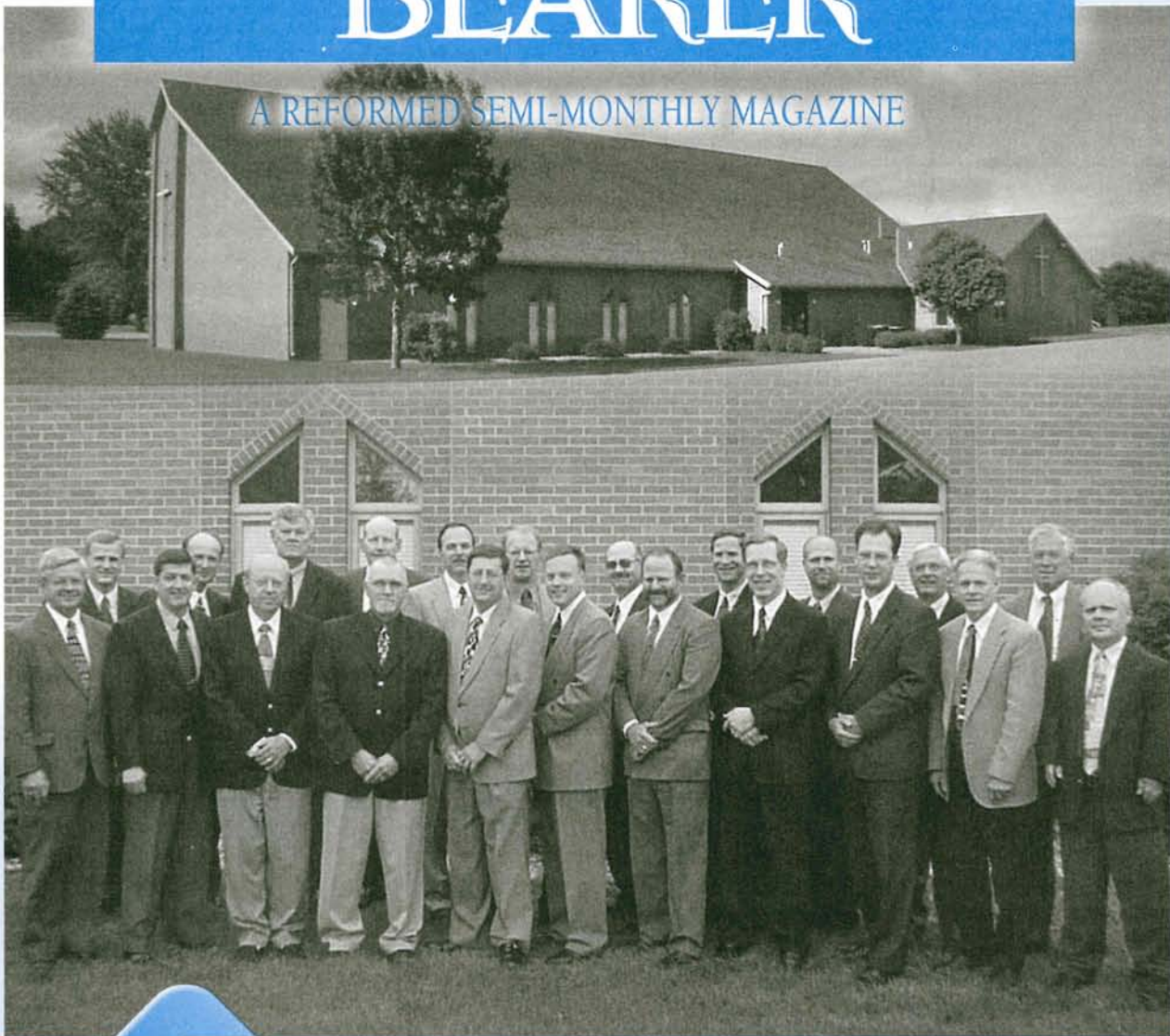


THE *July 2004* STANDARD BEARER

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE



PRC
SYNOD *Highlights*
2004

Volume 80 ♦ Number 18

| | |
|---|-----|
| Meditation <i>Rev. Ronald VanOverloop</i> Not by Human Might, But by God's Spirit | 410 |
| Editorial <i>Prof. David J. Engelsma</i> Synod 2004, Hull Iowa | 413 |
| Pictures of Synod <i>Mr. Don Doezema, arr. by Mr. Jeff Steenholdt</i> | 414 |
| Letters | 416 |
| Taking Heed to the Doctrine <i>Rev. James Laning</i> One Holy Church, One Covenant of Grace | 419 |
| Ministering to the Saints <i>Rev. Doug Kuiper</i> The Fundamental Work of the Deacons (4) | 421 |
| All Around Us <i>Rev. Gise J. VanBaren</i> | 424 |
| Marking the Bulwarks of Zion <i>Prof. Herman Hanko</i> John Wesley (1) | 426 |
| Report of Classis East <i>Mr. Jon J. Huiskens</i> | 429 |
| News From Our Churches <i>Mr. Benjamin Wigger</i> | 430 |

The Standard Bearer (ISSN 0362-4692) is a semi-monthly, except monthly during June, July, and August, published by the Reformed Free Publishing Association, Inc., 4949 Ivanrest Ave., Grandville, MI 49418.

Postmaster: Send address changes to the Standard Bearer, P.O. Box 603, Grandville, MI 49468-0603.

REPRINT POLICY

Permission is hereby granted for the reprinting of articles in our magazine by other publications, provided: a) that such reprinted articles are reproduced in full; b) that proper acknowledgment is made; c) that a copy of the periodical in which such reprint appears is sent to our editorial office.

EDITORIAL POLICY

Every editor is solely responsible for the contents of his own articles. Contributions of general interest from our readers and questions for The Reader Asks department are welcome. Contributions will be limited to approximately 300 words and must be signed.

EDITORIAL OFFICE

Prof. David J. Engelsma
4949 Ivanrest
Grandville, MI 49418
(e-mail: engelsma@prca.org)

CHURCH NEWS EDITOR

Mr. Ben Wigger
6597 40th Ave.
Hudsonville, MI 49426
(e-mail: benwig@juno.com)

NEW ZEALAND OFFICE

The Standard Bearer
c/o B. VanHerik
66 Fraser St.
Wainuiomata, New Zealand

UNITED KINGDOM OFFICE

c/o Mr. Sean Courtney
78 Millfield, Grove Rd.
Ballymena, Co. Antrim
BT43 6PD Northern Ireland
(e-mail: SeanCourtney@

BUSINESS OFFICE

The Standard Bearer
Don Doezema
P.O. Box 603
Grandville, MI
49468-0603

PH: (616) 531-1490
(616) 538-1778

FAX: (616) 531-3033

(e-mail: doezema@prca.org)

SUBSCRIPTION PRICE

\$17.00 per year in the U.S., US\$20.00 elsewhere.

ADVERTISING POLICY

The Standard Bearer does not accept commercial advertising of any kind. Announcements of church and school events, anniversaries, obituaries, and sympathy resolutions will be placed for a \$10.00 fee. These should be sent to the Business Office and should be accompanied by the \$10.00 fee. Deadline for announcements is at least one month prior to publication date.

16mm microfilm, 35mm microfilm and 105mm microfiche, and article copies are available through University Microfilms International.

Website for RFPA: www.rfpa.org

Website for PRC: www.prca.org

cprbookstore.yahoo.co.uk

Meditation

Rev. Ronald VanOverloop

Not by Human Might, But by God's Spirit

"Then he answered and spake unto me, saying, This is the word of the LORD unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts."

Zechariah 4: 6

Zechariah was sent by God to encourage Zerubbabel the prince, Joshua the high

Rev. VanOverloop is pastor of Byron Center Protestant Reformed Church in Byron Center, Michigan.

priest, and the people of God who had returned to Canaan out of the Babylonian captivity. After over fifteen years of inactivity they needed to be encouraged to return to the task of rebuilding the temple and the city. They were all quite discouraged.

The remnant of Israel had left Babylon and returned to Canaan with great expectations. But these were dashed on the hard rocks of Samaritan interference. They had

all set out with great joy and enthusiasm. They had made the 900-mile journey back to Canaan and remained enthusiastic when they found the piles of rubble in Jerusalem and began to clear away the destruction. They laid out the foundation and set up the altar of burnt offerings.

And then the interference began. It continued until the emperor himself commanded them to cease all restoration of the temple and of

Jerusalem's walls. For over sixteen years they did nothing to rebuild the temple — that on which their whole system of worship was based. They became convinced that they could do nothing about it. They were a relatively few people in a large land; they were surrounded by nations larger and stronger than they; and they were compelled to obey the emperor. They felt small and insignificant. They felt that their efforts were small and feeble. It was a day of small things (v. 10).

It was in order that Zechariah might arouse the people to action that he was given a vision of a golden candlestick. With this vision go the words of our text to Zerubbabel. These words are good words for every officebearer to remember. Especially are they to be remembered when our combined strength seems to fail and our efforts seem to be so frail. God declares then and today a truth that every officebearer is to take to heart. When anything good is accomplished in the church of God, it is not by human power, nor by human strength. Rather it is all by and because of God's Spirit! The praise goes to Him, precisely because it is all of Him, and through Him, and by Him.



The words of God in our text are at the end of a vision God gave to Zechariah. The vision is about a seven branched candlestick — it had three arms on each side of the center shaft. In his vision the candlestick is of pure gold, i.e., it has great value. Along with the candlestick, Zechariah saw a bowl above it, with seven pipes or tubes running from the bowl to the top of each of the seven arms of the candlestick. The idea is obvious: the bowl was filled with oil, and through the pipes a constant supply of oil was brought to the candlestick. And Zechariah saw two olive trees, one on each side of the bowl, with a golden pipe

from each tree bringing oil to the bowl (v. 12). This provided the candlestick, not only with a continuous flow of oil, but also an abundant supply.

There were, in the vision, things that Zechariah understood, and there were things that he did not understand. A seven-armed candlestick was familiar to Zechariah and to Zerubbabel, as well as to any child in Israel. It was a candlestick of this kind that was one of the three pieces of furniture in the Holy Place. It, along with the table of showbread and the altar of incense, represented the people of God living in close communion with the infinitely perfect God. God's people may have been separated from Him by the veil, but they were under the same roof, in both the tabernacle and in the temple. The candlestick, specifically, portrayed God's people (Rev. 1:20) as the light of the world because of their relationship with God. God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all. He is the sole source of light. God is light because He is the God of infinite perfections. When God establishes an intimate friendship with His people, then they are brought out of darkness into His marvelous light (I Pet. 2:9; Eph. 5:8). Then they are lights in the midst of the spiritual darkness of this world. This Zechariah understood.

The candlestick needed the oil in order to function, to give light. God's people have no light in themselves, just as a candlestick without oil is only a piece of furniture. Zechariah also understood the meaning of the oil. Oil, in Scripture, represents the Holy Spirit. When one entered into an office he was anointed with oil. This signified that the Holy Spirit was selecting him for this office and that the Holy Spirit would qualify him to function in that office. The people of God are the light of the world only because the Spirit of Christ is in them. It is by His Spirit that God realizes the in-

timate relationship with His people in Christ. And it is this Spirit in them that enables them to shine as light.

The part of the vision that Zechariah did not understand was the two olive trees that were on each side of the bowl. First, Zechariah asks, "What are these?" (vv. 4, 11, 12). The angel, in turn, emphasizes Zechariah's lack of understanding by asking him, "Knowest thou not what these be?" (vv. 5, 13). And Zechariah must admit that he does not know: "No, my lord" (vv. 5, 13). The angel asks this of Zechariah in order to show Zechariah (and us) the importance of knowing the meaning of the two olive trees for understanding the entire vision. When this portion of the vision is repeated in verses 11 - 14, then let us be aware of the fact that the answer recorded in our text is parallel to the answer in verse 14, "Then said he, These are the two anointed ones, that stand by the Lord of the whole earth." Scripture is interpreting Scripture.

The vision was shown to Zechariah, but it was "the word of the LORD unto Zerubbabel." Zerubbabel was one of the "anointed ones" (v. 14). He was a prince, of the tribe of Judah, the governor — the nearest that they could come to having a king. Zerubbabel was appointed by Cyrus to lead the children of Israel back to the land of Canaan.

With Zerubbabel was Joshua the high priest (3:1). Joshua joined Zerubbabel in leading Israel back to Canaan. He was given charge of those items of the temple taken by Nebuchadnezzar and returned by Cyrus. They are the two anointed ones, the ones God selected and qualified by His Spirit to represent God to His people and to represent His people to God.

This word of Jehovah to Zerubbabel (and to Joshua) is to arouse and encourage them in the performance of the offices to which they had been called and qualified.

With this word of Jehovah they are being shown that they are simply to busy themselves in their offices. It is their office that qualifies and equips them for the work of leading the people to start anew the great task of re-building. They need only busy themselves in their offices, and God's Spirit will use them to accomplish His purpose. The effect of their work can be left up to God and His Spirit to accomplish. The work will not be accomplished by human might or earthly power. Rather it is accomplished by the Spirit of Jehovah of hosts. This is God's word to His anointed prince. The promise of God is that before Zerubbabel the mountains shall become a plain (v. 7), and the hands that laid the foundation of the temple some sixteen years earlier would soon finish it (v. 9). Therefore, though things seem to be very small and doomed to fail, the people of God are not to despise the day of small things (v. 10).



This was the word of Jehovah to His anointed prince, who was inclined to fear and doubt that the temple and Jerusalem would ever be built. This is the word of Him who, as the perfectly self-sufficient One, never changes in His relationship of friendship with His people. This word to Zerubbabel is not simply words. Rather, it is the powerful word of Him who speaks and it is. God's word has irresistible force and infinite efficacy. He can speak and the enemies of His people will topple before Him and them. The emperors of the earth are as nothing before His word. And this word is also the means by which God works the power of grace in Zerubbabel, so that he and Joshua are inspired to arouse the people to the work of rebuilding the temple.

This is the word of Jehovah, who established and maintains a special relationship with His people. He is jealous for Jerusalem and Zion (1:14) and is very dis-

pleased with the heathen (1:15). So close is this relationship that "he that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye" (2:8b). His promise is to come and dwell in the midst of Zion (2:10).

And He is Jehovah "of hosts," because He is sovereign of all the universe. All the hosts of creation do His will and serve His purpose, namely, the glory of His name and the salvation of His church. He is "the Lord of the whole earth" (v. 14), possessing and exercising control over every portion of His creation. The point is that when this Lord, Jehovah of hosts, is for us, then the small nation of Israel in Canaan need fear nothing. All the other nations of the earth are as nothing before Him and His people. They can be assured that nothing can be against them.

The word of Jehovah makes it absolutely clear that neither the arousing of the people to the work of rebuilding nor the work itself will be accomplished by the might and power of man. "Might" has the idea of a combination of forces. This can be the combined talents in an individual or it can be the combining of the talents of several people. "Power" has the idea of panting as the result of exertion. Israel's shining as the light of the world and the worship of God as commanded in the ceremonial law will be restored, but this will not come about as the result of the ingenuity or persistent efforts of men. God will use man, but always in such a way that man knows that he is only an instrument in God's hands. Zerubbabel and Joshua are means in God's hand. They are not to labor as if they must accomplish everything in their own strength. Nor are they to think that they can help God with their efforts. Rather they must know that they are and will continue to be qualified by the Spirit and that the Spirit will use their feeble, but faithful, efforts to accomplish His purpose.


While every human effort must fail and prove to be useless in it-

self, God's work will be carried on by the Spirit of Jehovah. As the Spirit inclined their hearts to return to Canaan, so He would incline their hearts to rebuild. The God of hosts could have given them an abundance, but He is pleased to give them small things. This is so that He might make them (and us) look upon Him in complete dependence on His Spirit. All the opposition of their enemies will become powerless. The work of Jehovah is carried on by the power and grace of His Spirit.

This is what gives the churches and those delegated to the broadest assembly in our churches real and true confidence. We might be easily and quickly troubled because the cause of God seems to be so small and apparently unsuccessful. The power of the lie is great. God does give blessings, but it seems to be so small in size, especially when compared with the world. At other times it seems that God places before His church insurmountable mountains, so the opportunity to preach His Word to all nations is impossible.

We must keep learning that it is the work of God always — also when He uses the instrumentality of our obedience in the calling to build His house. Zerubbabel and Joshua were to remember that they had been qualified by His Spirit (as are the delegates appointed to synod). As they faithfully obey God to arouse the people with God's Word, they must not measure success by size. Rather, they must pray and trust the Spirit to use their obedience and their communication of God's Word to His people. The Spirit is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think. So great is the Spirit of God, that if He be for us, then nothing and no one can be against us.

"No human power delights Him, No earthly pomp or pride;

He loves the meek who fear Him And in His love confide." 

Synod 2004, Hull, Iowa

The 2004 annual synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches (PRC) met in Hull, Iowa from June 8-11. The Hull counsel and congregation were gracious hosts.

The large, beautiful auditorium of the Hull church was full for the pre-synodical worship service the evening of June 7. Visitors were present from the neighboring Doon, Iowa and Edgerton, Minnesota congregations. Rev. Ron VanOverloop preached the sermon. His text was Zechariah 4:6: "This is the word of the LORD unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts."

Elected officers of synod were Rev. Kenneth Koole, president; Rev. Steven Key, vice-president; Rev. Daniel Kleyn, first clerk; and Rev. Charles Terpstra, second clerk.

Synod received reports of the denominational mission works, both domestic and foreign. Southwest PRC, Grandville, Michigan requested permission to administer the Lord's Supper on the Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania mission field. Synod responded by instructing its Domestic Mission Committee to study the matter along the following lines: "1. The resolution of apparently contradictory synodical decisions of the past. 2. The decision of Southwest to enroll those who made confession of faith in Pittsburgh as members of Southwest PRC. 3. The principles set forth in the Form of Ordination of Missionaries, the relevant articles of the Church Order, Scripture, and the Reformed tradition." The Domestic Mission Committee is to

present its advice to the 2005 synod.

The recommendations of a special committee establishing "a coherent and equitable policy regarding furloughs and vacations for our missionaries and ministers-on-loan" were adopted.

Among decisions governing the theological seminary of the PRC was the admission of one student to the seminary in the 2004/2005 academic year. Synod noted the urgent need for ministers and reminded the churches to press this need upon capable young men. Synod 2005 will appoint a minister to succeed Prof. David Engelsma as professor of dogmatics and Old Testament in the seminary.

Synod approved the proposal of its Contact Committee that the Contact Committee send a delegation of two to participate in an international conference hosted by the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Australia in July, 2005. The theme of the conference will be "The Holy Spirit as the Spirit of Christ." In response to the request of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, the delegation of the PRC will include a professor. While in Australia, the professor will teach a post-graduate course to the ministers of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church.

Synod instructed the Contact Committee once again to express to the Evangelical Reformed Churches of Singapore the "urgent need" for those churches to come to the biblical stand on the issue of marriage, divorce, and remarriage. The Contact Committee of the PRC is also to report to synod 2005 regarding a position paper of one of

the Singapore churches on common grace and the well-meant offer of the gospel. Synod noted that these are unresolved issues in the Evangelical Reformed Churches of Singapore.

The Contact Committee informed synod that the Denominational Contact Committee of the Evangelical Reformed Churches of Singapore has drawn up and presented to the Classis of the Singapore churches a "Proposed Policy for Fraternal Church Relationships." This proposed policy affects the sister-church relationships with the PRC. Synod approved the response of the Contact Committee of the PRC to this proposed policy. Both the "Proposed Policy" and the synodically approved response can be read in their entirety in the forthcoming 2004 "Acts of Synod" of the PRC.

Synod approved the entrance of a congregation in Wingham, Ontario, Canada into the denomination. The congregation was formerly affiliated with the Orthodox Christian Reformed Churches. Synod conveyed to the Wingham consistory and congregation its joy at God's leading of the Wingham church to the PRC.

A helpful explanation by a special synodical committee of rules governing protests, appeals, and overtures was adopted. This explanation clarifies various documents brought to the ecclesiastical assemblies. Members of the PRC, as well as consistories, should give attention to this explanation, which will be published in the 2004 "Acts of Synod."

The Free Reformed Churches of North America had addressed

synod asking concerning the interest of the PRC in participating in a "low-grade revision" of the Authorized Version of Scripture. The Free Reformed Churches informed synod that they have decided not to pursue the project and have, therefore, withdrawn their request of the PRC.

Synod rejected an overture from a member of the PRC asking synod to rescind decisions of the synod of 2001. These decisions concern missionaries' baptizing and pronouncing the benediction in certain, prescribed circumstances. By rejecting the overture, synod upheld the decisions in articles 27-29 of the 2001 synod.

In closed session, synod treated two appeals by members of the churches against decisions of consistories and classes concerning the discipline of these members.

In other actions, synod approved \$209, 941 for support of emeriti ministers in 2005. The balance in the Emeritus Fund at present is \$1,430,091. The Fund grew by 25% in 2003. Subsidy for needy churches in 2005 was approved in the amount of \$179, 122. Synod approved aid for seminary students in 2005 in the amount of \$44,000. The total synodical budget for 2005 is \$1,578,000. The syn-

odical budget per family in 2005 will be \$866. This is up from \$845 in 2004.

The PRC have grown numerically in the past year to 28 congregations, 1,765 families, and a total membership of 7,080.

The Byron Center, Michigan PRC has been asked to host the 2005 synod, convening on June 14, 2005, God willing.

May the Spirit of the exalted Christ bless the PRC and the universal church through the decisions of synod.

"Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts."

— DJE 

PRC SYNOD 2004



■ Against "Gospel Services"

I have read with very close personal interest the ongoing discussion of Sunday evening gospel services (*Standard Bearer*, Nov. 1, 2003; Feb. 1, 2004; April 1, 2004). With regard to this subject I make a few comments. Let me first say that I am a part of the mission work in Spokane, WA. My background is Arminian, and "Reformed Baptist." I am very familiar with the type of sermon that Rev. Stewart warns about in his letter (*SB*, Feb. 1, 2004). I greatly appreciated that warning. It is simply a fact that such "gospel" preaching will in fact lead to potted gospel preaching with an invitation tacked on the end addressed to the unbeliever.

The argument is made that we ought not reject something that is legitimate simply because it can be abused. This is true of many things, e.g., the drinking of alcohol. There are many who have used alcohol in a right way their whole life and never sunk into the excess of drunkenness.

But the fact is that without one exception history has proved that measures and procedures like Sunday evening gospel services adopted by the church lead to full-blown Arminianism and then modernism. This was the decline of the Presbyterian church and greatly contributed to their embrace of the free offer and common grace. Therefore, we are not talking about a knee jerk reaction to change. Our objections have a firm and undeniable basis in the objective facts of history. It requires a certain unintended arrogance to think that we could do much better.

In addition, as has been brought out, we need to be careful about confusing personal witness with preaching in the established church on the Lord's Day. Although it is not the intent to

preach to a mixed group, to be baptistic and individualistic, yet it will become just that. Many of the passages in Scripture that have an emphasis on responsibility are instances of personal witness or what you would almost have to call street preaching. But those texts are few, and there is a different way entirely that Jesus and the apostles preach when in the synagogue or the formal worship of the New Testament church. Baptists and evangelicals preach to the church as though they are *unbelievers*. Reformed preaching does not do so, as has been pointed out by both Prof. Hanks and Rev. Stewart. This does not mean that when a text explicitly warrants it that the call to repent does not go forth.

It is because God sees His church organically that we do not in any way or degree alter or shape the service around unbelievers. I must agree with Prof. Hanks that this places an undue emphasis on human effort. The implication is that there is a gospel for unbelievers and a gospel for believers. Speaking as a man who has no "Reformed" in his generations, I can say that the strength of the churches is that they are completely different in worship, particularly in the element of preaching.

Because this is the strength of our churches, we must not treat the mission field any different than we would the established church. The preaching, especially catechism, exclusive psalmody, and our stance on all of the difficult issues such as marriage and divorce must be firmly implemented from the inception of the work. We ought compromise nothing. The church order must stand. All of these things are the gospel. By God's working, they

are repugnant to some, but are irresistible to others. We are called to walk by faith. I can remember losing many people over the issue of marriage and divorce, who expressed the desire to be members. But there were some who were in that situation drawn by the faithful preaching of the hard truths. Implicit in all the preaching here in Spokane is the call to repent without that call being artificially tacked on at the end.

I agree with Prof. Hanks that God is indeed putting a roof on His house here in America. America is simply not Singapore. There are very few people in this country who have not in some fashion or other been confronted by Christianity and some form of the gospel. If there are yet burning brands to be plucked from the fire, God will do so by our faithful witness in word and deed and by the same preaching that goes on from Lord's Day to Lord's Day in our established churches. If He does not use those means, then we must humbly confess that there never was an open door.

Adam Tash
Spokane, WA

■ Educating the Church

Thank you for the May 15 article, "Ecclesiology: The Study of the Church." We live in central Missouri, which is impoverished of Reformed churches. We must drive an hour and fifteen minutes to our PCA church in Union. On the way we pass three or four liberal PC/USA and UCC churches.

A neighbor puts pressure on us to participate in a "home fellowship" instead. He derides the instituted church.

The *Standard Bearer* article helped confirm our feelings that we do belong with the body of believers in the place where we are. The

PCA is not perfect, but it is all we have here, and we are blessed to have some great believers with whom to worship and learn. Magazines like yours help educate the church as a whole, wherever it is, and I am glad we subscribe to it.

Lewis and Katrinka Goldberg
Vienna, MO

■ Difficult and Dangerous Area

I have just finished reading your defense of amillennialism in connection with my preparing to teach the book of Revelation in our church (*Standard Bearer*, Jan. 15, 1995 – Dec. 15, 1996). I thank you for your efforts in this most difficult and dangerous area for the church.

Your position struck home with me for the first time in many readings of that difficult book of the Bible, Revelation.

I am a ruling elder in a PCA church and went to Reformed Theological Seminary in Jackson, MS, where postmillennialism reigned.

If you can point me to any new studies or readings in amillennialism, I would most appreciate the help.

Again, thanks for the very well-done arguments.

Tom Smith
Southern Pines, NC

RESPONSE:

The articles defending amillennialism with several preliminary chapters criticizing postmillennialism as “Jewish Dreams” and several concluding chapters examining “preterism” have been published as a book, *Christ’s Spiritual Kingdom: A Defense of Reformed Amillennialism*. The book is available from the publisher: The Reformed Witness, 1307 E. Brockton Ave., Redlands, CA 92374 (e-mail: thereformedwitness@hopeprc.org).

In a study of Revelation, be sure to read Herman Hoeksema’s

outstanding commentary on Revelation, *Behold, he Cometh!: An Exposition of the Book of Revelation*. The book can be obtained from the Reformed Free Publishing Association, 4949 Ivanrest Ave. SW, Wyoming, MI 49418 (e-mail: mail@rfpa.org).

— Ed.

■ Superb Series

I am just now reading the newest *Standard Bearer* (June, 2004), and I want to add my words to those of Dr. Carl Bogue: your series on “Covenantal Universalism” (aka “the Auburn Avenue Theology” or “Shepherdism”) is superb.

I would like to know if there are plans to put the entire series into a booklet, or book format.

I would dearly love to have the series in an accessible format, to hand out to my congregation and my fellow pastors.

(Dr.) Charles H. Roberts
Pastor, Ballston Center Associate
Reformed church
Ballston Spa, NY

■ Were You There?

I was handed a copy of the April 15, 2004 issue of the *Standard Bearer* a few weeks ago to read. It was my first introduction to the magazine.

Having recently attended the Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary’s spring conference in March where this year’s topic was the covenant and a critique of the so-called Auburn Avenue Theology, I found your article to be helpful and very much to the point. I do have one question, followed by a comment on another article.

In the article on “Covenantal Universalism” on page 317, far right column, you make mention of the proponents of this movement and include the name of Dr. Richard B. Gaffin, Jr. of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC). I have always associated Dr. Gaffin as a proponent of redemptive historical preaching but

not with that of “covenantal universalism.” Would you please provide me with specific references from Mr. Gaffin’s books and his other publications where you believe he sets forth covenantal universalism?

In your review article “The Account of a Fallen Seminary and a ‘Falling’ Church” on page 321, middle column, you state, “God’s judgment already falls heavily on the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. The 2003 General Assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church approved the doctrine of justification by faith and works.” I simply ask you, Sir, were you present at the 2003 Assembly of the OPC? I am assuming you were not, even as O. Palmer Robertson and John W. Robbins were not present either. I simply find it astounding that non-attendees have the audacity to make judgments about another denomination when they were neither present for the entire presentation of the case, did not have in their possession all the documents, were not privy to the debate or the discussion, yet will boldly declare that the OPC teaches justification by faith and works. Ken Ham of the *Answers in Genesis* organization always makes it a point to ask, “Were you there?” to those who pontificate that the days of creation were something other than literal, sequential 24 hours.

What is missing from your review is firsthand reporting. Contrary to Messrs. Robertson, Robbins, and Engelsma’s absence, I was there and I read the volumes of material, listened intently to the presentation of the case, its discussion, and debate on the matter. In my opinion (and apparently in the majority opinion of the Assembly) I judged that the presbytery bringing charges failed to make their case against Mr. Kinnaird. Mr. Kinnaird affirmed audibly and publicly that he does not hold to the doctrine of faith plus works to which he was charged. He audibly affirmed his

commitment to justification by faith alone. To specific questions drawn from our Standards he wholeheartedly affirmed justification by faith alone.

The OPC does not advocate nor does it teach justification by works. Contrary to your middle paragraph, the OPC does indeed uphold the Scripture's (and the *Westminster Standard's*) teaching that justification is by faith alone.

It bothers me when secular media do not get it right; however, there is no excuse for such reporting in the body of Christ.

(Rev.) Peter Stazen II
Metamora, MI

RESPONSE:

I was not present at the 2003 General Assembly of the OPC.

Neither was I present at the Council of Trent.

Absence from the General Assembly no more disqualifies me from judging the decisions of the OPC than absence from Trent disqualifies me from judging the decisions of Rome at that council.

I have the documents. I have the appeal to the General Assembly of the OPC containing the statements teaching justification by faith and works by the disciple of Norman Shepherd. I also have the decision of the 2003 General Assembly of the OPC approving the heretical statements of the disciple of Shepherd and the theology of Norman Shepherd they propound.

Does Rev. Stazen require that Ken Ham have been there, in order to pronounce on the days of creation?

As for the teacher's protestations of his orthodoxy on the floor of the assembly (for which I take Rev. Stazen's word, not having been there), since Mr. Kinnaird refused to confess the error of his heretical statements, and his own sin in teaching them to the congregation, his profession of soundness means nothing. Many a Roman Catholic theologian at Trent loudly

professed to believe salvation by grace alone, as he was adopting the heresy of salvation by the will and works of the sinner.

Dr. Richard B. Gaffin, Jr.'s name was included in a list of those who "publicly espouse" or "vigorously defend and promote" the heresy of which Rev. Norman Shepherd is the leading, but by no means only, proponent in reputedly conservative Reformed and Presbyterian churches. The sentence is this: "Among those who publicly espouse and teach covenantal universalism, or vigorously defend and promote it, are, in addition to Rev. Shepherd ... Dr. Richard B. Gaffin, Jr., of the OPC" (*SB*, April 15, 2004, p. 317).

Dr. Gaffin was the main defender of Prof. Shepherd at Westminster Seminary in the late 1970s and early 1980s (see Mark W. Karlberg, "The Changing of the Guard: Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia," *Trinity Foundation*, 2001, pp. 28-30, and O. Palmer Robertson, *The Current Justification Controversy*, Trinity Foundation, 2003, pp. 27, 28, 46).

Dr. Gaffin recommended Norman Shepherd's denial of justification by faith alone, attack on all the doctrines of grace, and defense of universal, conditional, resistible grace in the covenant in Shepherd's recent book, *The Call of Grace: How the Covenant Illuminates Salvation and Evangelism* (P&R, 2000). This is what Gaffin says on the back cover of the book:

This lucid and highly readable study provides valuable instruction on what it means to live in covenant with God. God's covenant is the only way of life that fully honors both the absolute, all-embracing sovereignty of his saving grace and the full, uninhibited activity of his people. *The Call of Grace* should benefit anyone concerned about biblical growth in Christian life and witness.

According to reliable reports,

which Rev. Stazen will verify, since he was there, Dr. Gaffin was one of the most energetic and powerful defenders of Mr. Kinnaird and his false doctrine at the 2003 General Assembly of the OPC.

Vigorously to defend and promote a false teaching renders one as guilty of the false doctrine as does teaching it oneself.

Rev. Stazen's quotation of my statement, "God's judgment already falls heavily on the Orthodox Presbyterian Church," without any reference to what precedes in the review article, makes me wonder whether he understands the statement. The decision of the 2003 General Assembly of the OPC approving justification by faith and works is God's judgment upon the OPC. The judicial ground of the judgment is the refusal of Westminster Seminary and the Philadelphia Presbytery of the OPC to condemn the heretical theology of Prof. Norman Shepherd in the 1970s and early 1980s. This deliberate refusal of Westminster Seminary and of the Philadelphia Presbytery of the OPC was the emphasis of my review article. About this refusal, Rev. Stazen says not a word. Why not?

Rev. Stazen affirms that the OPC upholds justification by faith alone.

Rev. Stazen is wrong.

The OPC had the opportunity and calling to uphold justification by faith alone, in the face of attack on that cardinal truth of the gospel, both in the 1970s and early 1980s in the Shepherd case at Westminster Seminary and in 2003 at its General Assembly. It miserably failed. "The children of Ephraim, being armed, and carrying bows, turned back in the day of battle" (Ps. 78:9). The OPC has let the glorious gospel-truth of justification by faith alone fall to the ground.

This is bad enough. But matters are far worse for the OPC. By the refusal of Westminster Seminary and the Philadelphia

Presbytery of the OPC to condemn the theology of Norman Shepherd and by the decision of the 2003 General Assembly of the OPC upholding the appeal of Mr. Kinnaird,

the OPC approves the false doctrine of justification by faith and works. Its official creed to the contrary is now a dead letter.

In accordance with Martin Luther's declaration that justifica-

tion by faith alone is the article of a standing and a falling church, which is the teaching of Galatians, the OPC is a "falling church."

— Ed. 

Taking Heed to the Doctrine

Rev. James Laning

One Holy Church, One Covenant of Grace

There are a number of ways by which people have tried to divide the church of Jesus Christ into two groups of people who are in two different covenants with God. When God established His covenant, He said to His covenant people, "Ye shall be My people." Therefore, it stands to reason that if the people of God are divided into two or more groups, each of these groups must be in a different covenant. The truth, however, is that there is one everlasting covenant of grace made with all of God's people in both dispensations. God's one people are united in one faith, believing one covenant promise. It is important for us to see how denials of the unity of the church are related to denials of the unity of the covenant.

One Covenant with One People of God

Let us consider two ways in which the unity of the church and the unity of God's covenant with the church have been and are denied. First, it is denied by those

who separate the people of God in the old dispensation from the people of God in the new dispensation. Secondly, it is denied by those who say that some of those in the church institute today are in an external covenant with God, while others in the same instituted church are in an internal covenant with God.

The Baptists separate the people of God in the old dispensation from the people of God in the new dispensation. They do this by maintaining that there was one covenant of God with Israel, a covenant in which the young children were included, and another covenant of God with the church, a covenant in which the young children of believers are not included. To put it succinctly, they maintain that the first covenant is with Israel and their natural descendants, whereas the second covenant is with believers and their spiritual descendants. So, they go on to say, whereas a person needed only to be born a male Israelite to be circumcised, to be baptized one must first show himself to be a believer.

This dividing of the people of God into two peoples is rooted, therefore, in a denial of the unity of the covenant of grace. This error is easily refuted by pointing out

that there was no covenant with those who were merely the blood descendants of Israel. God's covenant was made with Abraham and with his seed. This seed consisted of only the believing children, who are called "the children of the promise." This is clearly taught in Romans 9:6-8, where we read:

6) Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel:

7) Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called.

8) That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed.

The children of the flesh were not in God's covenant; they were not God's children. It was the children of the promise that were in the covenant as the seed of Abraham. Only those children were the covenant children of God. This same truth is taught in Galatians 3:16, 29. We set these two verses side by side:

16) Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.

Rev. Laning is pastor of Hope Protestant Reformed Church in Walker, Michigan.

29) And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

The Seed of Abraham is Jesus Christ, and those who are in Christ by faith. This was the case in the old dispensation; it is still the case today. The covenant has always been only with the children of the promise, and these children of the promise, in both the old dispensation and the new dispensation, together constitute the church of Jesus Christ.

A similar error is committed by those who teach that in the instituted church today some of the people are in one covenant, and others are in another. They say that those who have confessed that they have received God's saving grace are in an inward covenant of grace with God; while the other members of the church institute are in an outward covenant of grace with God. The outward covenant of grace is said to be with all the natural seed of the church and includes many common grace blessings. The inward covenant of grace is said to be only with the spiritual (i.e., elect) seed of the church, and includes particular grace blessings.

By making this distinction, one seeks to get around the various passages, such as those quoted above, that indicate that God's covenant is only with the spiritual, elect seed of believers. When these verses are cited by us, these people respond by saying that such verses are referring only to the inward covenant of grace, which they admit is made only with the elect seed of the church. But, they go on to say, there are other passages that indicate that there is also an outward covenant that God has established with all the children of believers head for head.

To prove the latter, they cite verses from the Old Testament, such as Genesis 17:7-10, where Abraham was commanded to circumcise every male in his household; and passages in which God speaks to Israel as a whole and tells

her that she is His holy people (Deut. 14:1, 2) and that she is married to Him (Jer. 31:32). For a New Testament proof, they turn to I Corinthians 7:13,14, which says that the children of a believer, even of one who has an unbelieving spouse, are holy children.

These passages in no way teach that God's covenant is with all the children of believers head for head. Many of those who were blood descendants of Jacob were not truly Israelites. According to Romans 9:6, unbelieving descendants of Jacob were "of Israel" but they were not "Israel." So when God made promises to Israel, He was not making a promise to the unbelieving descendants of Jacob. Still today in the new dispensation, believers and their children *organically* are told that they are elect and holy. They are addressed as a body. The truth does not apply to each individual in the church institute. It applies only to the living members of that body.

Similarly, that all the males in the old dispensation were to be circumcised, and that all our children head for head are to be baptized, does not mean that they all are in the covenant of grace and that they all receive a gracious covenant promise. As with the Lord's Supper, so also with baptism, there are many who receive only the outward sign, and not the inward blessing signified by that sign.

There are certainly baptized unbelievers who are members of true instituted churches on this earth. These people are in the sphere of the covenant, but the covenant itself is not made with them. The preached Word enters the ears of their body, but it is not a blessing to them. It rather serves to harden them, so that they go deeper and deeper into sin.

As with the Lord's Supper, so also with baptism, there are many who receive only the outward sign, and not the inward blessing signified by that sign.

It is easy to see how this false teaching concerning the covenant effectively denies the unity of the church of Jesus Christ. Some people in the congregation are led to believe that they are in an external, breakable covenant of grace with God, while others are told that they are in an internal, unbreakable covenant of grace with God. The

first group are told that, although they are being blessed now, they will be cursed everlastingly if they do not enter the inward covenant of grace with God.

This view is very similar to that of the Baptists. Thus it is not surprising that many of those who have held to such a view have eventually become Baptists.

Oneness and Holiness

There can be only one holy church. That the church is holy means that she is separated from sin and sinners and consecrated to God to be His special people — His bride, whom He loves. Only one people can be holy, set apart from all the rest. This is explicitly taught in a number of places:

Lev. 20:26 And ye shall be holy unto me: for I the LORD am holy, and have severed you from other people, that ye should be mine.

Deut. 7:6 For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God: the LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth.


Revelation 21:2 And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

The church, the bride of Christ, is here called the one holy city, the new Jerusalem. Christ has not two, but one holy bride, whom He has separated and consecrated unto Himself.

The church of Jesus Christ is one holy church because she has one holy Head. The unity of the church is rooted in the fact that she has one Head, Jesus Christ. And the holiness of the church is rooted in the fact that her Husband and Head is holy, consecrated unto God the Father. The perfections of the church are the perfections of Christ, which He has merited for

her by His atoning suffering and death.

As those who are members of this one holy church, we are called to live in harmony with one another, and in separation from those walking in sin. We are holy, and thus we must not join ourselves in fellowship with those who are not holy. We must be diligent to witness to others; but

we must not fellowship with those who repeatedly reject the truth of the Scriptures. And we are one, which means that we must commune with those who are fellow obedient members of the body of Jesus Christ. In this way we show not only by our confession, but also by our daily walk, that we believe the oneness and holiness of the church of Jesus Christ. 

Ministering to the Saints

Rev. Doug Kuiper

The Fundamental Work of the Deacons (4) *Distributing the Alms*

Just as our heavenly Father always supplies the needs of His children, and just as Jesus Christ our Good Shepherd never fails to bestow upon His sheep that which we lack, so must the church of Jesus Christ always be willing and ready to relieve the needs of the poor. Therefore, the deacons, having been informed of a need, having determined it to be genuine, and having procured the means to supply it, are required to distribute the alms accordingly.

That God expects deacons to distribute the alms is beyond question. The deacons were first appointed to “serve tables” at the “daily ministration” to the widows of the church (Acts 6:1ff.). Clearly they bestowed alms, or in this instance goods, to feed the poor. In an earlier article (Dec. 1, 2003), we noted that the phrases “he that giveth” (Rom. 12:8) and “gifts of ... helps” (I Cor. 12:28) both apply to the work of the deacons. The deacons are required to *give*, to dis-

tribute. If they do not give, they have not helped the saints.

That Reformed churches expect their deacons to distribute the alms is also beyond question. Article 25 of our Church Order requires deacons to collect the alms “and, after mutual counsel, faithfully and diligently to distribute the same to the poor as their needs may require it....” Article 30 of the Belgic Confession requires “that the poor and distressed may be relieved and comforted, according to their necessities.” And the Form of Ordination of Elders and Deacons says that the “second part of their office consists in distribution....”

Obviously, if the deacons do not distribute alms to the poor, they have failed to do that very work for which the office of deacon was instituted.

It might seem to deacons that, at this point, the work becomes easy. The alms have been collected. The hard questions relating to need have been asked and answered, and the need is determined to be genuine. All that is now required is that the alms be distributed. To write a check is easy. To deliver the check is not very difficult either — it can be quickly dropped off, or mailed

if that is more convenient. Perhaps someone else, such as a deacon’s wife, can take care of this matter, which seems to be merely “clerical.”

But the principles of Scripture, as spelled out in our Reformed creeds and documents, suggest that the deacons must view the distribution of alms as a more serious and weighty matter than suggested in the previous paragraph.



To whom must alms be distributed?

Scripture and the confessions set forth one only governing principle: they must be those who are poor, in need of help. They are those whose need for help the deacons have determined to be genuine.

Whether they are members of the congregation or not does not matter. Galatians 6:10 reads: “As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.” As the verse indicates, the deacons must give the poor of the church first priority. Nevertheless, the deacons must not neglect to help the poor who are not members of their church, should the occasion arise, for God

Rev. Kuiper is pastor of the Protestant Reformed Church in Randolph, Wisconsin.

teaches clearly in Galatians 6:10 that the saints and church must not limit their good works simply to fellow saints. The same point is made in the Form for Ordination of Elders and Deacons. After the deacons have made their vows, the minister exhorts the deacons to "show liberality unto all men, but especially to the household of faith." It stands to reason that the deacons need not be scouting out the neighborhood, looking for the poor, as they ought to do within the congregation. We hope to emphasize this latter point further in a future article. For now, the point is that even unbelievers may be given benevolence, if they are poor.

Neither does the standing of the poor member within the congregation matter. Peter Y. DeJong writes: "All the needy who belong to the church, without exception or distinction, are entitled to help. The view that professing members are deserving of more than members by baptism only cannot be defended. Even those who are under ecclesiastical censure may not be penalized by withholding support. The discipline of the church recognizes only spiritual weapons and may never stoop to use any others."¹ The principle set forth in James 2:1ff. with regard to respect of persons applies here. James warns the church against treating the rich with greater courtesy than the poor. This amounts to despising the poor (James 2:6). To apply the principle to distributing alms, we say that those to whom benevolence is given must be judged by the same standard, namely, their need. How active they are in the congregation, and how likely they might be one day to return a favor, does not matter.

One thing matters: they have demonstrated, to the satisfaction of the deacons, their need for help.



May the alms be distributed on the condition that the one receiving

alms perform some particular activity that the deacons require of him?

It is true that one who receives alms must demonstrate that he uses them rightly. The principles of stewardship require this of the one receiving them. Furthermore, the Church Order requires the deacons "to exercise care that the alms are not misused." If the deacons determine that one who receives alms does misuse them, the deacons must discuss among themselves how to deal with this misuse. In some cases, after the deacons have given repeated instruction and admonitions regarding stewardship, it is possible that the deacons no longer distribute alms to that person. DeJong writes: "Only when it can be demonstrated that the poor are misusing the gifts which the deacons bring by squandering money for liquor, excessive luxuries, indulgence in sports and unnecessary recreations, must the deacons refuse to help."² Notice that DeJong does not say that the mere purchase of liquor, or the mere attendance at a sporting event or other recreation, in itself constitutes misuse of gifts. Let us give the brother or sister who receives benevolence some measure of freedom to know how to use the money properly. But DeJong's wording emphasizes the *excess* of such spending as being misuse of gifts: "*squandering* money for liquor, *excessive* luxuries, *indulgence* in sports and unnecessary recreations" (emphasis mine, DJK).

Certain conditions the deacons must never require when distributing alms. To require that the receiver of alms pay back a certain amount over a period of time, or make the church a beneficiary of his estate, or do some work for the church, is wrong. The alms are gifts, not loans; and they are to be given for the relief of the poor. Furthermore, the church is blessed in the way of giving, not receiving. And Christ's mercies, by which our sins are washed away, were given us freely, without any

possibility of repayment. DeJong says, accordingly, that the "deacons should never demand repayment as a condition for extending aid."³ Another writer, Prof. William Heyns, opines that, to prevent poverty, the deacons might give a loan, and even stand ready to take the loss if the loan cannot be repaid.⁴ With such sentiments I heartily disagree. In any circumstance, the deacons are to give gifts, not loans. Even one who received benevolence in the past, and now has the means to give generously to the causes of God's kingdom, ought not consider his gifts to the church a repayment of loans, but a free-will thank offering to God.

One condition, therefore, is certainly implied in the distribution of alms; and others are certainly wrong. But the deacons will face still other situations, and other questions, about how best to deal with this or that family in their need. Are there other situations in which conditions must be made? May a condition for receiving benevolence be that the head of the household be diligent in looking for a different job, one that will support his family better? Or that the members of the household sell certain possessions that the deacons consider trivial or luxurious?

No answer can be given that will cover every situation. The key here is that deacons seek wisdom from God to deal wisely with the poor in their needs. Several principal points must be remembered.

First, the deacons must distribute alms according to need, sincerely desiring to help the poor and manifesting the genuine love of Christ for His people. They must bear in mind that the church's duty is not to relieve herself of her poor (whom we will always have with us, Matthew 26:11), but to relieve her poor of their poverty. This desire to help and love must be clearly conveyed when they bring the alms.

Second, the deacons do have the authority to ask the head of the household to face certain questions

regarding his job, his use of his possessions, and anything else that might contribute to his poverty. They have the authority to ask him to consider ways in which he might be better able, without violating any principles, to support his family. However, perhaps the time to ask these questions is not when the deacons bring the alms, but some other time — either when the need is being determined, or at a follow-up visit. And, in this regard, the deacons must be careful not to overstep their bounds and intrude into the government of the home. That is, they may ask the head of the household to face certain questions; and they may give any help that the householder desires and is willing to receive (in finding a better job, for example); but they must not dictate specific requirements in areas in which God gives liberty. One principle, especially as regards our vocations, that must not be forgotten is set forth in I Corinthians 7:20ff.: “Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called. Art thou called being a servant? care not for it; but if thou mayest be made free, use it rather.” God, in His providence, places each of us in our vocations and callings. If the person desires to change his job, and believes God gives him freedom to do so, he may. But the church must be careful not to require that he work at this or that job, when he desires differently.



Several points must yet be made regarding the formal distribution of alms.

Emphatically, the deacons must distribute the alms by a personal visit to the needy family or individual.

Such a visit is necessary, first, because the distribution of the alms is emphatically the deacons’ work. It is not a clerical matter that an-

other person may take care of on the deacons’ behalf. The deacons must serve the poor. Secondly, such a visit is necessary because the deacons are required “to visit and comfort the distressed” (Church Order, Art. 25), and to bring not only “ex-

They must bear in mind that the church’s duty is not to relieve herself of her poor, but to relieve her poor of their poverty.

ternal gifts, but also ... comfortable words from Scripture” (Form of Ordination of Elders and Deacons). To this aspect of the deacons’ work we hope to return in our next article, D.V. For now we note that it

requires a personal visit on the part of the deacons.

The visit need not be made by the whole diaconate, but may be made by a committee of the diaconate. This committee must consist of at least two men whom the diaconate has officially authorized to administer relief to the needy family. In small churches with only one deacon, it is advisable that an elder accompany the deacon on such visits, though the deacon leads the meeting.


The visit must be made privately — not after church in a room of the church building where the whole congregation can see who goes in and who goes out. The deacons must speak to *nobody* outside the deacons’ room or consistory room, about who are receiving benevolence. Therefore, the deacons must also be discreet in making their visit to distribute the alms. What Jesus says in Matthew 6:3-4 applies to this aspect of the deacons’ work: “But, when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly.”

This distribution must be carried out in accordance with the particular requirements of the Church Order, Article 25: “...after mutual counsel, faithfully and diligently to distribute the same to the poor as their needs may require it.”

The implications of the words “as their needs may require it” have been spelled out in our previous article. The extent of the need must be determined, and then the deacons are required to meet that determined need in full.

The words “after mutual counsel” emphasize that the whole diaconate must discuss the situation. A committee might investigate the need and make recommendations to the diaconate, and the same committee might distribute the alms, but no individual deacon(s) may determine by himself how much help is needed, and how to give that help. The deacons have authority *as a body* to care for the poor, and every deacon must do his work in cooperation with the whole body. Article 40 of the Church Order, therefore, requires that the “deacons shall meet monthly, or more frequently as the need arises, to transact the business pertaining to their office....”

Finally, this distribution must be made “faithfully and diligently.” The deacons must themselves be faithful men, of course. They must be faithful in their love of God, His church, and the poor and needy in the church. This faithfulness must manifest itself in their work. Especially it means that the deacons must be timely in distributing the alms. The poor are waiting for their alms! Let the deacons be dependable, quick to respond to needs, and willing to sacrifice of themselves if necessary to do so.

These words, “faithfully and diligently,” underscore the fact that this aspect of the work is weighty and must be taken seriously. That church whose deacons do take it seriously is blessed indeed! 

1. Peter Y. DeJong, *The Ministry of Mercy for Today* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1963), p. 142.
2. Peter Y. DeJong, p. 142.
3. Peter Y. DeJong, p. 143.
4. Prof. William Heyns, *Handbook for Elders and Deacons* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1928), pp. 328-329.

■ Theories of Atonement

Mel Gibson's movie, "The Passion of the Christ," has attracted great attention (and earned much money.) It has also generated considerable debate. Some consider it anti-Semitic. Others condemn its unseemly violence—for which it is given an "R" rating. Articles in the *Standard Bearer* and other periodicals have reminded of the blasphemy of any man portraying the divine Son of God come into the flesh. There is pointed out the Roman Catholic "slant" given to Christ's death on the cross. He is portrayed as needing and having the assistance of His mother Mary (co-mediatrix) in redeeming from sin and death. His death on the cross is presented as for all.

The film, however, has not only generated many comments about its Romish view of the atonement, but the subject of atonement itself is being discussed. That discussion appears in somewhat strange places—in *Time Magazine* no less. Its cover story in the April 12, 2004 issue is titled, "Why Did Jesus Have to Die?"

The article in *Time* presents some of the different views concerning the necessity of Christ's death. The subject is introduced:

Some modern atonement theorists maintain that only one answer—theirs—flows inevitably from Scripture. But more agree with Chicago Theological Seminary's Theodore Jennings Jr. "The New Testament is just all over the map" on the question of why Christ died, he says. Its writers "are all persuaded that something really drastic, fundamental and dramatic has happened, and

they're pulling together all kinds of ways to understand that."

The article continues by showing (in that writer's estimation) that Scripture is indeed "all over the map" with respect to atonement. The claim is made that there are inconsistencies and contradictions between the New Testament writers concerning the subject. The article then presents some of the theories of atonement:

When the early church fathers did pick up on the scriptural language of Christ's death as a ransom, the payee was not God but the devil, who some felt had legitimate claim on humanity because of Adam's fall. But others preferred another scenario: to see the Crucifixion and Jesus' subsequent descent into what they called Hades as a kind of divine bait-and-switch scheme, whereby the devil thought he had claimed a particularly virtuous human victim only to discover that he had allowed into his sanctum the power that would eventually wrest humanity back from his grasp. St. Augustine likened the devil to a mouse, the Cross to a mousetrap and Christ to the bait.

The article gives its idea of the teaching of the early church father Anselm, who set forth the teaching of substitutionary atonement:

Anselm too read the New Testament lines calling Christ's death a ransom, but he could not believe that the devil was owed anything. So he restructured the cosmic debt. It was, he posed, humanity that owed God the Father a ransom of "satisfaction" (to use Anselm's feudal terminology) for the insult of sin. The problem was that the debt was unpayable: not only did we lack the means, since everything we had of value was God's to begin with, but also we lacked the standing, like a lowly

serf helpless to erase an injury to a great lord. Eternal damnation seemed unavoidable, except for a miracle of grace. God "recast" himself into human form so that Christ, who was both innocent of sin and also God's social equal, could suffer the Crucifixion's undeserved agony, dedicating it to the Father on humanity's behalf. Christ "paid for sinners what he owed not for himself," wrote Anselm reverently. "Could the Father justly refuse to man what the Son willed to give him?" No, thank goodness.

Anselm's formulation, often called substitutionary atonement, has been restated in countless ways over the centuries. The church eventually extended its concept of the sin for which Jesus died beyond Adam's disobedience to everybody's transgressions. The 16th century reformer John Calvin replaced Anselm's feudal king with a severe judge furious at a deservedly cursed creation. Hala Saad, a contemporary churchgoer in Texas, recites a milder modern version: "All I had to do was sign up for God's debt-cancellation plan—for Jesus to take my place!"

Arguments still rage as to which group of humans (everyone? Christians? The elect?) the sacrifice benefits and about whether our sins somehow retroactively exacerbate the agony of Christ's sacrifice. But no other post-biblical formulation has so elegantly intertwined the Father, the Son, a wayward creation and intimations of sin and grace. None has so bound believer to Saviour in the intimacy of pain (and eventual Easter glory) and fulfilled Paul's great work of turning the Cross, an image of ultimate horror, into the paramount Western icon of love.

But there is another theory of atonement that is so popular today: the theory of "exemplary atonement."

From the 18th century on, however, various thinkers developed a bill of complaints about substitution, although few wanted to abandon it totally. To some Americans, Calvin's angry, all-powerful God was too reminiscent of the arbitrary tyrant by whose overthrow the country had defined itself. In an age when Thomas Jefferson was literally cutting out all references to miracles from his copy of the Bible, substitution's supernatural structure perturbed some Enlightenment rationalists. Its scant room for human volition contradicted a growing 18th and 19th century optimism that the species could perfect itself through its own efforts. And in a religious culture increasingly defined by emotional evangelizing and the idea of a personal relationship with Jesus, Anselm's legalistic equation struck some as a liability for those preaching to win souls.

For relief, they turned to a source as old as Anselm. The French theologian Peter Abelard had also worked in the Middle Ages to address Jesus' role in reducing sinful humanity's distance from God, but he did so without recourse to tit-for-tat transaction. His atonement took place less as a compact between God the Father and God the Son and more in the hearts of believers cleaving to the message of Jesus' life—and the love most dramatically expressed in his willingness to die rather than renounce his calling. "Love answers love's appeal," Abelard wrote. With Jesus' example before it, humanity, its deaf ear reopened, could now gain salvation and reconciliation with God.

...This theory is known as exemplary atonement, and it was expounded with vigor a few weeks ago by the Rev. Shafer at Rutgers Presbyterian.... "The mission and purpose of Jesus' life and ministry," he preached, "was, first, to model for humankind the fullness of mercy and forgiveness that God offers to us sinners and, second, to model for us the perfection of love that God is and that those who accept God's forgiveness are invited, by

God's grace, to become." Thus, Shafer concluded, "it is not Jesus' death that can save us but his life!"

The article presents then the expressed differences between the various views of the atonement. It makes an interesting observation at the conclusion of the article:

Of more concern to those interested in the health of American faith was—until last February, at least—the large proportion of Christians who really didn't think of Jesus' death much at all. "In most Protestant churches," says the Chicago Theological Seminary's Jennings, "there's hardly anything of a Cross there. You go straight from Palm Sunday to Easter without passing Go." The omission extends far beyond the historical Protestant aversion to crucifixes featuring Jesus' body. Rather, says Jack Miles, author of *Christ: A Crisis in the Life of God*, it dates back to the 18th century, when "Americans tended not to linger on the agony of Jesus. It was more 'friend of my soul, he walks with me and talks with me.'" That phenomenon, which has only accelerated, afflicts conservative Christianity as much as those in mainline churches, says *American Jesus* author Prothero. "If you asked Evangelicals in a Gallup poll if they had given up on the hard theology, they would say no. But in terms of day-to-day experience, atonement is not a lived reality."

And that in turn suggests a Christianity with a large hole in it where, at the very least, some thought should go. "The Cross is the center of Christianity, and we know that it was the center of Jesus' own thinking," says John Stott, an Anglican preacher and the author of *The Cross of Christ*, who suffered a stroke last year. "I could never myself believe in God if it were not for the Cross." He is almost pleading. "In the real world of pain, how could one worship a God who was immune to it?"

It is interesting that the sub-

ject of atonement should be discussed in a national news magazine. There is recognition of the differing views of atonement. At the same time it becomes very clear that the writers consider Scripture to be fallible and contradictory. The New Testament writers in particular are presented as setting forth their individual and conflicting views of atonement. One thing is very clear: the Christian must himself be well founded on Scripture itself. If he is not, articles of this nature can create confusion and doubt in his mind. Yet the article itself serves to remind us of the centrality of the atonement. It is a reminder also to us of the necessity of the proper understanding of the atonement.

■ The "High Moral Ground"?

I need present no quotes—though plenty could be found. Every reader, hearing of "losing the high moral ground," will instantly recall the pictures and reports concerning mistreatment of prisoners in Iraq. Again and again the pictures were flashed before our eyes in newspapers and news reports on television. Again and again there were described vividly to our ears exactly some of the things that had been done. Though sensitive spots on the picture were blurred out, there was hardly anything left to the imagination.

What seems to me almost equally horrifying is the hypocritical pleasure of presenting repeatedly the pictures themselves. While our country has insisted that it is contrary to the "rules of warfare" that our prisoner soldiers be displayed publicly on television, these prisoners are displayed publicly (presumably to arouse the natural disgust the observer may have toward the jailors). The prisoners are hooded—but that is all. Can you count the number of times you have seen all of this? While our country insists that the prisoner need give only his name

and serial number, this nation is justified in obtaining as quickly as possible the information from these terrorists through any means.

The need to obtain as quickly as possible the information certain terrorists can provide seems obvious. The mistreatment apparent in the pictures presented likewise merits our disgust and condemnation. And all of the questions raised create fertile ground in the field of politics.

What is particularly unsettling is the repeated claim that now we have “lost the high moral ground” – at least in the Arab world. Shockingly the words are uttered, “Now we have lost the high moral ground!” Many hide their heads in shame. Others blame certain “rogue” soldiers—insisting that average Americans are hardly like them.

But surely the claim must be made in jest. Have we *now* lost the “high moral ground” because of this one incident?

The “high moral ground” has been lost a long time ago. What is that “high moral ground” that we have now lost? Did we have it when, by court decree, abortion was made the law of the land? Did we stand on high moral

ground when it became legal to rip, limb-by-limb, the unborn from the mother’s womb? When the babe’s brain could be sucked from its head—as long as that head had not yet entered the world as we know it? The babe could provide no information concerning “terrorists” that need be extracted by this violent and inhumane treatment. The babe has not been tried and condemned to death because of any violent crime. It is judged to be a woman’s “choice” to carry out this violence only because the babe is still in her womb. It has no legal protection, not even under “rules of warfare,” until it is born.

So—when really did we “lose the high moral ground”?

Violence and sex are openly, even proudly, displayed in the drama of the movie screen and television. Video games can present that same violence and sex for the “entertainment” of the young. The Internet is increasingly a cesspool of sexual portrayals—a temptation not only for the young but for those older as well. Often even the e-mail we frequently use contains “letters” with offers of all

kinds of sexual temptations.

So—we lost the “high moral ground” first in a prison in Iraq?

Add to this all, the fact that divorce and remarriage have become commonplace. Homosexual marriages have become an acceptable option — so far, in one state it has even become legal. Cursing is condoned as a matter of “freedom of speech” — though one does not have the “freedom of speech” to say the “n” word. The Sabbath, for most, is no longer the “day of rest.” Gross materialism is the order of the day.

So one could go on. When was the high moral ground lost? Was it really first in Iraq within its cruel prisons? It seems that it has been long gone in our society. “Morality” has been redefined. Though some still claim that we are a “Christian nation,” it has in reality become a nation in which each can do what is right in his own eyes — provided, of course, that the courts declare that to be part of the “freedom” of “choice” or of “speech.”

These are indeed sad, sad times. The child of God can only conclude that these signs indicate that the coming of our Lord is at hand. ☼

*What is that
“high moral ground”
that we have now lost?*

Marking the Bulwarks of Zion

Prof. Herman Hanko

John Wesley (1)

Introduction

While the Marrow Controversy was raging among the Presbyterians in Scotland, and the church in

that land was struggling with the Arminianism present in Marrow theology, England was developing its own kind of Arminianism within the Anglican Church, sometimes called the Church of England because it was the one denomination approved by the crown and of which the king was the head.

Arminianism had been present in the Anglican Church from its be-

ginning and had been, more or less, tolerated within the church. But it came to full-blown development during the work of John and Charles Wesley, the founders of Methodism. The impact that these two men had on England can hardly be overestimated. Their influence continues to the present. Nor is their influence limited to England. Methodism has been firmly

Prof. Hanko is professor emeritus of Church History and New Testament in the Protestant Reformed Seminary.

established in this country as well, and was, in fact, the religion of the frontier when the West was being settled. And the theology of Methodism has penetrated into many other denominations, which still hail John Wesley as a saint of the first rank.

Wesley's Early Life

John Wesley was born June 8, 1723 from Samuel Wesley and Susannah Annesley. The Wesley family was of ancient Saxon stock of some fame in the annals of early British history. Susannah was the twenty-fifth child of Dr. Samuel Annesley, and she brought into the world nineteen children of her own. John was the fifteenth child, but only five sisters and one brother had survived when he was born. Samuel Wesley was rector of the parish of Epworth, where life was grim and difficult. It was also dangerous. The people of the parish, though members of the Church of England (Anglican), were coarse, brutal, uneducated, and much inclined to violence. Nor was the manse sacred ground. When the people thought that their rector was too godly and required too much of them, they were not only threatening in their actions towards their rector, but they endangered the well-being of the children.

Because the revenues of the parish were not great, and because of a series of crop failures, the Wesley family fell on hard times, and Samuel was imprisoned for a debt of less than thirty pounds. During this time, riotous mobs with drums and guns paraded outside the rectory. The cows belonging to the rector were stabbed. The people swore that they would "squeeze the guts out" of the rector should they ever get their hands on him, and they even set the thatched roof of the manse on fire.

But Susannah was a gifted, strong-willed, capable, and pious woman, who saw her family through the hard times to which they were subjected. She taught

her children at home and gave all those who survived infancy an excellent education. She instilled in them an enormous respect for the church in which their father was rector.

Her strong will often clashed with that of her husband, who was no weak personality himself. When William of Orange from the Netherlands came to the throne of England, Samuel was elated, but his wife refused to support a foreign king. When Samuel prayed for William of Orange, she refused to say "Amen." Her husband, irritated by this lack of submission, said to her, "Very well, Sukey, if we are to have two kings, we must have two beds." And with that he saddled his horse and rode to London. It was all, however, a bit of a bluff. He had business in London in any case, and he soon returned to the family and his wife, towards whom he was usually most affectionate.

John soon went off to school in London. He was about 10½ years old and the year was 1714. He entered the Charterhouse, a public school for boys. Here he remained for six years. But he was not alone the entire time. In 1716 John's brother Charles, who was to be his companion and co-laborer through many years of his ministry, joined him; and that same year, his brother Samuel became an usher in Westminster Abbey. The three were now together.

John was, throughout his life, committed to mysticism in its unbiblical form. From these early years, many influences in his life seemed to drive him in the direction of mysticism, and it became an important part of John's life, explaining in some measure the direction John's theology took. We must mention, as we go along, these early influences.

One of them was a most peculiar series of events in the rectory back in Epworth, to which John occasionally returned. Beginning in 1716, strange and inexplicable

noises were heard at different times, and were the beginning of many other different noises. The family was not unduly disturbed by them, which is probably evidence of the fact that spiritism was a part of their religious life. At any rate, the boys who were away were told of these strange goings-on, and they themselves, during the times they were home, were supposedly witnesses of them. A biographer, in recording these events, writes:

Groans and knockings were heard in every part of the house, and by every member of the family except the rector. A maid-servant noticed "a most terrible and astonishing noise, as at the dining-room door, which caused the up-starting of her hair, and made her ears prick forth at an unusual rate." The sounds quickly became more varied and more alarming. There was a noise of breaking glass among the bottles under the staircase, and the man-servant, Robert, heard "someone come *slaring* through the garret to his chamber," and gobbling like a turkey cock. Robert also declared that he saw a hand-mill at the head of the garret stairway turning of itself with incredible speed. Then the iron casements, the lids of metal pans and the latches of the doors began to ring and rattle. A rumbling, drumming and stamping seemed to move from room to room, shaking the walls and windows. Sounds were heard like those of lumps of coal being flung and splintered on the floor, pewter dishes being thrown about or glasses broken. At other times it seemed as if sheets of clanging metal were dropped heavily on the boards. Occasionally they could hear something like the rubbing of a beast along the walls. But there were never any visible signs of damage or disturbance.

Whatever may have been actually happening in the home and whatever may have been the fervid imagination of the inhabit-

ants, these occult events made a deep impression on John and created in him a lifelong belief in spiritism.

John's Life at Oxford

On his 17th birthday John entered, as a Commoner, Christ Church College at Oxford University, one of the most prestigious universities in all England, and, along with Cambridge, one of the most influential in the entire continent of Europe. Oxford was to be his home for many years.

It seems that it was during these Oxford years that Wesley's spiritual life began to develop. Whatever he himself expected from religious and spiritual development, he did not consider himself truly converted, even though he engaged in all the religious exercises required by the college.

While in Christ Church, about 1725, another influence came to bear on him that also turned him in the direction of mysticism. He became acquainted with Thomas à Kempis, the late medieval mystic and the author of *The Imitation of Christ*. John was heavily influenced by this book and it stirred up his interest in other medieval mystics. This was also the year that he was ordained a deacon of Oxford and was licensed to preach.

In 1726 John was elected to Lincoln, another Oxford college known for its piety and learning. He was appointed Greek lecturer and moderator of the disputations. These disputations were somewhat like public debates in which students were grilled on an assigned thesis and required to defend it. In 1727 he acquired his degree of master of arts, and he spent some time in his father's curacy. His father was becoming increasingly infirm and was burdened with the great weight of the almost negligible influence his ministry had on the coarse and hard-hearted members of the parish. John's father begged John to

stay and take over the ministry of the parish in his place, but John refused and soon returned to Oxford, where he stayed for an additional six years.

Mystical influences continued to mold his life. He spent a great deal of time reading and studying William Law's *A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life*. The book not only emphasized the importance of a personal and experiential relationship to God, but did so within an Arminianism that was becoming increasingly strong in the Church of England. In fact, John Wesley's father, Samuel, was a part of the Arminian party within the church. If one wonders why Arminianism was tolerated in what was intended to be a Calvinistic church, the answer lies in part in the fact that the Church of England was the established church, the church authorized by the government, and the church that alone had a right of existence within the realm. As an established church it had to have room in it for a diversity of views in order to keep all the ministers in England within its walls.

An extremely important development was the founding on campus, shortly before 1729, of the "Oxford Holy Club." It was organized for purposes of improving the members' spiritual life. The club never had more than twenty-five members, but it exerted an influence beyond its smallness. John Wesley was the leader. The club met together to encourage each other and to discuss how to better their lives in holiness. The way they prescribed among themselves was the way of self-denial, ascetic practices, and engaging in good works. They regularly visited prisons and poor houses and helped these poor souls as much as they were able. It seemed as if they actually sought their salvation in their good works and ascetic practices, and minimized the cross of Christ, the only hope of

the believer. The Oxford Club was also to have a lasting effect on Wesley and on his theology.

The members of the club caught the attention of the people at Oxford, both students and officials. For their exercises in holiness they were ridiculed and even persecuted. From those days comes the name "Methodists," a name scornfully given to the Oxford Club for their "methodical" exercises in piety. Wesley describes his goals and his reasons for declining the curacy of his father in these words:

My one aim in life is to secure personal holiness, for without being holy myself I cannot promote real holiness in others. In Oxford, conversing only with a chosen circle of friends, I am screened from all the frivolous importunities of the world, and here I have a better chance of becoming holy than I should have in any other place. Many good works, already begun, depend upon me for their continuance. In Epworth, on the other hand, I should be of no use at all: I could not do any good to those boorish people, and I should probably fall back into habits of irregularity and indulgence.

One cannot help but be struck with the constant emphasis on good works, with no mention made of the cross of Jesus Christ as the only hope of the lost sinner.

In 1735 Wesley was persuaded to cross the Atlantic to minister as chaplain in Georgia to a colony of debtors, sent to Georgia by the British government as punishment for their crimes. John went with his brother Charles, the hymn-writer of the later Methodist movement. While they were on board ship in the Atlantic, a terrible storm struck, in which the ship was in grave danger of foundering. Wesley was struck by the serene composure of a group of Moravians, who prayed and sang while the storm raged. Wesley made the acquaintance of these

Moravians and was influenced by their theology. At the heart of their religion lay the idea, good in itself but carried to the extreme of making theology a mystical experience and little more, that the true knowledge of God was a personal communion with Him. Again Wesley was subjected to mystical influences.


His stay in Georgia did not go well, and after three years he was forced to leave Georgia. He returned to England and to Oxford in 1738. It was during this stay in Oxford that Wesley had what he considered to be his decisive conversion experience. It took place in a small chapel on Aldersgate St. in London. The biographer C. E. Vulliamy describes the event.

...On the 24th of May, it seemed to him that he had really found the assurance of belief. On the evening of this memorable day he went "very unwillingly" to the meeting of a religious society in Aldersgate Street, in which James Hutton appears to have been the principal figure. Someone was

reading Luther's *Preface to the Epistle to the Romans*. At about a quarter to nine, while he was listening to the reader, Wesley felt a warming of the heart. He felt that he did trust in Christ, and that he was actually saved from the law of sin and death. He began to pray fervently, and more particularly for his enemies. And then, he says, "I testified openly to all there what I now first felt in my heart." But the assurance was not complete, for he did not feel the joy that he believed to be inseparable from a true knowledge of salvation. "Then was I taught that peace and victory over sin are essential to faith in the Captain of our Salvation; but that, as to the transports of joy that usually attend the beginning of it, especially in those who have mourned deeply, God sometimes giveth, sometimes withholdeth them according to the counsels of His own Will."

After his return home, he was "much buffeted with temptations," which returned again and again. Two days later he wrote, "My soul continued in peace, but yet in heaviness because of manifold temptations." ...On the 6th of June, after a ter-

rible encounter with his fears, he felt "a kind of soreness," and knew that he was not invulnerable. "O God," he cried, "save thou me, and all that are weak in faith from doubtful disputations."

In his book, *Mysticism in the Wesleyan Tradition*, Robert G. Tuttle, Jr. claims that one of the weaknesses of mysticism, especially as practiced in the Middle Ages, is that it really denies the atonement of Christ or bypasses it in the interests of immediate union with God. When one reads of Wesley's Aldersgate experience, as well as his life previous to May 24, one cannot help but be impressed with the fact that such was the core of Wesley's so-called religious experience. In the same book Tuttle argues that mysticism inevitably leads to Arminianism; and, of course, a reciprocal relationship exists between a bypassing (to use a more charitable word) of the cross and a salvation by good works. But to Wesley's Arminianism we turn in a later article. 

Report of Classis East

May 12, 2004

Classis East met in regular session on Wednesday, May 12, 2004 at the Georgetown PRC. All the churches were represented by two delegates. Rev. William Langerak served as the chairman for this session.

Much of the business of this session was routine. Reports from the Stated Clerk and the Classical Committee were received; the report of the committee to assist Wingham in its transition to the PRC was also presented and approved.


An overture to Synod 2005 from two brothers in our Cornerstone PRC requesting that synod appoint a committee to study the matter of proper Bible translation and advise synod whether it should recommend the use of a newer, vernacular Bible to our churches was presented. Classis put this matter in the hands of a study committee to bring recommendations to the September 2004 meeting of classis.

Classis was in closed session to consider a matter of discipline brought by one of the churches.

Classical appointments were

given to Georgetown, Hudsonville, and Wingham. Wingham's appointments extend through June 2004, when they expect the arrival of their new pastor, Rev. M. DeVries.

Expenses for this classis amounted to \$1,424.85. Classis will meet next on September 8, 2004 at the Holland PRC.

Respectfully submitted,
Jon J. Huiskens,
Stated Clerk 

Mission Activities

In his latest newsletter, written just before his furlough to the United States in June, Rev. A. Spriensma, our denomination's missionary to the Philippines, informs us that the Berean Church of God Reformed in Manila has recently set up a committee to work on translating some of our pamphlets and books into the Tagalog language. Somewhat related to that, Rev. Spriensma also writes that ten of the young people recently recited Matthew 5:3-16 and were given their own copy of the KJV Bible. These young people memorized and recited this passage not in their native language, but in English, and KJV at that. Rev. Spriensma adds that they did an excellent job, and all ten catechism students have already put their new Bibles to use in the worship services. We could also add that while on furlough in the States, Rev. Spriensma will be preaching and giving a presentation of his work in the Indiana/Chicago area June 13 at Cornerstone PRC; in the Grand Rapids, MI area at Trinity PRC in Hudsonville on June 27; and in the Iowa area at Doon PRC on July 11. Rev. Spriensma hopes to make copies of this power-point presentation available for churches and individuals who cannot make the in-person presentation.

Our churches' Domestic Mission Committee has decided to continue investigating the possibility of developing our mission labors in Allentown, PA. They plan to do this by making four visits to the area in 2004. Rev. Mahtani, our denomination's missionary to the

eastern United States, and Gary Boverhof, a member of the DMC, made the first visit in February. Gary Boverhof plans to accompany Rev. Mahtani to Allentown again in December, the Lord willing. Rev. Mahtani returned there May 21-23 along with his wife, and will go again in September, in order to encourage the saints there and to keep up the contacts we have in the area.

Rev. R. Cammenga and his wife and their three youngest children, along with several other members of Southwest PRC in Grand Rapids, MI, the calling church for Rev. J. Mahtani and our churches' work in Pittsburgh, PA, spent the Memorial Day weekend in Pittsburgh. Besides visiting the Pittsburgh Zoo and Aquarium on Saturday, May 30, Rev. Cammenga was able to preach for the Fellowship on Sunday and also give a speech on "Christian Patriotism" at their annual Memorial Day picnic on Monday.

Our churches' missionary to Northern Ireland made another trip to South Wales on June 4. He reports that there was a good response to the speech he gave entitled, "The Last Days."

Rev. W. Bekkering, one of our churches' missionaries to Ghana, West Africa, left his work in Accra the last week in June to join his wife in the States for their annual vacation with their family.

Members of the Covenant of Grace PR Fellowship in Spokane, WA were encouraged to reserve the Wednesdays of June 9, 16, and 23 for a seminar series, "The Holy Worship of God," which was to be conducted by Missionary Rev. T. Miersma under the topics, "Living Participants in Worship," "Biblical and Reverent Worship," and "Preaching, the Heart of Worship."

Young Adult Activities

Saturday, May 25, there was a Young Adults' outing at the Yucaipa Community Park for the young adults of Hope PRC in Redlands, CA. Activities included soccer, softball, tennis, and volleyball, with plenty of good food to fill the time between periods, innings, sets, or games.

Rev. J. Laning, pastor at Hope PRC in Walker, MI, arranged for a group of his congregation's young people and young adults to accompany him on a trip to Wingham, Ontario, when he filled a classical appointment there to the Wingham PRC. On Saturday there was a time of fellowship with the young people of Wingham. Rev. Laning preached twice on Sunday and then led a Bible discussion in the evening, before the group returned on Monday.

The young adults in and around the Kalamazoo, MI PRC were invited to join the Young Adult Society of Kalamazoo for a fun day of discussion and games at their church on Saturday, June 5, from 8:30 A.M. until early evening. Rev. W. Bruinsma, pastor at Kalamazoo, spoke on "Holding Fast to the Truth."

Young People's Activities

The Young People's Society of Southwest PRC hosted a softball tournament on Saturday, May 29 at Whistle Stop Park in Byron Center, MI. There were 15 teams entered, and most of our area's churches were represented. Games began at 8:00 A.M. and concluded roughly 12 hours later, with a concession stand open all day.

Minister Activities

Let us continue to pray for our five vacant churches, for those churches with pastors just beginning to serve, and for all our pas-

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

tors, that God might lead them according to His will unto the good of His people.

Rev. R. Smit, pastor of the Doon, IA PRC, has accepted the call he received to become the next pastor of the Immanuel PRC in Lacombe, AB, Canada. Since Rev. Smit's acceptance of the call from Immanuel, the council of the Doon, IA PRC presented a trio of the Revs. W. Bruinsma, G. Eriks, and

J. Slopsema, from which their congregation was to call on June 16.


Rev. J. Slopsema declined the call from Georgetown PRC to serve as their next pastor.

Rev. M. DeVries accepted the call he received from the Wingham, Ontario PRC to become their next pastor.

First PRC in Edmonton, AB, Canada extended a call to Rev. C. Haak to replace Rev. M. DeVries as their next pastor. With Rev.

Haak on trio were the Revs. J. Laning and C. Terpstra.

From a trio of the Revs. G. Eriks, D. Kleyn, and C. Terpstra, the Faith PRC in Jenison, MI extended a call to Rev. C. Terpstra.

On May 30 the Hudsonville, MI PRC extended a call to Rev. J. Slopsema to serve as their next pastor. With Rev. Slopsema on the trio were the Revs. A. Brummel and A. den Hartog. 

Announcements

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The council and congregation of the Loveland PRC express their Christian sympathy to Mrs. Elizabeth Schwarz and to Robert and Phyllis Brands and family in the death of their husband, father, and grandfather,

MR. HUGO SCHWARZ.

May they be comforted by God's Word in Revelation 14:13, "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord."

Rev. Garrett Eriks, President
Mr. Victor Solanyk, Clerk

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

Our parents,
**HILBERT AND BEVERLY
KUIPER,**

will celebrate their 25th wedding anniversary on July 4, 2004. We their children thank God daily for the faithful and godly example that they have given us over the years. We also would like to thank them for the continuing support and love that they show to us daily and will, Lord willing, continue to show in the years to come. "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth" (III John, verse 4).

✿ Steve and Rosie Bylsma

Joel

✿ Hib & Missy Kuiper

✿ Jim Kuiper

✿ Joanna Kuiper

✿ Tom Kuiper

✿ Suzie Kuiper

Hudsonville, Michigan

TAPES

Copies of the lecture sponsored by Peace PRC Evangelism entitled,

"Is the KJV Still the Best?"

by Prof. Hanko,

are now available. If you would like a copy, please email our church at srhouch@aaahawk.com or mail your request to:

Peace PRC Evangelism
18423 Stony Island Avenue
Lansing, IL 60438.

Please indicate whether you would like a CD or a tape. There is no charge for small orders.

NOTICE!

Classis West of the Protestant Reformed Churches will be hosted by Randolph PRC in Randolph, Wisconsin on Wednesday, September 1, 2004 at 8:30 A.M. All material for the agenda should be in the hands of the stated clerk by Monday, August 2, 2004. An officebearers' conference will be held on Tuesday, August 31, the Lord willing, on the subject of "Christian Education." Delegates or visitors in need of lodging or transportation should notify Rev. Douglas Kuiper (920-326-5642, or by email at doug.kuiper@prca.org).

Rev. Daniel Kleyn
Stated Clerk, Classis West

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The council and congregation of the Hull PRC express their Christian sympathy to Mr. and Mrs. Tony Jansma in the death of his sister, and to Scott and Michelle Hoekstra in the death of her grandmother,

MRS. GERT DE BOER.

May they find their comfort in the Word of God in Psalm 23:6: "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever."

Rev. Steven R. Key, President
Brian Kroese, Assistant Clerk

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The council and congregation of the Loveland PRC express their Christian sympathy to Mrs. Nola Griess, Rod and Kim Griess and family, and Ken Griess in the death of their husband, father, and grandfather,

MR. ROLLY GRIESS.

May they find their comfort in the Word of God in Romans 8:28, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."

Rev. Garrett Eriks, President
Mr. Victor Solanyk, Clerk

NOTICE!!

Classis East will meet in regular session on Wednesday, September 8, 2004 at the First Protestant Reformed Church, Holland, Michigan. Material for this session must be in the hands of the stated clerk no later than August 9, 2004.

Jon J. Huisken, Stated Clerk

THE STANDARD BEARER

P.O. Box 603
Grandville, MI 49468-0603

*****CAR-RT LOT**C-015
Dorothy Kamps 31
3315 CALVIN CT SW
GRANDVILLE MI 49418-2469
USA

PERIODICAL
Postage Paid at
Grandville,
Michigan

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On June 12, 2004, our parents and grandparents, **RICHARD and SYLVIA VANBAREN**, celebrated their 40th wedding anniversary. We are thankful to God for His continued blessings and mercies regarding our parents and us. We are thankful He has given to us God-fearing parents who brought us up in His honor and fear.

We thank our parents also for their steadfastness in the faith and guidance throughout our lives. Psalm 90:1, 2, "Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou didst form the earth and the world, even from everlasting thou art God."

- ✿ David and Nancy VanBaren
Melissa, Brenda, Chad, Michelle,
Jessica
- ✿ Bryan and Elizabeth VanBaren
Amanda, Jeanette, Bryanna
- ✿ Loren and Nancy Gritters
Emily, Brad, Heidi, Leah, Kyle
- ✿ Marvin and Marcia Gritters
Matthew, Keith, Ryan, Daniel,
Garett, Brett
- ✿ Rick and Shawna VanBaren
Madeline, Richard, Nathan, Russell
- ✿ Michael and Kathy Miller
Ashlea
- ✿ Kevin VanBaren

Grandville, Michigan

The Southwest PRC's
Evangelism Committee presents:

Summer Seminar 2004

at Southwest Church
4875 Ivanrest Ave.
Grandville, Michigan

Marriage — God's Institution

July 28, 7:30 P.M.:

"The Bible's Teaching on Marriage"
by Rev. Ronald Cammenga

August 4, 7:30 P.M.:

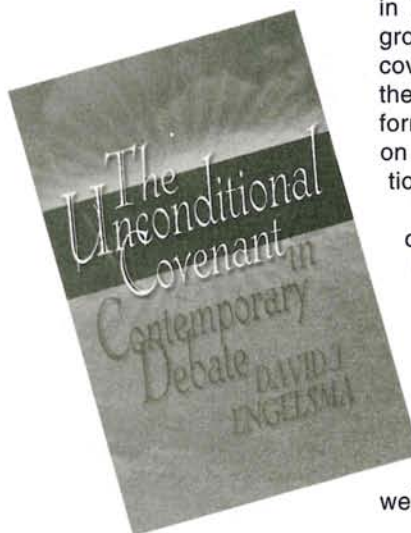
"Marriage and the Culture of Divorce"
by Rev. Kenneth Koole

August 11, 7:30 P.M.:

"Homosexual Union and Marriage"
by Rev. Charles Terpstra

Announcing a new booklet

by Prof. David J. Engelsma:
*The Unconditional Covenant in
Contemporary Debate*



This booklet examines the contemporary heresy of justification by faith and works in light of its claim that it is grounded in the truth of the covenant. The booklet rejects the heresy, and calls all Reformed Christians to reject it, on the basis of the unconditional covenant of grace.

To request your free copy, contact the Evangelism Committee of Trinity Protestant Reformed Church,

3385 Van Buren St.
Hudsonville, MI 49426;
email your request to
booklet@trinityprc.org;
or read it online on our
web site: www.trinityprc.org

Reformed Witness Hour

Station Listings

| Station | Location | Frequency | Time/day |
|---------|------------------|-----------|-------------------|
| KARI | Lynden, WA | 550AM | 8:00 P.M./Sunday |
| KLOH | Pipestone, MN | 1050AM | 8:00 A.M./Sunday |
| KDCR | Sioux Center, IA | 88.5FM | 5:00 P.M./Sunday |
| KCWN | Pella, IA | 99.9FM | 3:30 P.M./Sunday |
| WMRH | Waupun, WI | 1170AM | 8:30 A.M./Sunday |
| WFUR | Grand Rapids, MI | 102.9FM | 8:00 A.M./Sunday |
| WFUR | Grand Rapids, MI | 1570AM | 4:00 P.M./Sunday |
| WORD | Pittsburgh, PA | 101.5FM | 10:00 A.M./Sunday |
| WFNC | Fayetteville, NC | 640AM | 9:30 A.M./Sunday |
| KGA | Spokane, WA | 1510AM | 7:30 P.M./Sunday |
| KCRO | Omaha, NB | 660AM | 4:30 P.M./Sunday |
| CJCA | Edmonton, AB | 930AM | 6:30 P.M./Sunday |
| KLTT | Loveland, CO | 670AM | 1:30 P.M./Sunday |
| WAUR | Chicago, IL | 930AM | 8:30 A.M./Sunday |
| GOSPEL | Northern Ireland | 846AM/MW | 8:30 A.M./Sunday |

Topics for July

| Date | Topic | Text |
|---------|---|---------------------|
| July 4 | "The Calling of Husbands and Wives" (2) | Eph. 5:25ff. |
| July 11 | "Priorities in Marriage" (1) | I Corinthians 10:31 |
| July 18 | "Priorities in Marriage" (2) | I Corinthians 10:31 |
| July 25 | "The Woman's Role as Wife and Mother" (1) | Titus 2:1-5 |