. And what a radical change that Spirit brings about in that proud domain of the human heart. He breaks to shivers all that is hard; He brings low all that is lofty; He abases all that is high; He humbles all that is arrogant. Never a heart so hard but He softens it to repentance; never a mind so darkened but He enlightens it unto the acknowledgment of sin; never a will so stubborn but He subjects it into contrition. He labors irresistibly in that dark and haughty domain of our natural heart until every throne of self, of sin, of the devil is cast down into the dust.

And He is not satisfied until from that erstwhile proud and impenitent heart the cry is wrung: "God, be merciful unto me, a sinner!"

In Christ Jesus the child of God receives the grace of humility.

Saved we are by grace.

And this grace is given to the humble.

This humility is not of us.

It is the gift of God!



How wondrous are the ways of God!

Always His work is thus that there remains nothing for us about which to boast.

For it is only because of His everlasting grace that ever we are humble. And we receive His unfathomable grace because only to the humble He is gracious.

How sweet is that grace to the humble!

How precious is that grace when with cords of love unbreakable the humble are drawn toward the accursed tree of their blessed Redeemer and they receive what is to their contrite hearts the sweetest of all comforts, that they have received double for all their sin and that their iniquity is pardoned! What inexpressible thrills of delight and incomparable sensations of joy pass through their weary souls when, while kneeling at the bleeding feet of the blessed lamb of God, they are clothed with the garments of righteousness, garbed in which they may dwell in God's house all their days to see the beauty of the Lord and to inquire in His temple!

How blessed when the Comforter, the Spirit of the lowly Jesus, takes up His abode in their hearts forever, dwelling in them, assuring them of their deliverance from the

law of sin and death, liberating them, cleansing them, drawing tight the bond of God's covenant-love and evermore spreading abroad in their hearts that love of God which is always first and to the which they are taught to respond with a blessed "Abba, Father!"

How sweet is the new hope that is quickened in their hearts by this very grace! For they know that they may dwell in the house of God forever. And though on this side of the grave there is much that separates, much that interferes with this blessed communion of God's dwelling-place, they know that when the earthly house of this tabernacle is dissolved they shall have a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. They shall move to their heavenly abode in the company of all the redeemed that have gone before and of all the holy angels. They know by grace that when the last trumpet shall sound and time shall

be no more, when the dead in Christ shall rise and the roll is called up yonder, they shall be satisfied with His likeness. Everlastingly clothed with most beauteous grace, with spotless purity, with imperishable glory in body and soul, and having received the image of the heavenly instead of the image of the earthly, they shall see Him face to face, know Him as they are known, and walking in the light enjoy His divine covenant-friendship in perfection forevermore!

How precious! Yea, truly, His loving-kindness is better than life, His grace is more than meat!

And it is all of Him. Unto all eternity it will be our grateful confession: None of self and all of Thee!

How wondrous are His ways!

Grace to the humble.

Humility is not of us, it is the gift of God.

His alone is the glory forever!

□

Editorial

A Letter and Response on "Jewish Dreams"

The editorial in the January 15, 1995 issue of the *Standard Bearer*, entitled "Jewish Dreams," took up the sword against postmillennialism. It contended particularly against the form that this error concerning the last things takes in the modern movement known as "Christian Reconstruction." It called this movement's vision and program for the earthly future "Jewish dreams." The reference is to the illusory hopes entertained by the Jews of Jesus' day

for a carnal kingdom, as those hopes surface in John 6.

The phrase "Jewish dreams" is borrowed from the Second Helvetic Confession (A. D. 1566). In its time, this was one of the most influential of the Reformed confessions. Philip Schaff says of it that "it is the ... most catholic among the Swiss Confessions.... It was adopted, or at least highly approved, by nearly all the Reformed Churches on the Continent and in England and Scotland"

(*Creeks of Christendom*, vol. 3, Baker, repr. 1983, p. 233). In its treatment of eschatology (the doctrine of the last things), this Reformed creed stated:

We further condemn Jewish dreams that there will be a golden age on earth before the Day of Judgment, and that the pious, having subdued all their godless enemies, will possess all the kingdoms of the earth. For evangelical truth in Matt., chs. 24 and 25, and Luke, ch.

18, and apostolic teaching in II Thess., ch. 2, and II Tim., chs. 3 and 4, present something quite different.

In these words, this creed expressed the view not only of Bullinger, its author, but also of Calvin and, indeed, of all the Reformed churches. The Reformed faith in the 16th century was amillennial. The Reformed faith in the 16th century condemned postmillennialism. It condemned postmillennialism as "Jewish dreams."

The "Three Forms of Unity," and the Protestant Reformed Churches in accordance with these Reformed confessions, maintain the Reformed adherence to amillennialism, as well as the Reformed condemnation of postmillennialism, especially in its "Christian Reconstruction" form.

To this editorial has come a letter of objection. Partly because of the length of the letter and response and partly because the letter opens up significant aspects of an issue that is of vital importance for Reformed and Presbyterian churches today, I run the letter and my response as an editorial.

What follows, then, is the letter objecting to "Jewish Dreams" and my response to the letter.

Letter:

Your editorial of January 15, 1995, "Jewish Dreams," was a very strong attack against those who have held to a victorious Church of Christ in the world — including the signers of the *Savoy Declaration* which was chiefly authored by that stupid Jewish dreamer, Dr. John Owen.

At any rate, I think you owe it to your readers to quote another part of the *Second Helvetic Confession*, from chapter 30 ("Of the Magistracy"), which reads as follows:

...(the magistrate) shall root out lies and all superstition, with all impiety and idolatry, and shall defend the Church of God. For indeed we teach that the care of religion does chiefly appertain to the holy magistrate.

Let him, therefore, hold the Word of God in his hands, and look that nothing be taught contrary thereunto. In like manner, let him govern the people, committed to him of God with good laws, made according to the Word of God in his hands, and look that nothing be taught contrary thereunto.... Therefore let him draw forth this sword of God against all malefactors, seditious persons, thieves, murderers, oppressors, blasphemers, perjured persons, and all those whom God has commanded him to punish or even to execute. Let him suppress heretics (who are heretics indeed), who cease not to blaspheme the majesty of God, and to trouble the Church, yea, and finally to destroy it.

If, indeed, the *Second Helvetica* condemns a so-called postmillennial eschatology, as you maintain (you did not cite the reference of your quote from the Confession), it certainly teaches a so-called theonomic ethic for civil government. Could it be that the author, Heinrich Bullinger, actually believed that civil government could be Christian in its theology and ethics — which is what a "postmill" prays and works for (Ps. 2:6-9; Is. 2:1-4; Micah 4:1-8; Matt. 28:18-20)?

(Rev.) Norman Jones
Pierre, SD

Response:

"Stupid" is your word, and suggestion, absolutely not mine. The past and present postmillennialists whom I have in mind were and are many things. "Stupid" is not one of them. I did not demean the postmillennialists. I condemned postmillennialism. There is a difference.

Nor was John Owen a "Jewish dreamer." John Owen was a godly, orthodox Presbyterian theologian who, nevertheless, went seriously astray in eschatology (postmillennialism) and in ecclesiology (independency). He was not a "Jewish dreamer," but his eschatological error was a "Jewish dream."

The apostle Peter was no Jewish legalist, but his sin at Antioch (Gal.

2:11-14) was grievous Jewish legalism, in practice.

The Second Helvetic Confession does indeed condemn postmillennial eschatology. It condemns it in the quotation that I gave fully and exactly. It condemns it in language that seems to have been deliberately drawn up precisely to describe the present-day variation of postmillennialism known as "Christian Reconstruction":

... that there will be a golden age on earth before the Day of Judgment, and that the pious, having subdued all their godless enemies, will possess all the kingdoms of the earth.

There is no "if" or "so-called" about the Second Helvetic's condemnation of postmillennial eschatology. The Second Helvetic condemns postmillennial eschatology. Plainly! Flatly! Sharply!

The appeal to Matthew 24, 25; Luke 18; II Thessalonians 2; and II Timothy 3, 4, puts beyond any question that the Reformed creed condemned the postmillennial view of the future because the creed was convinced that Scripture teaches that the future holds apostasy, Antichrist, and great tribulation for the church in the future. That is, the Second Helvetic confessed amillennialism.

If any additional proof were needed that the Second Helvetic Confession confessed amillennialism and condemned postmillennialism, the paragraph immediately preceding the quotation given in the editorial, "Jewish Dreams," gives this proof:

And from heaven the same Christ will return in judgment, when wickedness will then be at its greatest in the world and when the Antichrist, having corrupted true religion, will fill up all things with superstition and impiety and will cruelly lay waste the Church with bloodshed and flames (Dan. ch. 11). But Christ will come again to claim his own, and by his coming to destroy the Antichrist, and to judge

the living and the dead (Acts 17:31). (The Second Helvetic Confession, in *Reformed Confessions of the 16th Century*, ed. Arthur C. Cochrane, Westminster Press, 1966, Chap. 11).

This is amillennialism — the Reformed doctrine of the end.

Holding this, and *because* it held this, the Second Helvetic Confession condemned postmillennialism.

I did indeed "cite the reference of (my) quote from the Confession." My citation was "Chap. 11, in *Reformed Confessions of the 16th Century*, ed. Arthur C. Cochrane, Westminster Press, 1966." The Latin original, but not the English translation, is found in Philip Schaff, *Creeds of Christendom*, vol. 3 (Baker, repr. 1983), p. 257: "*Damnatus praeterea Judaica somnia*," etc.)

You quote the Second Helvetic's assertion that it is the duty of the magistrate to "suppress heretics" with the cold, steel sword of physical force, as though this contradicts the condemnation of postmillennialism. Fact is, one may hold this to be the calling of the state *while recognizing that the Bible teaches that the kingdom of God in the world is spiritual, not carnal, and that the condition of the church in the last days will be tribulation, not that of a "golden age.* This is the very position of the Second Helvetic Confession, as it was the position of John Calvin and, for that matter, the position of the Belgic Confession. In chapter 30, the Second Helvetic calls on the state to "suppress heretics" and to have "the care of religion" (although it begins by saying that "the chief duty of the magistrate is to secure and preserve peace and public tranquillity"). In chapter 11, it condemns postmillennialism. There is no contradiction. The opinion that the state has the calling to promote the true religion does not imply a postmillennial eschatology.

I did not quote chapter 30 of the Second Helvetic on the duty of the state because my sole concern was to expose and reject postmillen-

nialism as false doctrine in the Reformed churches, regardless of one's view of the duty of the state.

Your description of my editorial as an attack against "those who have held to a victorious Church of Christ in the world" takes us to the heart of the issue.

"... a victorious Church of Christ in the world"!

The assumption basic to the entire enterprise of postmillennial "Christian Reconstruction" is that the church of Christ is victorious in the world only if she prevails in history with political power, superior numbers, and cultural influence.

I deny this assumption. I repudiate this assumption. I abhor this assumption. I challenge this assumption as nothing less than a falsehood that puts the true church to shame, perverts the gospel (which is always the gospel of the cross, not the gospel of earthly triumph), and renders the living and reigning Lord Jesus Christ a miserable failure in history. It is a modern form of the "Jewish dream."

Was the small, despised, persecuted church of the apostles, themselves "reviled, persecuted, defamed, filth of the world, and offscouring of all things" (I Cor. 4:9-13), defeated or victorious?

Was the early church of Coliseum and catacombs defeated or victorious?

Was the Reformation church in the Netherlands during the persecution under Alva, in France during the persecution under Louis XIV, and in Scotland during the persecution under Charles II defeated or victorious?

Is the true church in the world at this time — small, politically powerless, and culturally ineffective — defeated or victorious?

Has the church hitherto, the church from the apostles to the end of the 20th century, been a defeated church inasmuch as she has never yet dominated the world with earthly power?

Whoever says that the church — the *true* church — in any age and

land, or the church throughout the present age to this moment, has been a defeated church, because it has not had earthly dominion, is calling Jesus Christ a defeated King, a failure.

We amillennialists proclaim a gospel that declares the little flock of Christ, that will always have tribulation in the world and whose members are killed all the day long, to be not merely conquerors but "more than conquerors" (Luke 12:32; John 16:33; Rom. 8:36, 37). See, this is not pessimism. This is optimism. This is the hugest optimism. This is optimism without any hint of pessimism.

But the victory, indeed "more than victory," of the church, here and now, is spiritual, not carnal. It is achieved by the gospel of the forgiveness of sins, not by the gospel of world-domination. It is enjoyed by faith, not by settling down comfortably in a society or world governed by the saints. It consists of the pardon of sins, peace with God, holiness of life, and perseverance in Christ to the end; it does not consist of political power, big numbers, and cultural influence.

Esteemed friend Jones, permit me a question or two that reflect not only on your letter published above but also on the note that accompanied the letter.

You more than most Reformed Christians are well aware that R. J. Rushdoony, Gary North, and others of the "Christian Reconstruction" movement have for many years now been assaulting Reformed amillennialism as "impotent religion" and jeering at us amillennialists as "pessimillennialists." You also know that this tirade and ridicule are ongoing.

This has been, and continues to be, their "strong attack" against the doctrine of the end confessed by the Reformed churches in the Second Helvetic Confession and against all those Reformed theologians and other believers who have embraced Reformed amillennialism according to the Reformed confessions.

Would you say that *they* have

"arrived at an ideological stance for passionate postmillennialism that is not healthy"?

Would you warn *them* that "ideology and biblical theology are two different things"?

And have you ever actually said

this to *them* and warned *them* of this, publicly, perhaps by a letter in *Chalcedon Report*? □

— DJE

Letters

■ Shall the Churches Observe Christmas?

In regards to the December 15 1994 *Standard Bearer* I appreciated "The Reformation and Family Worship" and look forward to the remainder of it. On the same topic, are there any plans to review K. Pracek's *Family Worship: Biblical Truth, Historical Reality, Practical Necessity*, as recently published by Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary?

As for the article entitled, "Grieve Not," in reference to the Heidelberg Catechism, Q & A 2, 86, 87, does the Holy Spirit "often" or "always" sanctify through consciousness of gratitude?

Also, how do we harmonize the "Observance of Christmas" with:

1. The emphasis of Scripture (Bel. Conf. 7)? Luke is the only gospel that actually tells us of Christ's birth (2:1-20). Matthew only mentions it briefly (2:1), the others not at all. Yet all four gospels speak at some length of His death and resurrection.

2. HC, Q & A 96? Who hath required it at our hands (Is. 1:12)? Scripture only commands us to remember Christ's death and resurrection, not with observing the Romish holydays of Good Friday and Easter, but by celebrating the Lord's Supper and observing the Sabbath on the first day of the week rather than the seventh.

3. HC, Q & A 80? That "Christmas" is a corruption of Christ's mass, "an accursed idolatry," would seem to taint the matter from the outset.

4. VanDellen and Monsma's *The Church Order Commentary*? They state that compromise with the

civil magistrate, rather than consistency with the Heidelberg, was the reason why the Romish feast days were included in Article 67 (pp. 273, 274).

5. A denial of common grace? Christmas cannot be both biblical and universally popular with the unbelieving world unless common grace is true.

6. The Appendix to the Westminster Assembly's Directory for Public Worship which says, "Festival days, vulgarly called *Holy-days*, having no warrant in the word of God, are not to be continued"?

If we cannot harmonize the observance of Christmas with the above (which is essentially the thrust of the booklet *Christmas: A Biblical Critique*), is it not presumptuous, rather than protestant, for the Reformed to continue to do so?

R. Suden,
Lynden, WA

■ Jewish Dreams, Puritan Hope, Reformed Ostrich

What is referred to as "Jewish Dreams" in the January 15 issue of the *Standard Bearer* has been elsewhere described as the "Puritan Hope." The longing which filled the breasts of generations of godly men for well over 200 years in the British Isles and in America is swept aside with the stroke of a pen by the esteemed editor of the *Standard Bearer*, with what is almost akin to an anathema on the concept of postmillennialism being even mentioned in Protestant Reformed circles.

Ever since the rise of Reconstructionism, in the minds of many Protestant Reformed writers, postmillennialism has been inextricably bound up with this movement. Concern amounting to paranoia is displayed whenever the subject arises, and

ghosts appear in the form of "earthly kingdoms" and "world dominion," like skeletons from the proverbial cupboard. Perhaps we need reminding that while Reconstructionism has been around for a few decades, postmillennialism has been around for centuries.

The editor appears to make the amillennial view of prophecy a matter of dogma and attempts to support his contention from the Reformed creeds, quoting Heidelberg Catechism Q. 52 & 123 and Belgic Confession Articles 27 and 37. In fact, none of these passages relate to the subject under discussion (except perhaps Q. 123, where the clause "till the full perfection of thy kingdom take place" could be interpreted in a postmillennial sense! Cf. the Westminster Larger Catechism's answer to the same question: "In the second petition [which is, *Thy kingdom come*] ... we pray, that the kingdom of sin and Satan may be destroyed, the gospel propagated and throughout the world, the Jews called, the fulness of the Gentiles brought in; the church furnished with all gospel-officers and ordinances..."). Moreover, the statement that "it [i.e., the amillennial position] is the stand of the confessions that bind Reformed and Presbyterian churches and Christians today" is manifestly untrue. The editor cites two creedal statements which do have a bearing, however, namely the Second Helvetic Confession and the Savoy Declaration, but proceeds, arbitrarily, to accept the former while rejecting the latter. Again, we need to remind ourselves that it was precisely because the framers of the *Three Forms of Unity* and the *Westminster Standards* recognized that the matter of prophecy was of secondary importance, was subject

to a degree of speculation, and did not form part of the *substance of the Faith*, that they omitted reference to eschatological matters — other than the major events of the second coming of Christ, the resurrection of the dead, and the final judgment — in their creeds.

Another concept that receives the anathema of the editor is the suggestion that the return of Christ might not be imminent. Scorn is poured upon the idea that history could have several thousand years yet to run; instead, we are confidently informed that “the kingdom of the beast will come. Indeed it is coming now. Its features are distinct in a lawless society, an apostate church, and a uniting world of nations” and we must “Be prepared for the Antichrist!” Having, in the recent past, called the bluff of Harold Camping, perhaps the editor needs to take heed lest future generations call his bluff over the attempt to condense all prophetic history into a single span that finds its fulfillment in his own short lifetime.

Furthermore, belief in a future Antichrist implies that the editor does not believe with the Westminster Confession of Faith that: “the Pope of Rome ... is that antichrist, that man of sin, and son of perdition, that exalteth himself in the church against Christ, and all that is called God” [XXV:vi]. In this — according to Iain H. Murray — he is at variance with all the Reformers. Murray speaks of “the unanimous belief that the papal system is both

the ‘man of sin’ and the Babylonian whore of which Scripture forewarns (II Thess. 2; Rev. 19)” and says that “In the conviction of sixteenth-century Protestants, Rome was the great Antichrist, and so firmly did this belief become established that it was not until the nineteenth century that it was seriously questioned by evangelicals” [*The Puritan Hope*, p. 41].

Certainly, the second coming of Christ is the universal “hope” of all Reformed Christians; it always has been and always will be. But why should this preclude a desire to see the kingdom of God advanced and Christ glorified here on earth (Ps. 46:10b). If what the editor says is true, then why preach, why evangelize, why take part in missions, why do anything at all? Why not in fact just become a Reformed ostrich?

Tony Horne

Stonehaven, Kincardineshire,
Scotland

Response:

Do preaching, evangelizing, missions, and other labor by the church depend upon the “hope that a majority of humanity will soon be converted” and that the world will soon be “Christianized”?

Really?

Will the church that lacks this “hope” become a “Reformed ostrich”?

Really?

Is the church of Augustine a “Reformed ostrich”? that of Luther? that of Calvin? that of the Heidel-

berg Catechism and the Belgic Confession? that of the Bullinger of the Second Helvetic Confession? that of Abraham Kuyper and Herman Bavinck? that of Herman Hoeksema? Amillennialists, all.

Really?

Might there be other motives than that of a “hope that a majority of humanity will soon be converted,” not only for doing “anything at all,” but also for doing everything possible, and then still more?

Might not such motives be obedience to Christ the Lord (Matt. 28:18-20; I Cor. 9:16); the gathering of the elect out of all nations (II Tim. 2:10); giving a witness to all nations so that the end may come (Matt. 24:14); and sheer love of the Lord Jesus and His precious Name (John 21:15-19; Phil. 1:15-21)?

Does the apostle say, “Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season ... for the time will soon come that a majority of humanity will be converted and the world will be ‘Christianized’”?

Not really.

Rather, “Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season ... for the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. But ... do (thou) the work of an evangelist” (II Tim. 4:1-5).

— Ed.

All Around Us

Prof. Robert Decker

■ Missionary Murdered

Around 10:00 P.M. on November 24, 1994 Mr. Rein Boerma, a translator for the mission of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC)

in Suriname (a small country in Northeastern South America), was shot to death in his home during an attempted burglary. Mr. Boerma’s wife, Frans, was threatened during the attack, but not harmed.

Mr. Boerma, a ruling elder of the Gereformeerde Kerk te’s-Hertogenbosch in the Netherlands, had responded to a request of the OPC for help with the Dutch-language work

in Suriname (where, many years earlier, his church had sent missionaries). After his retirement in 1993 his church sent Boerma to Suriname specifically to help OPC missionary Rev. Karl Hubenthal in his labors.

Rev. Hubenthal writes concerning Boerma, “Rein was ecumenical in the best sense of the word. That is, he believed in the unity of the church and yet would not compro-

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

mise his Reformed position. There was no need to. While there were differences in our cultural backgrounds, we were one in faith and practice.

"Both Rheta and I and the whole OPC are thankful for the immense help that Rein and Frans gave. Rein taught communicants (catechism) class for two girls who, hopefully, will be received as communicant members in January. They will remember him fondly as their surrogate 'grandpa.' He read and corrected the grammar in my sermons before I preached. He taught the Heidelberg Catechism on a regular basis after the evening service. He was instrumental in leading the way in establishing our Dutch-language Suriname Institute for Theological Studies.... Rein would like best to be remembered as a sinner saved by grace, who lived out his life in thankfulness for what his Savior did for him — and not for what he did or might have done."

Here is another evidence of the fact that the life of a foreign missionary is far from easy. Neither should any of us expect any different. Jesus, after all, made very plain that the citizens of the kingdom of heaven could expect persecution and reviling from the men of this world. In this Jesus told them to "Rejoice and be exceedingly glad; for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you" (Matt. 5:10 - 12). On the night before He was crucified our Savior warned the disciples (who became apostles, preachers to the nations) that the time was coming when " ... whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service" (John 16:2). Jesus also assured them and us and all of His church "... in the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

For us of the Western world, persecution and suffering and dying for Jesus' sake are only things we occasionally read or hear about. For many saints in other parts of the world they are a daily reality! The

REC News Exchange reports that the case of three evangelical pastors murdered in Iran last year remains unsolved. The government blames the killings on an Iraq-based Muslim group, but the Christians in Iran believe the government itself is responsible for the murders. Churches in Iran receive bomb threats daily. In Pakistan, Gul Masih, a Christian, was released from prison after serving three years. He was convicted of blasphemy against the Qu'ran (the Muslim holy book) and sentenced to death on the basis of the testimony of one witness. In November the Lahore High Court of Pakistan ruled that the charges were false. After his release, Masih went into hiding. His family and his lawyers are seeking asylum for him in another country. Earlier last year, two Christians released from a similar trial for blasphemy were murdered as they left the court! Things are no better for Christians in Egypt. A Coptic Orthodox priest last November was charged with encouraging Muslims to convert to Christianity. In that same month a Protestant pastor was arrested on similar charges. This pastor, according to reports, was held in a prison for hardened criminals with several others in a small, windowless cell. He was released after thirty-seven days. Egyptian law specifies that people may convert to Islam, but that no one may convert from Islam to another religion. It's interesting and ominous to note that Egypt requires its citizens to carry an identity card which indicates the bearer's religious affiliation.

Let us not fail to pray for God's people and for those who minister to them in countries where Christians are openly persecuted and even killed merely because they confess that Jesus is their Lord and Savior.

New Horizons
REC News Exchange

■ A "Christian" Nation?

Many mistakenly believe the United States was founded on Chris-

tian principles and continues to be a "Christian" nation. While it is true that God certainly has His church and people in the U.S., in the light of the following it can hardly be considered a Christian nation.

* Many Americans believe God is not perfect. Most people believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God, but according to a recent Barna Research Group survey 42% say Jesus committed sins. One fourth of all so-called born-again Christians also believe that Jesus committed sins. The survey concluded that conventional Christian beliefs continue to decline among Americans. Three of ten adults embrace an unorthodox definition of God, such as a state of higher consciousness. Only 39% of the people believe that Jesus Christ is the only means of personal salvation.

* Eugene Stevens, longtime pastor of Southside Baptist Church in Monahans, Texas, went to the home of a couple from the church who were having marital problems. As pastor Stevens attempted to counsel the couple the husband fired a shotgun at him. The man has been arrested and charged with murder.

* "HEAVEN IS PERFECT. Who wants to go to a place that's perfect? Boring. Boring," media mogul Ted Turner told the National Press Club recently. When Turner and his journalistic audience get to hell, he said, "we'll have a chance to make things better because hell is supposed to be a mess."

Unless by God's grace he repents, Mr. Turner will find that hell is "a lake of fire burning with brimstone" into which the Antichrist (the beast and the false prophet) shall be cast (Rev. 19:20). Mr. Turner had better also know the sure Word of Jesus, "That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give an account thereof in the day of judgment" (Matt. 12:36). And, let us and all who love our Lord Jesus and look for His appearing "have grace whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: For our God is a consuming fire"

(Heb. 12:28-29).

* Abortion has its consequences. Of 260 women surveyed by the Elliot Institute for Social Services Research of Springfield, Ohio, 28% regretted their abortions and attempted suicide. 20% of the same group of women reported having nervous

breakdowns, and 36% engaged in self-destructive behavior. The researchers claim this study to be more reliable than many pro-choice studies because their subjects had their abortions an average of 10.6 years ago as compared to three to six months ago for those women in the

pro-choice studies. "Only by studying women five years after abortions can researchers see 'the cycle of disintegration' abortion causes," said Elliot Institute Director, David Reardon. □

*National & International
Religion Report*

News From Seminary Hill

Protestant Reformed Seminary

Robert D. Decker
Professor of Practical Theology and New Testament
David J. Engelsma, Rector
Professor of Dogmatics and Old Testament
Herman C. Hanko
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February 6, 1995

The new addition to the seminary building is well on the way to completion. The exterior was finished before heavy weather struck, the end of December. As I write, men are painting and installing the electric.



Preparatory work

As of January 1, 1995, \$360,000 has already been donated. The total cost is estimated at approximately \$440,000. Synod 1994 decided to raise the rest of the money by collections in the Protestant Reformed Churches (PRC). The Theological School Committee (TSC) has asked all the Protestant Reformed congregations to give for the new addition in the collection at the special, Prayer Day worship service on March 8. This underscores the denominational nature of the seminary

and enables all the congregations to act in unity in the support and promotion of their theological seminary.

The need is approximately \$80,000.

The cause is worthy: the preparation of ministers of the gospel for all the churches of the denomination; the preparation of missionaries to bring the gospel to the scattered and the lost; and the preparation of pastors and teachers for other churches of Christ, as well as the work in theology that goes on in connection with this training of ministers.

Also, the addition will serve to house the archives of the denomination.



Lower level begins to take shape

Those outside the PRC who may read this and who may have a heart for this work should not think themselves excluded. Already, a number of you have contributed more than \$100,000. Send

your gift, large or small, to Mr. Joel Zandstra, Synodical Treasurer, 5052 - 36th Ave., Hudsonville, MI 49426. Designate it for the seminary addition.

The second semester has begun. All eleven seminarians are in school. The two seniors, Allen Brummel and Doug Kuiper, have returned from their internships in Singapore and in Doon, Iowa. It is good to have them back, if only for a semester. Both are to graduate in June, in northwest Iowa, after examination by synod.

With gladness, we have heard that Chris Connors and



Future archival and storage space

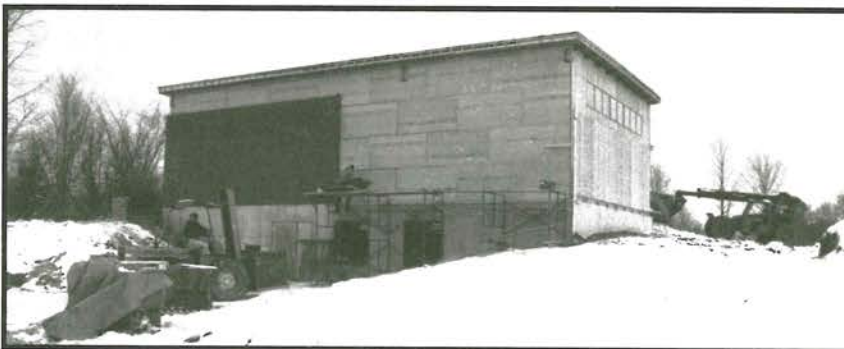
David Higgs, last year's graduates, successfully sustained their examination by the presbytery of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Australia (EPC). Both are presently considering calls to congregations in the EPC. God bless their ministries!

Prof. Herman Hanko taught the interim course in January on "The Theology of Augustine." Several ministers and others, including men and women, attended the class.

Among the courses being taught this semester is a missions course by Prof. Robert Decker, "Cross-Cultural Missions." Most of the students are taking this course either for credit or audit.



Future offices and library



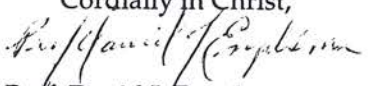
Lower-level walkout

churches may have able, devoted Reformed ministers and missionaries who will preach the Word without compromise.

Ten of the seminarians are involved in practice preaching (all except the first-year student). Four are licensed to speak a word of edification in the churches. Eight are helping Grand Rapids area churches by teaching catechism classes.

The life of the seminary is busy. We are thankful to God that it is. God blesses us.

Pray for us all, students, faculty, staff, and TSC, that the

Cordially in Christ,

 Prof. David J. Engelsma

Thoughts on Prayer

"Be careful for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

Philippians 4:6, 7.

In everything let your requests be known. In everything, in every circumstance, in adversity and prosperity, in sickness and health, fruitful and unfruitful seasons, in every kind of distress, let your requests be known.

Seemingly the apostle leaves his readers in the dark as to what requests may be made known unto God. Yet the text contains more than one clue as to what he had before his mind. It must be a request that has to do with a real need, and that, when made, will bring to the soul a peace that surpasseth all understanding. This at once eliminates a host of requests that we are so prone to make. Will a request for, let us say, a return of prosperity be followed by peace in our hearts; or a request for health, rain, sunshine, crops, and what not? If you put the making known of all such requests to a test, you will discover that, after having made the request ever so often, you will still be without peace. Though a man who is sick pray day and night for recovery, he, through such a prayer, will never attain to peace.

Though a man pray ever so fervently for the removal of his present financial depression, he, through this prayer, will never attain to peace. Though a man pray ever so often that the house or the houses he is in danger of losing may be retained by him, he will never, through such a prayer, attain to peace. All such prayers gender dissatisfaction and remorse, yea, blank despair, especially if the course of events continues to run contrary to the prayer. The fact that such prayers do not bring peace is in itself the evidence that they are forbidden prayers.

What prayer, then, will be followed by peace in our hearts, the peace that surpasseth all understanding? The answer: the prayer that, in whatever circumstance we find ourselves, His will be done, His counsel realized; the prayer that we may receive grace to praise Him for His ways with us, whatever these ways may be; grace, and spiritual power to confess His name, to fight the good fight, to work out our salvation with fear and trembling; grace, to humble ourselves under His mighty hand; grace, to believe that through whatever circumstances He may set up about us, He works our salvation unto His glory; grace, therefore, to believe that all things of whatever character are for us.

That such should be our request in whatever circumstances we are led by Him is evident enough from the model prayers of Scripture. The Lord's Prayer, as to the whole of its content, is a request that God be God, a prayer for His counsel, a prayer that His kingdom may come, may come in our hearts. Wrote the apostle with a view to this evil day:

"Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil...." In other words, let your request in this evil day be that you may be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might, that your loins may be girded about with the truth, that you may have on the breastplate of righteousness, that your feet may be shod with the preparation of the gospel. Let us ask for power, the apostle would say, to take the shield of faith, where-with we shall be able to quench the fiery darts of the wicked; to take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. The apostle actually wrote (Eph. 6), after admonishing his brethren to put on the whole armor of God, "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints."

That such should be our request is evident from the fact that the apostle's admonition, "Praying always...", immediately follows the admonition of his to put on the whole armor of God. This last warning should at once constitute the content of our requests. Not prosperity, fine houses, and big cars, but *grace to stand* is what we are so sorely in need of today. We can do without the former, but not without the latter. It is for this *grace* that we should so earnestly, fervently, and continually pray. You say, the kingdom of God is suffering! It is going to pieces from lack of funds! I know that that is what they are dinning into your ears, to get you to pray for prosper-

George Ophoff was part of the first Editorial Staff of the SB, and a long-time writer for the magazine.

ity. But know well, brother, that the kingdom of God cannot possibly come to ruin, that this kingdom always comes, comes also through oppression and reverses. I can appeal to the whole history of the Christian church from Adam to the present day in support of this statement. Take the first

two centuries of our Christian era. They were centuries of persecution, and the kingdom came. The church also needs periods of quiet for study and the development of the truth. What we mean to bring out is that the kingdom always comes.

And the Lord will see to it that each one of us has his daily bread as long as He has use for us here on this earth. And daily bread means daily bread, bread that comes to us from the Lord, either through our own efforts or through the channel of another.

It is plain, now, what the contents of a prayer worked in us by the Spirit will be. The two elements comprising this prayer are, concisely stated, *praise* — the declaration that God is God and that the petitioner wills that God be God in His own life, and, secondly, the making known unto God of our request for *grace*. Rightly considered, also the making known of this request is equal to the declaration that God is God, that your deep and ardent desire is that He reign, reign in your life, and by His grace glorify Himself in and through you unto your salvation and His very own supreme glory and honor.

It can easily be seen that through such a prayer the Spirit will gender in us that peace of God that surpasses all understanding. Consider that to praise God, to declare that He is God, to praise Him that for Christ's sake He is your God, to praise Him for causing in His abounding mercy all things to work for your good and for the good of all His people, to request Him to glorify Himself in and through you by

giving you grace is to pray as only a child of God can pray. Such a prayer in itself is the evidence that you are a sheep of Christ, one of God's children, set in heaven with Him. The very act of praying this prayer

strengthens in you the conviction that you are His priceless possession. Convinced of

*Not prosperity,
fine houses,
and big cars,
but grace to stand
is what we are
so sorely
in need of
today.*

this you will find that *these things* will, must cease to terrorize you. A great calm will steal over your soul. Your heart will fill with that peace of God. The moments we can praise him from the heart, and declare that what

He wills we, too, will, whatever it may be, are the happiest moments in our life, irrespective of what our outward circumstances may be. When this praise dies upon our lips, we are truly miserable, and we have no peace.

But this is not all. Such a request, such a prayer will be heard, for it is a prayer worked by the Spirit. It is the only kind of a prayer that may leave our lips. It is the only kind of a prayer that God promises to hear. All other prayers are out of the flesh and will not be heard, but will work our spiritual deterioration. It is this true prayer that the apostle John had in mind when he wrote, "And whatsoever we ask we will receive of Him, because we keep His commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in His sight." His commandments, the thing pleasing in His sight, is to praise Him from the heart in our prayer and in our life as He wills to be praised, and to make known to Him our request that He glorify Himself in and through us unto our salvation and His glory. Therefore, whatsoever we ask we will receive from Him, in this life grace and power, and in the life to come absolutely all things, Himself included. The right kind of a prayer, then, will, must be heard because He promised. Hence we *will* receive grace and power. Our faith will be strengthened, our hope enlivened, and the flame of our love

fed by His grace. So fed, so strengthened, so enlivened, we will consciously dwell in Him, hide in Him, and abide in Him, and we will have peace and joy unspeakable.

This grace, says the apostle, shall keep our hearts and minds. The picture is that of a guard, standing between our hearts and minds and the things that distress and terrorize, so that *these things* can no longer terrorize us. And we have peace.

You say that this view of prayer allows us to pray for so little that prayer must very nearly vanish from your life? No, read this article again, and be convinced that this view of prayer allows you to pray for so much that you never get through praying. I know you will not reject this view of prayer because it does not allow you to pray for a good job with a good salary, for money to pay for your debts and the like. You say, "Of course not; I am satisfied with my daily bread." Exactly. And daily bread means daily bread.

But may we not talk to God about our crops and jobs? Of course. Say to Him, "Lord, I desire a good job, if it be to Thy glory." This "for Thy glory" you shall have to add. A Christian is always interested solely in God's glory. But if I am actually interested in God's glory instead of in that good job, and if I desire only that His counsel promote His glory and my salvation, even though that counsel wills that I remain jobless and eat the rich man's bread, it stands to reason that I will desire His counsel, and will decide to do without that good job, if He so wills. We will that His will be done. That is what we pray for, and that only.

Someone may now ask, "Is a sick man's prayer for recovery a forbidden prayer? Are our prayers for rain and sunshine and harvest forbidden prayers? I do not understand." Get then before your eye a prayer of a believer who is physically ill. What is his prayer? Is it this? "Lord, I pray Thee, my request, my petition is that Thou restore me to health, Amen." Surely

no. You would neither dare nor desire so to pray when ill. You instinctively recoil from such a prayer. It means that when you are ill, you instinctively recoil from petitioning the Lord to restore you to health. Likewise you instinctively recoil from praying, "Lord, grant us a harvest, Amen," or, "Grant, Lord, that I may suffer no financial reverses, Amen."

What is the believer's prayer when ill? It is this, "Lord, could it be, restore me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt." So the believer prays when ill.

I ask in all candor, what believer would want to ask for anything else but the counsel, the coming of the kingdom, the salvation of the church unto His supreme glory. Can you conceive of a child of God, who stands in his faith, saying to the Lord: "Lord, I do not want Thy counsel, Thy kingdom, my salvation and the salvation of Thy people unto Thy glory, but I pray that Thou grant me health, prosperity, crops, and the like"?

You may reply: "To be sure, the believer does not pray when ill, 'Lord, restore me to health, Amen,' but: 'Lord, grant me health if it be Thy will; if not, prepare me for death and grant me grace to will my death.'"

Know well, that to pray thus is to pray not for health at all but solely for God's will. This is simply a matter of plain logic.

This right and proper kind of prayer does not involve the petitioner in a contradiction; for his prayer is not, "Lord, grant me what Thou by Thyself hast decided to give me, but Lord, grant me not sickness." Such a prayer destroys itself; for the petitioner first asks for whatever the counsel may hold for him, but concludes with asking the Lord not to grant him sickness. The point

is that sickness may be the very thing that the counsel includes for him, so that the petitioner should also be able to desire sickness not for its own sake but as an instrument through which the Almighty is capable of working his salvation. The believer therefore prays, Lord, grant me whatever Thy counsel holds for me, be it health or sickness.

So the believer prays. So Christ prayed even when the weight of our sins and the wrath of God pressed out of Him the bloody sweat in the garden: "O, Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me. Nevertheless, not as I will, but as

Thou wilt." This is no request on the part of Christ to be allowed to cast off His people rather than be compelled to drink the cup. It is not even a petition that the cup be taken away. How could He have so requested or petitioned? Consider who He is that prays here: Our merciful High Priest, He whose meat and drink it is to do the will of the Father even in this dark hour.

The prayer He now utters breathes a great love and a marvelous obedience. It is a prayer pure and perfect, wholly untainted by sin, necessarily so as it was uttered by a sinless man. What is His sole request, His actual desire in this darkest hour of His career? "Father, have Me do what must be done to save My people unto Thy supreme glory. Father, not My will, My desire, but Thy will be done." Not a trace of rebellion in this prayer. Someone may say: Christ here has a will, a desire of His own that seems to be at odds with the will of the Father; for He prays, Not My will but Thy will be done. Consider that the desire Christ is prepared to quell is not an *actual* desire that the cup be taken from Him, but a desire reposing upon the condition that it be possible for the Father to take from Him the cup. From the very nature of

things, such a desire becomes actual only if the condition upon which it reposes be fulfilled. It was respecting this desire and not respecting the actual desire that the Father have Him do what He must do to save His people, that Christ prayed, Not my will or desire but Thy will be done.

The cross was striking terror to Christ's soul. It had to because He came to bear our griefs and to carry our sorrows. Yet how in His great and mysterious agony He cleaves unto His people! For them He will drink the cup if He must; for He loves them unto death. He will do the will of the Father; for He is the obedient servant. Say that He shrank from the cross; but never say that it was His actual desire that the Father let the cross pass from Him. Even in the garden He had but one actual desire, the desire, namely, to do what he had to do to save His people unto the everlasting glory of the Father. □

*"But
the end
of all things
is at hand:
be ye
therefore
sober,
and watch
unto
prayer."
I Peter 4:7*

Ghana Re-Visited

We would like to take this means to inform our readers further of the trip that we took to Ghana in behalf of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America and under the direction of its Foreign Mission Committee. Our churches have had a long standing interest in Ghana as a potential mission field. This has happened because of contacts that we have made with children of God in this nation. Especially this interest has been promoted because of our contact with a fellow believer, Gabriel Anyigba. We have maintained contact with him for over eighteen years. This brother has an influential place in the Volta Evangelical Association and is an elder in the Evangelical Presbyterian Churches of Ghana. In these churches he is well respected. Gabriel has intentions of becoming, the Lord willing, an ordained minister in the E.P.C.G. in the near future. Gabriel has received tapes, pamphlets, and books from our churches, and in many ways has received much training through these means in the Reformed faith as we hold to it.

It was because of the close contact that we had with Gabriel and because of many other contacts that we have made over the years with others in Ghana that our churches decided three years ago to send a committee to Ghana for a period of three weeks. Rev. Dykstra and Henry Bleyenbergh made this visit

and cemented the relationship with Gabriel even further, and made other very promising contacts with believers in Ghana. They were able to see firsthand that there was a possibility of doing work in Ghana, and they recommended that we continue our contact with this field. The book *Reformed Dogmatics* by H. Hoeksema was given to Gabriel and to Rev. Moses Buamah. The latter is a brother that this committee met while in Ghana. He has a real desire to grow in the Reformed faith. Rev. Buamah was at the time about to go to Northern Ghana to begin work in a mission field for the E.P.C.G. We continued our correspondence with these men and with others who were visited by this committee. The fruit of all this is the trip only recently completed by Rev. Moore and his wife, Jan; and by elder Don VerMeer and his wife, Marilyn.

The purpose of this latest trip was to investigate the field in Ghana further, especially that we might determine the need for missionaries, whether this work would be possible for our churches to conduct, and what is the receptivity in this land for the gospel as it is proclaimed in our churches. The trip was intended, further, to continue to strengthen by the truth those people with whom we have contact, and to encourage them as they bring the gospel to the church in Ghana. We believe that the trip was very beneficial in this regard and also was a blessing for the people of God in Ghana with whom we visited and in whose midst we labored while in Ghana.

First, I would like to write a few

things about each group and/or area in which we labored.

We arrived in Accra on November 18th and returned home on December 29th. We labored with the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ghana (E.P.C.G.) in Accra and in the north Volta Region on the mission field in Nkwanta. The E.P.C.G. provided us the opportunity to preach in their churches on three Sundays while we were in Accra. We were very well received by the E.P.C.G. A brother, Kofi Awuitor, personally saw to many of our needs while in Accra. We had the opportunity to preach the Word in three of their churches in Accra. The smallest congregation was about 130 souls, the largest about 650. In the third one we preached in English to the half of the congregation that understood English. There were a little over 300 in attendance. In the other two churches our sermon was interpreted into the Ewe language, with up to fifty percent understanding the English.

In the sermons we strove to emphasize the Sovereignty of God in salvation, double predestination, limited atonement, as well as the distinctives of our Protestant Reformed faith. These sermons were well received by the ministers and by many of the people, who took the time to express their appreciation for the Word.

We found that in these congregations in Accra there were many families that came to worship together, and for the large part the audience was made up of a normal mix between male and female.

While in Accra we met twice

Rev. Moore is pastor of the Protestant Reformed Church of Hull, Iowa.

with the leaders of this denomination. Their synodical officebearers are full-time employees of the denomination. These consisted of a Synodical Moderator, Synodical Clerk, and Inter-church Relations Officer. At the first such visit we were warmly welcomed into their midst and were told that they were pleased that we could spend this time in their churches. They asked that while we worshiped in their midst according to their way, if we saw things we believed were not biblical to tell them about this. They desired to do things according to the Word.

They had approved our visiting the mission field in Nkwanta, where Rev. Buamah labors, and also asked that we report to them on our reactions and observations on this field. Especially was this interesting for them as they had not been able to visit the field since it was established. We gladly agreed to do this. When we met again we had opportunity to speak to them about several things that we found to be weaknesses in their worship. Most important was the amount of participation that women have in some of their church services (some led in prayer, in leading the singing, and in reading the Scripture for the worship) we explained in a brotherly way that we find this to stand outside of the teaching of the Scripture. Also we were able to commend them for their obvious desire to bring the truth of the Word of God to their people, and we spoke to them of the importance of holding fast that truth. We were blessed as we worshiped in their churches.

While we were in Accra we were able to meet with the Volta Evangelical Association for a short while one evening. We were cordially welcomed by the president of this organization, James Agbeblewu. They told us that they would help us in any way possible while we were in Ghana. We have had contact for many years with this organization, which is a non-denominational evangelistic association, through Gabriel

and others. We appreciated this offer of help, but because the E.P.C.G. had everything so well arranged, it was not necessary on this trip to avail ourselves of their care.

Nkwanta was one of the focal points of our trip. We visited there with a brother and his family of whom we had become fond through our correspondence. It was a visit to observe his work in mission labor in the primitive villages. While we were in Nkwanta we had no electricity, no telephones, and no running water. We did however have gas lantern, gas stove, and water in a tank outside the back door of the house in which we stayed.

Our labor in this field consisted of giving speeches in the outlying villages, and preaching twice in Nkwanta. During this time we were able to see how Rev. Buamah goes about his work of bringing the gospel to the area. He works with those who have known about Christ before, with many who are only recent converts to the Christian faith, and with those who have not yet been converted. As we would walk through the village, we would stop at the different family compounds and visit with the families, informing them of the meeting that we would be holding a little later. We often would stop and visit with the chief of the village and would sometimes pray with him. Then we would go to the meeting place, sometimes an outdoor meeting place, sometimes in a rather small building ("school" or room in a home). In the meetings in these villages we had an average of 50 souls in attendance. Some were members of the newly formed mission station, some were regular visitors, and some were there for the first time. And of the latter, for some it was the first time that they had ever heard the gospel preached in their lifetime.

These meetings consisted of some singing, usually accompanied by drums and clapping, a speech by Rev. Moore, comments by Rev. Buamah, and greetings and com-

ments by Rev. Adzadzi, who was the Chairman of the Northern Presbytery of the E.P.C.G. Rev. Adzadzi had come to oversee the work on this field in behalf of the churches, and this was the first official visit by a personal representative of the denomination. We grew to appreciate the biblical and Reformed stance of this minister of God's Word and enjoyed his company for the four days he spent with us. He was 56 years old, a few months younger than Rev. Moore.

The speeches lasted about 45 minutes to an hour, and were translated usually into one other language, sometimes into two other languages, namely Tsee and Konkomba. This was followed by a question hour that lasted from thirty minutes to over two hours at Sebi. Again we were able to emphasize the main doctrines of the Reformed faith during the course of the speeches and in our answers to the questions. We gave both the milk and the meat of the Word in these villages, for there were new converts or even pagans in the audience, and there were also present those with a much longer history in the church. Again there was expressed a deep appreciation for the Word they received and a sadness when we had to depart, for they longed to hear more of the truth that we were able to bring.

From the primitive north we next traveled twelve and a half hours via Accra to Kumasi. While in Kumasi we met with the Unto God Prayer Group. We have had contact with a Brother Adjei, who has become one of the leaders of this group since the time of the last visit. This group gathers together weekly to study the Scripture and is made up of members of several denominations. There were about sixty in attendance this evening. They come together to grow in the knowledge of the Word of God. It seems as though they lack in instruction from their churches in such study.

Members of this group could understand the English language, and

they have a good foundation of biblical knowledge. This made it possible for Rev. Moore to speak in English, for an hour and ten minutes, on the topic "The Church — One Throughout the Ages." In this speech we developed the idea of the covenant from Adam to the present, the place of Creation in this work of God, the place of election and reprobation in this, and the marks of the true church. This speech was listened to very carefully by many and with deep appreciation for the truths that were set forth. During the question hour many very important questions were asked and answered from the Scriptures; and for those who could come it was decided to meet again on Friday (two days later) to continue the discussion. One such question was, "Why did the reprobate come through the Flood? Why did not all the reprobate seed perish?" Questions of this nature gave rise to detailed answers that could further set forth the blessed truth of God's sovereign work of salvation.

In our visits with the leaders of this group and with two of Hope Protestant Reformed Church's contacts from Dunkwa on Offin, who were at the Friday meeting, we learned that there is a great need for instruction from the Scripture. In their words, there is a lack of knowledge, even in that which confesses to be church. They urged us to come back and labor in Ghana.

In Mpraeso we were the guests of the Assemblies of God Churches of Ghana, in particular of Rev. Banahene and his congregation. While there we preached twice on Sunday and had major speeches on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday evenings. During the day we would visit various of the villages around Mpraeso, and different ministers and pastors who labored in these villages. In the sermons and speeches we were able to speak at length and in detail, bringing forth the great truths of our Reformed faith. We were interpreted here into one language, the Tsee.

The speeches and sermons were characterized by the ministers and people as being "powerful." We believe that what was meant is that they clearly were biblical and set forth the Word of God. Even here our preaching the doctrine of double predestination was received with appreciation on the part of many. That they understood these doctrines as we spoke of them is evident from questions that were asked such as, "If God wills the hardening of the wicked, then does God will the sin, does He become the Author of it?" And when we answered the question from Scripture, there was obvious agreement with our position by many in the congregation. They freely express themselves in these meetings with vocal Amens and expressions of their agreement. Another such question was raised on the basis of a point made from Romans 7: "If there is a battle within the child of God, between the old and new man, which way will God judge in the day of judgment? Is the end of the battle in question?" Again such questions gave us opportunity to address the Word of God in more detail to the people.

We were pleasantly surprised at the receptivity to the truth of sovereign grace in the congregation and by the ministers of this denomination of churches. They are charismatic; but when speaking of healing or of speaking in tongues they limited these things to the way it took place at the time of the apostles, claiming that it also is to be practiced today. They maintain that the tongues in which they speak are known tongues. We pointed out our position on the same and discussed the scriptural position that we take on such matters. Rev. Banahene and Rev. Boateng (who interpreted the speeches of Rev. Moore) desired further instruction in these Reformed truths.

At their request, the last speech was on the covenant family and the place of the husband, wife, and children within it. This gave us an excellent opportunity to develop the

truth of the blessed covenant that God realizes with His church by sovereign grace alone. In our discussions with Rev. Banahene and Rev. Boateng, we had learned before our speech that their position on marriage after divorce is "scriptural" according to them. And when asked what does that mean, they replied, "There is no marriage after divorce, and if one so walks he would be excommunicated." We asked Gabriel and Kofi Awutor this same question when we returned to Accra, and they answered that the E.P.C.G. held that marriage after divorce is not to be permitted. It was heartening to know that there are other churches that hold to this truth of the Scripture as we do. The desire of the ministers and members of this congregation was that our churches might return to give further instruction in these truths.

Others we met while in Ghana were many, and we do not have the space to speak of each of the encounters we had with the people of Ghana. We spoke of the Word wherever we were. We spoke of the blessed salvation that there is in Christ, and of the comfort of a sovereign God. We asked many people of their faith and of their conception of the church, and were able to gain insight into the needs of the people in Ghana for the Word.

The people of Ghana are very friendly, and we found that they are not out to rob you, or to take advantage of you, but rather were willing to help in any way possible.

While we were in Accra, Marilyn and Jan were able to visit several hospitals, and visit with various women and business people, to obtain information that would be important to our churches if we were to send a missionary there in the future. We were able also to learn much about what will be necessary with respect to the government in order for our churches to do any mission work there. We were given much insight into how to go about mission work in the country, by the way that Rev. Buamah has con-

ducted his work, by Rev. Banahene's explanation of how they have established churches in the villages about Mpraeso, and especially by talking with Mennonite missionaries about their work in Ghana.

We may summarize some of the things that became very apparent while we visited in Ghana. There is a need for the gospel to be preached in Ghana. Many have not had the gospel at all, and many have not had a true gospel expounded unto them. There is a hungering for the Word on the part of those who have tasted of the truth. There is a call by many of many walks of life to come and preach the truth. It is possible from

the point of view of the government to become established in Ghana and to be recognized as a mission church. And it is possible for a small denomination to have an effective work there, as is evident from the work the Mennonites are doing. Although they are not as small as we are, they are a small denomination. They maintain the scriptural place of women in the church and home; they do not adapt the native music to their work; and yet they are able to have a successful mission program in Ghana. Finally, on the part of the leaders of the various denominations and groups there is a desire to grow in the knowledge of the Word, in

order that they may be a blessing to their congregations and people.

There are enough differences between these denominations and ours that we would not want to establish a cooperative mission work. Besides, in this writer's opinion, that is very unwise wherever we labor. But there are ways that a missionary could be a strength also to these men while laboring in Ghana, in the way of teaching, guest lecturing, etc.

We were blessed in the work that we could accomplish and by the care of God's people there. We do believe that if our churches do any foreign mission work, there is a field in Ghana in which our churches may labor. □

Ministering to the Saints

Mr. Ed Gritters

The Office of Elder — His Qualifications

In our first article concerning the office of elder (Nov. 15, 1994), we briefly reviewed the biblical meaning of the office of elder (bishop), and also traced the history of the office from the times of the "elders of Israel" to the Reformed concept of the office as we know it today.

Before entering upon a more practical, personal discussion of the office, we must look at the qualifications Christ has placed upon those whom He places in this office. Our discussion of these qualifications, however, need not exclude some very practical applications related to

these qualifications, thanks in part to some of you who responded to our editor's suggestion in the November 15th issue to contact the writers of this rubric with comments or questions. I not only find this to be very encouraging, but it also gives an opportunity to address thoughts and concerns of fellow church members instead of being limited to the opinions and experiences of the writer.

To *qualify* for something — materially speaking — means you must prove to someone that you have the education (knowledge), experience, personality, temperament, physical traits, etc. that make you competent or worthy of performing a *specific* task. It follows, therefore, that an elder's qualifications are inseparably tied to the duties imposed upon him

by the Word of God, which duties we cited previously.

We could quote from the *Church Order*, the *Ordination Form*, and countless other sources, but inasmuch as all of these are — and must be — based solely on the Scriptures, we limit ourselves to the Word of God for now. In the interest of brevity, let us look at what is probably the most familiar guideline for the office of bishop (elder). The Holy Spirit by the apostle Paul tells us in I Timothy 3:1-7: "This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work. A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behavior, given to hospitality, apt to teach; Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy

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lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous; One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?) Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil."

To this, Paul adds such words as "not self-willed, not soon angry, a lover of good men, just, holy, temperate, holding fast the faithful word," etc. (Titus 1:6-9). What an extensive list we generate from just two passages! Granted, some of these traits may be synonymous; even so, we can number as many as twenty qualifications, all "desirable," many "mandatory" (e.g., "*must be blameless*"). Now it is in no way my intent to expound the meaning of each of these terms as if to create yet another "handbook for elders," so to speak. This has been done countless times in the past by theologians and writers immeasurably more competent than I. Nor is that the expressed intent of our *Standard Bearer* staff in these articles directed toward "Ministering to the Saints."

We note that while most of the qualifications are "mandatory," additional ones may be "desirable" (public speaking); some are expressed negatively (*not covetous*), and others positively (given to hospitality). In summary, they can essentially be grouped into three categories.

The first (though not necessarily in importance) would encompass a majority of the several qualities cited by the apostle Paul. These elements, taken together, I will refer to as the elder's character and deportment as seen by others, especially by those of the household of faith. These would include "blameless, monogamous, not self-willed, patient, not given to wine, not soon angry, no striker, no brawler, not guilty of filthy lucre, hospitable, so-

ber, holy, temperate, and (somewhat all-inclusive) good behavior."

The second category would include those very special gifts an elder must possess in ruling (overseeing) the Body of Christ, the church. Among these gifts would be "able to rule well one's own house (family), patient (not soon angry), just (who would not dread being brought before God's law by an *un-just* consistory?), not a novice (newcomer), holding fast the faithful word (to be able to exhort and convince)."

The third category would be the ability to instruct others. Here the obvious scriptural reference is "apt to teach."

Now we should note two things. Many of the qualifications grouped above really are appropriate to each of the three categories. For example, if one is not hospitable in his deportment, how can the fellow-saints respect him, or (especially in the case of young people) even *dare* go to such a one for counseling or advice? So also, an elder's *rule* must be hospitable, not tyrannical! Again, the elder as a *teacher* must be hospitable toward those in his care, whether in private counseling or in the catechism classroom, showing care and sincere love, even as for his own children!

Did you notice that the gifts applicable to the duties of *ruling* and *teaching* are described as "special gifts"? Why are they so? Because the traits outlined by the apostle Paul, and which we have lumped together in the first group above, are "general," that is, virtues that *every* child of God, *every* member of the Body of Christ, must strive for every day of his life here below. And how much more so for the office-bearer who represents Christ! Not short-tempered, not given to wine, not a brawler, not obsessed with earthly gain (filthy lucre); in short — *blameless*!

What an awesome word when we stop to think about it. Blameless! What child of God would not be the first to confess that he is *not* blame-

less? But wait! God's Word does not even give that as an option. The elder *must be* blameless. This is the same word Jesus uses when He says to Nicodemus, "*Ye must be born again*" (John 3:7). Certainly, then, the word "blameless" cannot be taken to mean "sinless." For who of us is without sin? May we draw a parallel here from the *Form for the Administration of the Lord's Supper*? I quote but a part: "But this is not designed to deject the contrite hearts of the faithful, as if none might come to the supper of the Lord, but those who are without sin." So also, we being elders do not "testify that we are perfect and righteous in ourselves" (God forbid!). But rather, "we have daily to strive with the weakness of our faith, and the evil lusts of our flesh."

So, what is it to be "blameless"? Since only the Lord can judge the *innermost* heart, we conclude that the reference here is to our deportment in society, both within the church and without. Our personal walk, our behavior, our example, do not go unnoticed. This applies to everyone, but especially to consistory members. Are you seen as a "lover of good men (people)"? Are good people too strict for you? Do they "cramp your style"? Do you have to watch your language too closely? The fact of the matter is that we must watch *every* aspect of our walk. We must so control our conduct and outward appearance so as not to give rise to disrespect or even *offense* by fellow-believers.

We must ask ourselves, then, who can possibly "fill the shoes" of that man the apostle Paul describes for us? Not *one*! But notice. God does not place the rule of His church in the hands of one. Where do we find in the Scriptures an instruction to go to the "elder"? or to appoint an "elder" in every city? The reference is always to elders (plural). Did not our Reformed fathers provide for this in the Ordination Form for Elders and Deacons where we read (in part), "that such men should be joined to the ministers of the Word

in the government of all the Church, to the end that all tyranny and lord- ing may be kept out of the Church of God, which may sooner creep in, when the government is placed in the hands of *one*, or of a very few?"

Another good reason for elders serving as a *body* is that not all have the same gifts. I Corinthians 12 gives a beautiful account of the "diversities of gifts" whereby the strengths and weaknesses of the individuals may complement one another to the edification of the entire body. The Scriptures further recognize that the elder has a "helpmeet." Wives, have you considered the fact that your deportment is to some extent a measure of your husband's worthiness to serve? You, too, are called upon to be "grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things" (I Tim. 3:11), to the end that you may "teach the young women..." (Titus 2:4).

(I suppose at this point I *do* wish I were writing a "handbook." I could then draw more heavily on the writings of others. For as I look ahead to discussing the more practical aspects of our office, I find the finger pointed more and more at me. And I am not "real comfortable" with that! Nor should I be.)

I made reference earlier to some concerns expressed to me in connec-

tion with our work as elders. The first subject has bearing on our *attitude* toward our work; the other, an aspect of our being an *example*.

Officebearers, do your fellow members see you as being *happy* in your work in the church? Or are we sometimes prone to display a lack of enthusiasm (or worse) for our office? (Consistory meeting again tonight! — hope it's a short agenda — hope we don't have to sit here til midnight! Oh, no! Family visitation starting again? — seems like we just got done with it!) Does any of this sound familiar? It does to me. Guess where I heard it? (Shame on me!) Are we not Christ's representatives? Did *He* ever give of Himself grudgingly? Timothy tells us that if a man desire the office of bishop he desires a "good (excellent) work." If then Christ bestows a *good thing* upon us, may we (dare we?) be anything but happy? Further, how can our work be effective if we convey a feeling to our fellow saints that we would rather not be "bothered by it all"?

Another concern expressed was a perceived growth of "materialism" among us. Anything specific? Yes — houses and cars. Now, we know that material possessions are not in-

herently wrong. Nevertheless, I Timothy 3:1-3 exhorts us that a bishop must be "not given to filthy lucre." Suffice it that we ask *ourselves* if our castles, cars, and clothing have taken on too much importance in our lives. Do you have that "warm feeling" when you leave for church on Sunday morning? Is that feeling in anticipation of hearing the Word? Or could it be the satisfaction you derive from watching heads turn as you drive into the parking lot in your luxury automobile? Are we (poor) examples in our quest for earthly gain? Does it show? If so, need we be surprised if there be parents among us, who, while struggling to pay their tuition, would not dare send their children to school in anything less than Reeboks and Jordache?

What more can we say than, "Take heed." As we close this article, and with a view to discussing the *rule* of the elder in the church next time, D.V., let us note well the priority the Scriptures set for "taking heed." Acts 20:28, "Take heed therefore unto *yourselves* (emphasis mine, E.G.), and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood." □

To My Bible

O, Book of books — the message sweet —
The dearest treasure that I own!
It is through thee my erring feet
May know their path, and thou alone
Canst give the joy that does surpass
All that the world can e'er afford.
It is through thee, when cares amass,
I comfort find in Christ, my Lord.

Howe'er, I know that thy demands
With carnal nature do not mesh;
Therefore the work of human hands
Thou'rt called by men who serve the flesh;
A book of fables, stale and old —
A history of ancient days —
A man-made book thou art, we're told,
To frighten men to better ways.

But all is vain, O shining light!
O book of wealth, of sterling worth!
All wicked men of brutal might
Have failed to banish thee from earth,
For God, thy author, cares for thee,
Though learned men thy truth condemn.
All worldly men must fear and flee,
For thy pure Word accuses them.

Shine on, O comfort of my soul!
I feel thy truth within my heart!
My friends may fall in death's great toll,
But thou shalt stay; I shall not part
From thee, the gift of God to man —
The searchlight to salvation's door.
Thou leadest me to Him who can
Give joy for time and evermore!

Standard Bearer
May 15, 1933

Directory of Churches, Protestant Reformed

Seminary

4949 Ivanrest Avenue
Grandville, MI 49418
(616) 531-1490

NEW JERSEY:

Covenant P.R. Church
283 Squawbrook Rd.
Wyckoff, NJ 07481
Services: 10:00 & 6:00
Pastor: Rev. R. Flikkema
Pastor's Phone: (201) 891-0902

MICHIGAN:

Byron Center P.R. Church
1945 84th St.
Byron Center, MI 49315
Services: 9:30 & 5:00
Pastor:
Pastor's Phone: (616) 878-3255

Faith P.R. Church
7194 20th Ave.
Jenison, MI 49428
Services: 9:30 & 6:00
Pastor: Rev. K. Koole
Pastor's Phone: (616) 457-5848

First P.R. Church (Grand Rapids)
2800 Michigan St. N.E.
Grand Rapids, MI 49506
Services: 9:30 & 6:00
Pastor: Rev. M. Joostens
Pastor's Phone: (616) 247-0638

First P.R. Church (Holland)
290 E. 18th St.
Holland, MI 49423
Services: 9:30 & 6:30
Pastor: Rev. W. Bruinsma
Pastor's Phone: (616) 396-8303

Georgetown P.R. Church
temp. meeting: Heritage Chr. School
4900 40th Ave. Hudsonville MI
Services: 9:30 & 6:00
Pastor: Rev. R. VanOverloop
Pastor's Phone: (616) 662-0257

Grandville P.R. Church
4320 40th St.
Grandville, MI 49418
Services: 9:30 & 6:00
Pastor: Rev. A. Spriensma
Pastor's Phone: (616) 538-2575

Hope P.R. Church (Walker)
1580 Ferndale S.W.
Walker, MI 49504
Services: 9:30 & 7:00
Pastor: Rev. J. Slopsema
Pastor's Phone: (616) 453-3253

MICHIGAN (cont.):

Hudsonville P.R. Church
5101 Beechtree Ave.
Hudsonville, MI 49426
Services: 9:30 & 7:00
Pastor: Rev. B. Gritters
Pastor's Phone: (616) 669-0755

Kalamazoo P.R. Church
4515 Green Acre Dr.
Kalamazoo, MI 49006
Services: 9:30 & 6:00
Pastor: Rev. B. Woudenberg
Pastor's Phone: (616) 345-4556

Southeast P.R. Church
1535 Cambridge S.E.
Grand Rapids, MI 49506
Services: 9:30 & 5:00
Pastor: Rev. D. Kuiper
Pastor's Phone: (616) 452-7047

Southwest P.R. Church
4875 Ivanrest Ave.
Grandville, MI 49418
Services: 9:30 & 6:00
Pastor: Rev. R. Cammenga
Pastor's Phone: (616) 532-4846

ILLINOIS:

Bethel P.R. Church
Children's World Learning Center
1050 Bonaventura Dr.
Elk Grove Village, IL 60007
Services: 10:00 & 6:00
Pastor: Rev. C. Haak
Pastor's Phone: (708) 529-4676

Peace P.R. Church
Illiana Christian High School
2261 Indiana Ave.
Lansing, Illinois
Services: 9:30 & 6:00
Pastor: Rev. S. Houck
Pastor's Phone: (708) 474-6064

South Holland P.R. Church
16511 South Park Ave.
South Holland, IL 60473
Services: 9:30 & 6:00
Pastor: Rev. C. Terpstra
Pastor's Phone: (708) 333-1314

WISCONSIN:

Randolph P.R. Church
229 Hammond St.
Randolph, WI 53956
Services: 9:30 & 2:00
Pastor: Rev. S. Key
Pastor's Phone: (414) 326-5642

IOWA:

Doon P.R. Church
408 6th Ave.
Doon, IA 51235
Services: 9:30 & 2:00
Pastor: Rev. R. Dykstra
Pastor's Phone: (712) 726-3382

IOWA (cont.):

Hull P.R. Church
1204 Third St.
Hull, IA 51239
Services: 9:30 & 7:00 (Apr-Sept)
9:30 & 1:30 (Oct-Mar)
Pastor: Rev. R. Moore
Pastor's Phone: (712) 439-1326

Pella P.R. Church
410 Franklin St.
Pella, IA 50219
Services: 9:30 & 7:00
Pastor: Rev. W. Bekkering
Pastor's Phone: (515) 628-4747

MINNESOTA:

Edgerton P.R. Church
Corner 3rd and Maple St.
Edgerton, MN 56128
Services: 9:30 & 7:30 (Mar-Nov)
9:30 & 2:00 (Dec-Feb)
Pastor:
Pastor's Phone: (507) 442-4441

TEXAS:

Trinity P.R. Church
214 Barker-Clodine Rd.
Houston, TX 77094
Services: 9:30 & 3:00
Pastor: Rev. J. Mahtani
Pastor's Phone: (713) 492-0844

COLORADO:

Loveland P.R. Church
709 E. 57th St.
Loveland, CO 80537
Services: 9:30 & 6:00 (Oct-May)
9:30 & 7:00 (June-Sept)
Pastor: Rev. G. VanBaren
Pastor's Phone: (303) 667-1347

CALIFORNIA:

Hope P.R. Church
1307 E. Brockton Ave.
Redlands, CA 92374
Services: 10:00 & 6:00
Pastor: Rev. A. denHartog
Pastor's Phone: (714) 792-0307

WASHINGTON:

Lynden P.R. Church
315 North Park Dr.
Lynden, WA 98364
Services: 10:00 & 2:00 (Nov-Mar)
10:00 & 7:30 (Apr-Oct)
Pastor:
Pastor's Phone: (206) 354-4337

CANADA:

First P.R. Church (Edmonton)
15911 107A Ave.
Edmonton, Alberta, Canada
Services: 11:00 & 3:00
Pastor: Rev. M. DeVries
Pastor's Phone: (403) 489-6470

Immanuel P.R. Church (Lacombe)
C & E Trail and 50th Ave.
(St. Cyprian's Anglican Church)
Lacombe, Alberta, Canada
Services: 11:30 & 4:00
Pastor: Rev. M. Dick
Pastor's Phone: (403) 782-5444

Congregational Activities

Since last August, the congregation of the Georgetown PRC, meeting presently at Heritage Christian School in Hudsonville, MI, has been busy with providing a parsonage for their pastor, Rev. Ron VanOverloop, and his family. The progress of that home has been watched very closely these past four months, and recent bulletins from Georgetown have regularly included parsonage updates. Activity appeared to reach a climax in late January with regular calls for congregational help in work bees on Saturdays and cleaning projects going on throughout the week. Finally, on January 23, the VanOverloops and all their worldly goods were able to be moved into their new home. We assume that by now the settling-in process is coming along well. For your information, their new address is 4510 Bridgeville Ct., Hudsonville, MI 49426. Phone (616) 662-0257.

The consistory of Georgetown PRC decided that collections taken in catechism this year would be used for the purchase of two carts for the storage of their Psalters and Bibles while they are meeting at Heritage Christian School.

The Young Adults of the Georgetown and Hudsonville, MI PRCs have been meeting together this past season. At one of these meetings in mid-January the discussion centered in the pamphlet "Sex and Dating in the Christian Life," with discussion being led by Revs. Ron VanOverloop and Barry Gritters, pastors of Georgetown and Hudsonville respectively.

Evangelism Activities

Rev. Jai Mahtani, pastor of our Trinity PRC in Houston, TX, was in-

vited to speak at the Grace Communion Church in Jasper, TX. Original plans called for Pastor Mahtani and Elder Joel Sugg to visit over a two-day period in late January, with Pastor Mahtani speaking on one evening and, on the next, discussing with the leaders of the church the subject of "Grace." However, Elder Sugg was unable to travel to Jasper with Pastor Mahtani, but George Kamps, a member of the Hudsonville, MI PRC, and in Houston for the winter, was able to go in his stead.

The Evangelism Society of the Georgetown PRC held their inaugural meeting on February 5, after their evening service. All interested in joining to work together in the important work of evangelism on behalf of their congregation were urged to attend.

Young People's Activities

The Young People's Society of the Grandville, MI PRC, this year's host of the Young People's Convention, sponsored a convention fundraiser on January 31. On that Tuesday, between the hours of 4:30 and 8:00 p.m., they received 20% of all sales made at a nearby McDonald's restaurant. Besides lots of Big Macs, supporters of Grandville's young people could also get their children free balloons and/or face painting.

The South Holland, IL PRCs young people invited their congregation, as well as the congregations of both Bethel and Peace, to join them after their evening services on January 29 for an hour of Christian fellowship in song. A collection was also taken, not for this year's convention, but rather for the 1996 Young People's Convention which will be sponsored by our South Holland young people, D.V.

Mission Activities

Rev. and Mrs. Arie denHartog, of the Hope PRC in Redlands, CA,

were able to spend two weeks in January preaching and speaking with our sister churches in Singapore. You may remember that the denHartogs previously labored on behalf of our churches in Singapore for eight years.

The address, including phone number, of our home missionary, Rev. T. Miersma, is 6551 Walker Rd., Alamosa, CO 81101. His phone number is (719) 589-8687.

Rev. B. Gritters and his wife, along with Rev. A. Spriensma and his wife, representing the calling church and the Mission Committee respectively, returned home in late January after a two-week visit to our churches' mission field in Northern Ireland. They report that our missionary, Rev. Ron Hanco, and his family and the Covenant Reformed Fellowship are prospering under God's blessing. Both the visitors and the visited were encouraged in the Lord during the stay. While the visitors were there, Rev. Hanco was scheduled to take part in a public debate on common grace and the Reformed Faith. Along with other labors, the two visiting pastors hoped to conduct family visitation.

Minister Activities

Rev. W. Bruinsma, pastor of the First PRC in Holland, MI, declined the two calls he was considering to serve as pastor. These two calls had come from the Edgerton, MN and the Lynden, WA PRCs.

The Council of the Byron Center, MI PRC formed a duo from which their congregation will call a pastor. On that duo were Rev. R. Dykstra of the Doon, IA PRC and Rev. A. denHartog of the Hope PRC in Redlands, CA.

Food for Thought

"Faith is to believe what we do not see and the reward of this faith is to see what we believe."

— Augustine □

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS

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 resumé to Hope Christian School, 1309 E. Brockton Ave., Redlands, CA 92374. Or contact Ron VanVoorthysen at (909) 794-6457, Steven Feenstra at (909) 794-5933, or Ed Gritters at (909) 792-4923.

NOTICE!!

All standing and special committees of Synod, as well as individuals who wish to address Synod 1995, are hereby notified that all material for the 1995 Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches should be in the hands of the Stated Clerk no later than April 1. Please send material to the Stated Clerk:

Rev. M. Joostens
2016 Tekonsha S.E.
Grand Rapids, MI 49506.

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, O-342 Begole St. S.W., Grand Rapids, MI 49504. (Phone (616) 453-8466.) This contact should be made before the next scheduled meeting of April 11, 1995, D.V.

Student Aid Committee
Larry Meulenberg,
Secretary

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Men's Society of the Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church of Hudsonville, MI extends its sincere Christian sympathy to one of our faithful members, Mr. John C. Lubbers, in the recent passing of his sister,

**MRS. BERT (HENRIETTA)
MARING,**

who was taken to glory on January 30, 1995. May he and the family be comforted in God's Word, "But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you. To him be the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen" (I Peter 5:10, 11).

Mr. Bernard Bruining, President
Mr. Erv Kortering, Secretary

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Mary-Martha Society of Hope Protestant Reformed Church in Redlands expresses sincere Christian sympathy to fellow members Betty VanMeeteren, Mary Gaastra, Nancy Hendriks, Beth Potjer, and Beth VanMeeteren and families, in the loss of their father and grandfather,

MR. HENRY BARWEGAN.

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

Rev. A. denHartog, President
Jeanne Karsemeyer, Secretary

NOTICE!!!

Each issue of the *Standard Bearer* is available on cassette tape for those who are blind, or who prefer hearing the *SB* to reading it. This is an excellent ministry of the Evangelism Society of the Southeast Protestant Reformed Church. The reader is Ken Rietema of Southeast Church. Anyone desiring this service regularly should write:

Southeast PRC
1535 Cambridge Ave. S.E.
Grand Rapids, MI 49506

LECTURE

Thursday
March 23, 1995
at 7:30 P.M.

in

**Jamestown
Christian Reformed
Church**
(1653 Riley St.
— e. of Jamestown)

by

Rev. Barry Gritters
on
"Imitators of Christ"

All young people and young adults also are urged to attend.

This lecture is sponsored by the Hudsonville and Byron Center Evangelism Committees.

Refreshments will be served.