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## In This Issue ...

Humility is the theme of emeritus minister Rev. Cornelius Hanko's meditation on II Samuel 7:18, 19. "Humility," writes Hanko, "is ... the earmark of every true servant of God."

Serving is the instruction of Prof. Robert Decker's opening article in a series on "Ministering to the Saints." "Jesus is the minister of the saints." He is this also "through the saints themselves."

Rev. Carl Haak explains one of Jesus' acts of service in the rubric, "Search the Scriptures." This is His healing of the lame man at the pool of Bethesda. It is "a sign of the power of salvation to take us who cannot walk in the ways of God."

Spiritual maturity is described by Rev. Ron VanOverloop. Spiritual maturity is ... well, what is it? Long-time membership in the church? Regular attendance at the worship services? Intellectual sophistication? Read "Maturity."

Attorney James Lanting informs of a recent Supreme Court decision bearing on the relationship of church and state in the United States. See "Narrow Victory for Religious Expression."

Controversy in the Reformed churches over the promise of God to covenant children is Rev. Bernard Woudenberg's subject in the new rubric, "Contending for the Faith." However, he continues a treatment begun earlier in another rubric.

Rev. Gise VanBaren notes that all around us is renewed interest in the teaching of a "well-meant offer" of salvation, not all of it favorable. Against this heresy in Calvinistic circles, Herman Hoeksema, though dead, yet speaketh (see the rubric, "Bring the Books").

Last (though often read first), Mr. Benjamin Wigger gives us some news of the denomination, particularly of the schools.

— DJE



# Humble Thanks

*Then went king David in, and sat before the Lord, and said, Who am I, O Lord God? and what is my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto? And this was yet a small thing in thy sight, O Lord God; for thou hast spoken also of thy servant's house for a great while to come. And is this the manner of man, O Lord God?*

II Samuel 7:18, 19.

King David is overwhelmed, filled with awe and gratitude! It is all so marvelous, so incomprehensible, exceeding his fondest imagination.

He goes to the house of God and sits in worship and adoration before that great God of Israel. He is wrapped in deep humiliation and prayer as he declares, "Who am I, O Adonai Jehovah, that thou hast brought me hitherto, ... that thou hast spoken also of thy servant's house for a great while to come?"

The Lord had given David victory over all his enemies. The land was at rest for the first time since the agonizing times of the judges and the distressful days of Saul, when the enemy overpowered and held Israel in subjection.

The king's thoughts turn toward a permanent house for his God, a temple for Adonai Jehovah. He himself dwells in a house of cedar, but a mere tent made of curtains still serves as the dwelling of God. Surely the time had come that a perma-

nent abode among His people Israel be built for the Lord. Even the prophet Nathan agrees that this would be pleasing to God.

But they were both mistaken. Jehovah had far greater plans in mind for David and His people Israel. In vision the Lord spoke to the prophet, informing him that David would have a son, and that this son would build the Lord's house, for in this son Jehovah would prove His faithfulness by establishing David's throne forever. Typically Solomon would represent the promised Christ, who builds the house of God eternally in the heavens, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom and whose throne is eternal in the heavens.

Jehovah assures His servant of His covenant faithfulness. In the line of David and Solomon the Christ, the Savior, the eternal King of kings, the Lord over the whole universe would be born.

Do you wonder that David was overwhelmed? Should not he be? Should you and I not be overwhelmed for what God has done for us and promised us?



Who am I, O Lord God?

The Pharisee in us is inclined to boast of our virtues and accomplishments. Our sinful flesh may be pleased to think that there is some good, some common grace in every man, also in us.

But when we are on our knees before the face of the Lord, all boasting is excluded. When we are in the

presence of the adorable, sovereign Adonai, the unchangeable, ever-faithful Jehovah, who keeps covenant forever, we are but dust and ashes.

"What is man that thou art mindful of him?"

Scripture never ceases to remind us that "all flesh is grass, and all the goodness thereof is as the flower of the field. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: because the Spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it: surely the people is grass" (Is. 40:6, 7).

The Lord reminded David from time to time that, "I took thee from the sheep cote, from tending the sheep." He himself admitted, "Who am I and what is my father's house?"

Our ancestry gives us no reason to boast. It is amazing, but so very true, that not many mighty, not many noble are found within the church. God gathers His people often out of the common folk, the farmers, shepherders, factory workers, bricklayers, carpenters, shopkeepers. Dr. Abraham Kuyper spoke of "*de kleine luyden*," "the commonfolk," whom God uses to bring reformation in the church.

Added to that, shamefacedly we admit that we are guilty of transgressing all God's commandments, of constantly sinning against Him by failing to give Him the glory He is worthy to receive, to trust in Him with our whole being as we ought. "I am evil, born in sin. Thou desirest truth within."

This humility is and should be the earmark of every true servant of God; whether prophet, priest, or

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



king; whether minister, elder, or deacon; or whether serving in the office of all believers.

We are saved solely by grace according to God's sovereign good pleasure.



David's amazement only increases as he adds, "And this is but a small thing in thy sight."

Twice he takes these two exalted names: Adonai Jehovah, upon his lips. In deepest reverence and awe the man of God addresses God as Adonai, Sovereign Lord. Our God is Self-sufficient in His eternal perfections. He has no need of men's hands to be worshiped by them.

He is the God of infinite virtues. He is sovereign in His eternal thoughts, plans, and purposes. All power, all authority belongs to Him. No one is His counselor. His counsel stands and He does all His good pleasure. All nations are before Him as a drop of the bucket, as a particle of dust in the balance. He alone is sovereign Lord over all.

Adonai Jehovah. The latter is God's covenant name. He who is completely self-sufficient in His own glorious being has freely and sovereignly chosen the Son, the second Person of the divine Trinity, to reveal all His infinite perfections. To Christ He gives a people to be His sons and daughters, who bear His blessed image and likeness. With that people God established His covenant, takes them into His heart, into His life, and into His blessed fellowship to dwell in His new creation for endless ages to come. God is the eternal "I am," the almighty, unchangeable, ever-faithful covenant God.



Thus David adds, "But thou hast spoken also of thy servant's house for a long time to come."

He marvels in the fact that he also is included in the promise giv-

en to father Abraham, "I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee."

He knows by faith that he is a member of that universal church which the Son of God gathers, defends, and preserves from the beginning to the end of the world.

He looks forward to the fulfillment of God's promises, the day when the promised Savior will come to bring salvation.

He marvels that he may be included in that covenant line out of which the Savior will be born.

He sees, as it were, that covenant line that ran from Adam through Noah to Abraham, from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob through Judah to David. And now to him comes the promise that the royal line will continue after him even to the One who will sit upon David's throne forever. Along with that, the covenant line will continue to Mary and Joseph, to Jesus, the Savior.

That line still continues unbroken even to our present day. We can see how the line carried on from Jerusalem to Antioch, to Asia Minor and to Europe, to England, Scotland, Wales, and Ireland, and across the sea to the Americas, continuing on to the ends of the earth as God unfailingly gathers His own unto Himself.

What a privilege to be a covenant parent! With tender awe we take that little speck of life in our arms. What a marvel! A gift of God. A very personal gift, for this child is very much like its parents, yet an individual, with his own personality to live the life God has appointed for him and to serve the purpose for which he was created.

What a blessing that we may present this child for baptism, making our vows and, by the grace of God, assuming our responsibility as covenant parents to rear this child in the fear of the Lord to the utmost of our power!

Even more amazing is the fact

that God takes from our children to claim them as His own. Yes, even as members of the church we share that privilege. Each child that is baptized is included as a member of the congregation. He or she is a member of the family of God. We say with the church of all ages, "I will open my mouth in a parable: I will utter dark sayings of old: Which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us. We will not hide it from their children, shewing to the generation to come the praises of the Lord, and his strength, and his wonderful works which he has done" (Ps. 78:2-4).

Who is not moved in the depth of his being by the thought that God is willing to use us in a small way for the gathering of His church and the coming of His kingdom? Who, realizing his own unworthiness, does not pray (as our fathers did in the past), "Cut us not off in our generations"? And who does not humbly thank his God when he sees his children's children walking in the fear of the Lord? Amazing grace!



"And is this the manner of man, O Lord God?"

I Chronicles 17:17, where this narrative is repeated, can well serve as a commentary on this statement. There David adds: "And hast regarded me according to the estate of a man of high degree."

God's people are very special in God's sight. Already in the old dispensation the church sang:

Zion, founded on the mountain,  
God, thy Maker, loves thee  
well;

He has chosen thee, most precious,

He delights in Thee to dwell;  
God's own city, God's own city,  
Who can all thy glory tell?

While in the new dispensation the apostle Peter declares concerning God's covenant people, "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the



praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvelous light."

That also is true of the individual believer. God regards each of

His children as "a man of high degree," a saint in Christ Jesus. We ask: Why me? Why should I be one of God's children and heir of His eternal kingdom? Who am I that

I should be instrumental toward the gathering of God's church and the coming of His kingdom?

Truly blessed is that people whose God is Jehovah! □

## Editorials

# Prospects for the New Volume-Year

With this, the October 1, 1995 issue begins volume 72 of the *Standard Bearer*.

The main changes from the preceding volume-year are the following, as decided by the present writers at the annual staff meeting in June.

Rev. Gise VanBaren is the new editor of "All Around Us," a column he has written before. He replaces Prof. Robert Decker, who has decided to write for the rubric, "Ministering to the Saints." This is the area of Prof. Decker's primary teaching at the Protestant Reformed Seminary.

Rev. Ron VanOverloop will co-edit two rubrics, "The Strength of Youth" with Rev. Wilbur Bruinsma and "When Thou Sittest in Thine House" with Mrs. Marybeth Lubbers.

Missionaries Ron Hanko (Northern Ireland) and Tom Miersma

(Alamosa, Colorado) and minister-on-loan (to the Evangelical Reformed Churches of Singapore) Jason Kortering will cooperate in writing the missions column, "Go Ye into All the World."

"Taking Heed to the Doctrine" will be the responsibility of Rev. Steve Key. Rev. Key intends to set forth the Reformed faith following the order of the six *loci*, or main topics, of Reformed dogmatics.

A new rubric will be "Contending for the Faith." Rev. Bernard Woudenberg will be the writer.

The other rubrics and writers will be continued, except for "Come, Lord Jesus" which has been dropped.

Several ministers, active and retired, will write the meditations. We plan to reprint some meditations that appeared in early issues of the *SB*.

Societies and other Bible study classes should keep in mind that the

*SB* will continue to publish study guides by Rev. Carl Haak on the gospel according to John.

The staff reappointed the present editor (Prof. Engelsma), managing editor (Don Doezema), staff secretary (Prof. Decker), general adjunct (Prof. Hanko), and special issues committee (Prof. Engelsma, Prof. Decker, and Don Doezema).

The next issue of the *SB* will be our special Reformation Day issue. The theme will be "The Reformation of 1924." This will explore the history of and the issues involved in the founding of the Protestant Reformed Churches.

May our writers have the grace to write (on time!); may our readers have the zeal to read; and may the Lord God add His blessing.

Let the testimony continue and, may it please God, increase: "God is God!"

— DJE

# Hoeksema on a Controversy in the OPC

Just off the press is a new book by Herman Hoeksema, *The Clark-VanTil Controversy*. The press, interestingly, is not that of the Re-

formed Free Publishing Association, or of any organization associated with the Protestant Reformed Churches (PRC). The publisher is The Trinity Foundation headed by

John W. Robbins and "committed to the reconstruction of philosophy and theology along Biblical lines." The Foundation seeks to fulfil this mission by the publication mainly of the



writings of the Presbyterian philosopher and theologian Gordon H. Clark.

The new book consists of a series of *Standard Bearer* editorials that Hoeksema wrote in the years 1944-1946 concerning a controversy in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC). The controversy had serious effects upon the OPC. In a foreword to the book, Robbins remarks that because of unrelenting attacks upon Gordon Clark and his defenders, in spite of the defense of Clark by the General Assembly (Synod), "one-third of the church walked out the door, including one of its largest congregations." According to Robbins, "the OPC has never recovered from that loss, and indeed, Christianity in America suffered a serious blow" (p. viii). In his article, "The Battle over the Ordination of Gordon H. Clark," in the OPC commemorative volume, *Pressing toward the Mark: Essays Commemorating Fifty Years of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church*, Michael A. Hakkenberg agrees that Clark was virtually forced out of the OPC by "the constant and often bitter opposition to his ordination," although Hakkenberg, unlike Robbins, sees the outcome of the conflict as beneficial to the OPC as a Reformed denomination.

The protagonists were Gordon Clark, then an ordained minister in the OPC, and Cornelius VanTil, professor at Westminster Seminary in Philadelphia. Allied with VanTil were several other leading lights in the OPC, including R. B. Kuiper, Ned Stonehouse, John Murray, Edward Young, and Paul Woolley — basically the faculty at Westminster. VanTil and his allies were demanding the deposition of Clark for his doctrinal views.

### Vital Issues

These doctrinal issues are the reason why articles from the 1940s on an old controversy deserve to be published as a book, and read, in 1995. As Robbins notes, the doc-

trines that were at issue in the Clark-VanTil case "remain very much with us" (p. vii).

There were four doctrinal issues: the meaning of the incomprehensibility of God; the relationship between divine sovereignty and human responsibility; the "sincere offer" of salvation to the reprobate; and the relationship of the intellect to the will and emotions in the soul of man.

Especially the attack on Clark for denying the "sincere offer of the gospel to the reprobate" drew the attention of Hoeksema. He himself had been deposed by the Christian Reformed Church (CRC) for denying the "well-meant offer" a scant 20 years earlier. Nevertheless, in the careful, clear, and penetrating manner that was characteristic of him, Hoeksema analyzed all of the issues in the controversy, in the light of Scripture and the Reformed confessions.

With regard to the issue of God's incomprehensibility, Hoeksema showed that God's act of revelation makes possible, and demands, that we know truth as God does, though not exhaustively.

But if what God revealed to us has a different meaning for Him than for us, God is not only incomprehensible, but also unknowable. Then revelation itself is not true and reliable (p. 12).

With regard to the issue of the relationship between divine sovereignty and human responsibility, no Reformed theologian — in this case, Clark — may be criticized, much less deposed, for attempting to harmonize the two truths. As revealed truths they are not contradictory. Their harmony is that "responsibility must be defined as falling within the compass of God's decrees and sovereignty" (p. 59).

With regard to the issue of the "sincere offer" as held by Clark's adversaries and denied by Clark, "to say that God sincerely seeks the salvation of all that hear the Gospel ...

is Arminian, pure and simple" (p. 49).

With regard to the issue of the relationship of the intellect to the emotions, Hoeksema demonstrated from the sources that in affirming the primacy of the intellect in man Clark stood squarely in the tradition of Calvin, Kuyper, and Bavinck. This question, however, wrote Hoeksema,

might be a nice subject for discussion by some philosophical or theological club. How the Presbytery of Philadelphia could subject a theological candidate to several hours of grilling on this point is, I confess, beyond my comprehension. And still more difficult it is for me to understand how the complainants could discover in Dr. Clark's views in this respect sufficient ground for a protest against his licensure and ordination. The question involved is, to say the least, debatable (p. 18).

### Worthy Purposes

Robbins has a definite purpose with this publication. He charges that Cornelius VanTil consistently misrepresented Clark and that VanTil's disciples are carrying on this misrepresentation today, thus obscuring Clark's "important contribution to both Christian philosophy and theology."

Hoeksema clearly perceived which party advocated the Biblical position on the four major issues in the controversy; it requires extraordinary blindness — or personal loyalty bordering on idolatry — for others not to see so clearly half a century later. We hope that this small book will aid their understanding, and that they will join us in promoting a consistent, Christian faith ("Postscript," p. 87)

In the providence of God, the book may also serve the purpose to enlighten some concerning the Reformed theology of Herman Hoeksema. Specifically, it may serve to clarify what Hoeksema intended by



his repudiation of the "well-meant offer of the gospel." No one can read chapter 9, "The Sincere Offer of the Gospel" (which we publish elsewhere in this issue with the permission of Dr. Robbins), and come away thinking that Hoeksema was opposed to the church's preaching the gospel to all, or to the church's calling every hearer to repent and believe.

Hardly less important is the book's presentation of Hoeksema's denial that God's revelation, Holy Scripture, is contradictory. This, of course, was intimately related to Hoeksema's vehement denial that God sincerely desires to save those whom He has from eternity reprobated. Like Clark, Hoeksema wanted nothing of the view held by VanTil and his cohorts, that the Reformed church can maintain that God both wills the damnation of some and desires the salvation of all, inasmuch as Scripture is a book of "paradox," that is, real contradiction to the mind of the believing man. Such a view of Scripture, insisted Hoeksema, is the death of all theology.

All of Scripture is given us that we might understand it ... all of it is adapted to our human mind, so that, even though there be many things in that revelation of God which we cannot *fathom*, there is nothing in it that is *contrary* to human intelligence and logic.... If the complainants (VanTil and his allies — DJE) take the stand that Scripture reveals things that are, not above and far beyond, but *contrary* to, in conflict with the human mind, it is my conviction that the complainants should be indicted of heterodoxy, and of undermining all sound theology. Either the *logic* of revelation is *our* logic, or there is no revelation (p. 8; cf. also pp. 26, 27).

For this, Clark and Hoeksema were unjustly (and unkindly) branded "rationalists," as are the PRC today.

It is not clear to me what the difference might be between the par-

adoxical nature of truth as espoused by VanTil and his disciples and the "theology of paradox" of Kierkegaard and his pupil, Karl Barth. To the same proposition in the same sense at the same time, both VanTil and Barth say "yes and no."

### Intriguing Question

Hoeksema raises an interesting question in the book about the influence of the CRC upon the Orthodox Presbyterian opponents of Gordon Clark, particularly in the matter of the sincere offer of salvation to the reprobate. This is a question, really, about the influence of the CRC upon the OPC itself in the matter of the offer. One result of the Clark-VanTil controversy was the virtual adoption by the OPC of the doctrine that in the preaching of the gospel God displays a saving love for all hearers and expresses a sincere desire to save them all, reprobate as well as elect. This is the teaching of the report by John Murray and Ned Stonehouse, "The Free Offer of the Gospel," presented to the Fifteenth General Assembly of the OPC in 1948.

Hoeksema suspected such influence of the CRC upon the OPC:

The *Complaint* leaves the impression that it was chiefly written by Christian Reformed men that are trying to defend the Christian Reformed tradition in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and to introduce into the latter the errors of 1924. In fact, this impression is so strong that I make bold to conjecture that the *Complaint* was written by more than one author, and that I could point out the writer of the last part merely on the basis of internal evidence. I would consider it deplorable if the Orthodox Presbyterian Church would yield to this temptation (which the OPC did in 1948 — DJE) (p. 11). Here, too, the *Complaint* reveals, more clearly than anywhere else, its distinctly Christian Reformed tendency, particularly its sympathy with the three well-known decrees

of the Synod of Kalamazoo, 1924 (p. 33).

There were good reasons for the suspicion, apart from the similarity of the doctrinal positions and of the arguments supporting those positions. Cornelius VanTil and R. B. Kuiper had their roots deep in the CRC. In addition, there was a very close relationship between the CRC and the OPC in the early years of the OPC.

It is noteworthy that it was the Christian Reformed theologian R. B. Kuiper who attacked Clark on the issue of the offer at the presbytery meeting of March 19, 1945.

Professor R. B. Kuiper discussed Dr. Clark's attempt to solve the paradoxes of divine sovereignty and human responsibility and the decree of reprobation and the universal sincere offer of the Gospel.

In this attack, Kuiper gave the typical Christian Reformed defense of the "sincere offer" (understood as God's desire to save the reprobate) against the condemnation of this notion by the creedal doctrine of predestination: "there are paradoxes which are intrinsically paradoxical to man because of his very finiteness" (report of the proceedings of presbytery by *The Presbyterian Guardian*, cited in *The Clark-VanTil Controversy*, p. 77).

This typical defense of the sheer contradiction is also typical evasion. For the issue is not man's "finiteness." The issue, rather, is God's revelation. Is God able to reveal His counsel concerning our redemption to the believing mind in an understandable way? Is the revelation of Scripture reasonable and harmonious, or irrational and contradictory? Has God, in fact, revealed Himself? For a "paradoxical revelation," like the "theology of paradox," is no revelation at all, but confusion and nonsense.

By putting his finger on the Christian Reformed influence upon the theologians of the OPC, Hoekse-



ma may well have solved the problem that so mystifies the Presbyterian theologian John H. Gerstner: how could John Murray ever have taught that God sincerely desires to save men and women whom He has eternally appointed to damnation according to His good pleasure?

#### Timely Book

The book is timely. Many Pres-

byterians are commemorating the 100th anniversary of the birth of Cornelius VanTil. Perhaps some will reconsider the issues in the Clark-VanTil controversy.

Many Calvinists are presently taking a close look at the doctrine of the "well-meant offer." In the British Isles, there is a frenzy of activity to defend the "well-meant offer," while condemning the denial of it

as "hyper-Calvinism." Perhaps some of a fair mind will at least listen to Hoeksema's biblical and confessional criticism of the "well-meant offer," and respond to it.

We in the PRC wish this lucid, little (87-page) book well.

It is available for \$7.95 from The Trinity Foundation, Post Office Box 1666, Hobbs, New Mexico 88240.

—DJE

*Ministering to the Saints*

*Prof. Robert Decker*

# Christ Jesus, Our Minister

In the passage from which the title of this rubric is taken (II Corinthians 8:1-7) the apostle Paul exhorts the saints in Corinth to give liberally to the relief of the poor. Paul begins by holding before the Corinthian saints the example of the saints of the churches in Macedonia, i.e., the churches in Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea.

The saints in Macedonia in the midst of great affliction, and we take affliction to mean persecution and extreme poverty, had exceeded their ability in the contributions they had made for the saints (vv. 1-3). And this they did, not by constraint or in obedience to earnest exhortations on the part of the apostle, but they themselves urged the apostle to receive and take charge of their alms (v. 4). The great desire of these saints was to be allowed to take part in "the fellowship of the ministering to

the saints." Not only so, but these saints did more. Liberality to the poor was only a part of what they did. They devoted themselves to the Lord (v. 5). Thus the apostle entreates the Corinthians to abound in this grace also, i.e., in the grace of giving themselves to the Lord in the way of giving liberally to the poor.

All this is evidence of the grace of God bestowed on the churches and saints in Macedonia. Their liberality to the poor and their giving of themselves to the Lord were a fruit of the wonderful grace of God given to them.

This same wonderful gift of the grace of God ought to abound among the saints today. All of God's people ought not only to give liberally to the relief of the poor and to support the ministry of the gospel, but they ought to give their very selves to the Lord in the way of ministering to His saints. This is a must for the saints for it is the will of God for His saints (v. 5).

This is Scripture. The same apostle exhorts the saints in Galatia not to use their liberty "for an occa-

sion to the flesh, but by love serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another" (Gal. 5:13-15). In order that the saints may grow up into their Head, the Lord Jesus Christ, and come into the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, the exalted Christ gave "some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers" (Eph. 4:11-16).

The purpose of this rubric is to help the believer grow in the knowledge of Christ, especially as regards his calling to "minister to the saints." In the light of Holy Scripture and our Reformed confessions we shall study the principles and the practice of ministering to the saints. This will involve an examination of the meaning and significance of the office of believer, and the special offices of minister, elder, and deacon. Included will be, the Lord willing, discussion of such subjects as the

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preaching of the Word, Christian discipline, family visitation, sick visiting, marital counseling, comforting the sorrowing, caring for the emotionally disturbed, and more.

The fundamental question we face is, who is called to minister to the saints? Who has the *right* or *authority* to minister to the saints? And, who has the *ability* to minister to the saints? The answer is, *Jesus Christ!* Jesus is the minister of the saints. Christ chooses to minister to the saints through men and by means of His Word and Spirit. Christ ministers to the saints through those men who are lawfully called by the church and, therefore, by Christ Himself to the offices of minister of the Word, elder, and deacon. Christ also ministers to the saints through the saints themselves who share His anointing and thus are, in Christ, prophets, priests, and kings.

These fundamental principles come to expression in the Reformed confessions, the *Church Order of Dordt*, and the forms for the ordination of ministers, missionaries, professors, elders, and deacons. The *Belgic Confession*, for example, insists that Jesus Christ is true and eternal God (Article X), that He is the One in whom God in His eternal and unchangeable counsel of mere goodness hath elected His people (Art. XVI), that Christ as our only High Priest made satisfaction for us (Art. XXI), that Christ is the eternal King of God's church (Art. XXVII), that the church must be ordered and

disciplined according to those things which Christ, our only Master, hath instituted (Art. XXX and XXXII). But nowhere are these biblical principles more beautifully, accurately, and profoundly summed than in Lord's Day XII of the *Heidelberg Catechism*. In answer to the question, "Why is he called Christ, that is, anointed?" the *Catechism* says, "Because he is ordained of God the Father, and anointed with the Holy Ghost, to be our chief Prophet and Teacher, who has fully revealed to us the secret counsel and will of God concerning our redemption; and to be our only High Priest, who by the one sacrifice of his body, has redeemed us, and makes continual intercession with the Father for us; and also be our eternal King, who governs us by his word and Spirit, and who defends and preserves us in (the enjoyment of) that salvation, he has purchased for us." Note well the language the *Catechism* uses. Christ is ordained of God to be our *chief* Prophet and Teacher, our *only* High Priest, and our *eternal* King. There can be no doubt about the fact that Jesus Christ, according to the *Catechism*, is the minister, the office-bearer in God's church.

The *Catechism* continues by asking, "But why art thou called a christian?" The answer is, "Because I am a member of Christ by faith, and thus am partaker of his anointing; that so I may confess his name, and present myself a living sacrifice of thankfulness to him: and also that with a free and good conscience I

may fight against sin and Satan in this life: and afterwards reign with him eternally, over all creatures." Christ remains the officebearer of God's church, but the believer, inasmuch as he is a member of Christ by faith, is a partaker of Christ's anointing. The believer is a prophet, priest, and king in Christ. He confesses Christ's name as prophet; presents himself a living sacrifice of thankfulness as priest; and fights against sin and Satan in this life as king. In glory the believer will reign with Christ eternally over all creatures.

Christ, therefore, is the minister of the church. Christ functions through those lawfully called to office. Christ causes the Word to be preached and the sacraments to be administered through the ministers of the Word. Christ governs and disciplines His church through the elders, and Christ ministers His mercy through the deacons. Furthermore, Christ ministers to the saints through the saints themselves. Their calling as members of Christ by faith is to minister to one another by confessing the name of Christ, presenting themselves living sacrifices of thankfulness, and fighting against sin and Satan in this life. Doing so by God's grace the saints look forward in hope to that day when they shall reign with Christ eternally over all creatures.

These confessional principles are clearly taught in Holy Scripture. To this we turn our attention in the next article. □

## All Around Us

Rev. Gise VanBaren

Rev. VanBaren is pastor of the Protestant Reformed Church of Loveland, Colorado.

### ■ On the "Free Offer"

The question of the "well-meant" or "free" offer of the gospel has had a very important part in the life of our churches. It is part of the First Point of Common Grace adopted by the Synod of the Christian Reformed Church in 1924 at Kalamazoo, Michigan.

The concept has been incorporated into the doctrine of most Reformed and Presbyterian churches today. Many become very upset if this "free offer" is questioned or condemned as being not Reformed and not Scriptural. The claim is made that a mission-minded church must come with this "free offer" to the



heathen. Those who deny such an "offer" are labeled more often than not as "hyper-Calvinists."

What is this "free offer"? It is supposed to be the offer of God through the preaching to all that hear, salvation in Jesus Christ. It is called "well-meant" because God would have declared His own earnest desire to save all who hear.

Now that fits in well with the Arminian view that God chose those whom He foresaw would believe, and that Christ died for all men without exception. Those who hold to what is Reformed, however, insist on an unconditional and eternal election not based on works. Likewise, these maintain a "limited" or particular atonement of Christ on the cross. The problem ought to be obvious: how can God offer what Christ did not obtain? How can an offer, not based on atonement on the cross, be "well-meant"? Some would be willing to label this a "paradox" or "apparent contradiction." Only eternity, supposedly, will provide the answer to what seems contradictory.

But what was once considered an established doctrine in Reformed and Presbyterian circles is being questioned today again. And a careful examination of the issue would be profitable indeed.

Both in Northern Ireland and the United Kingdom in general, Reformed people are asking questions — or emphatically asserting that the "free offer" is indeed Reformed. There has been discussion and debate. That is good — provided one carefully studies God's Word concerning the issue.

It is of some degree of interest to us, as Protestant Reformed people, that the issue of the "free offer" is also being discussed in other circles in our own country. The Rev. Bernard Woudenberg recently provided us a copy of a paper presented by Pastor Albert C. Bean to the fifteenth General Synod of the Bible Presbyterian Church (BPC) in opposition to a motion that the BPC establish fraternal relations with the

Orthodox Presbyterian Church. Pastor Albert Bean is minister in the Ebenezer Bible Church in Fayetteville, North Carolina and also moderator of the South Atlantic Presbytery of the BPC. I would quote the short paper in its entirety.

#### Fathers and Brethren,

A first cogent reason why the BPC should not establish fraternal relations with the OPC is the tragic fact that the Orthodox Presbyterian Church holds a biblically erroneous view known as the well-meant gospel offer. Their view, in effect, constitutes an attack on the absolute sovereignty of Almighty God, and on the doctrines of unconditional particular election, the covenant of grace, particular redemption, predestination, irresistible sovereign grace, and reprobation. To state or imply that Almighty God wills, desires and intends to save men whom He does not actually save is to "undeify" God. Job 23:13 declares, "But He is in one mind, and who can turn Him? and what His soul desireth, even that He doeth."

The Minutes of the Fifteenth General Assembly of the OPC, 1948, appendix, pages 51-63, are printed in a booklet titled *The Free Offer of the Gospel*. Professors John Murray and Ned B. Stonehouse write, "...there is in God a benevolent lovingkindness towards the ... repentance and salvation of even those whom he has not decreed to save. This pleasure, will, desire is expressed in the universal call to repentance. The full and free offer of the gospel is a grace bestowed upon all. Such grace is necessarily a manifestation of love or lovingkindness in the heart of God and this lovingkindness is revealed to be of a character or kind that is correspondent with the grace bestowed. The grace offered is nothing less than salvation in its richness and fullness. The love or lovingkindness that lies back of that offer is not anything less; it is the will to that salvation. In other words, it is Christ in all the glory of his person and in all the perfection of his finished work whom God offers in the gospel. The loving and benevolent will that is the

source of that offer and that grounds the veracity and reality is the will to the possession of Christ and the enjoyment of the salvation that resides in him."

The venerable Presbyterian theologian, John H. Gerstner of Ligonier, Pennsylvania proclaimed, "I had the incomparable privilege of being a student of Professors Murray and Stonehouse. With tears in my heart, I nevertheless confidently assert that they erred profoundly in *The Free Offer of the Gospel* and died before they seem to have realized their error which because of their justifiably high reputations for Reformed excellence generally, still does incalculable damage to the cause of Jesus Christ and the proclamation of the gospel.

"It is absolutely essential to the nature of the only true God and Jesus Christ whom He has sent that whatever His sovereign majesty desires or intends, most certainly — without conceivability of failure in one iota thereof — must come to pass! *Soli Deo Gloria*. Amen and Amen forevermore. God can never, ever desire or intend anything that does not come to pass, or He is not the living, happy God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, but an eternally miserable being weeping tears of frustration that He was unable to prevent hell and can never end it, thus destroying Himself and heaven in the process."

Brethren, over a quarter of a century before Westminster, the chief controversy between our Reformed forefathers and the Arminians was the particularity of sovereign grace. *We do not worship, praise and laud a weak and disappointed God!* (Emphasis my own — ACB). The Lord's grand election of grace embraces a great host which no man can number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues (Rev. 7:9). But the Lord does not will nor intend the salvation of reprobates (I Peter 2:8; II Peter 2:12; Jude 4). "But our God is in the heavens; he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased" (Psalm 115:3). Amen and Amen.

The result of this and other objections was that the motion to establish fraternal relations with the



OPC failed. The Rev. Albert Bean believes it possible that the same

motion will be considered again next year. One can be thankful, however,

that this question of the "free offer" is not entirely a dead issue. □

*Church and State*

*Mr. James Lanting*

# Narrow Victory for Religious Expression: Government Funding Allowed for Christian Student Newspaper

"To obey the Establishment Clause, it was not necessary for the University to deny eligibility to student publications because of their religious viewpoint. The viewpoint discrimination inherent in the University's regulation required public officials to discern the student newspaper's underlying philosophic assumptions respecting religious theory and belief. That course of action was a denial of the right of free speech and ... undermines the very governmental neutrality the Establishment Clause requires."

Rosenberger v. University of Virginia,  
U.S. Supreme Court (1995) (majority opinion)

"[The student newspaper in question contains] not the discourse of the scholar's study or the seminar room, but of the evangelists' mission station and the pulpit. It is nothing other than the preaching of the word, which (along with the sacraments) is what most branches of Christianity offer those called to the religious life. Using public funds for the direct subsidization of preaching the word is categorically forbidden under the Establishment Clause...."

Rosenberger v. University of Virginia,  
U.S. Supreme Court (1995) (minority opinion)

In the past few decades, the First Amendment Establishment Clause ("... Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion") has been often interpreted by the Supreme Court to erect a rigid wall of separation between church and state. Very recently, however,

the more conservative justices (Kennedy, Rehnquist, Scalia, Thomas, and O'Connor) are suggesting that the Establishment Clause has been too broadly construed, resulting in a milieu of government hostility rather than neutrality toward religious expression. In the context of this area of constitutional law, the Court released this summer a controversial 5-4 decision that arguably expands the freedom of religious expression.

Ron Rosenberger, an evangelical Christian student at the University of Virginia, formed a student organization called Wide Awake Publications to publish a campus newspaper called *Wide Awake: A Christian Perspective at the University of Virginia*. The editors committed the publication to a twofold mission: "... to challenge Christians to live, in word and deed, according to the faith they proclaim and to encourage students to consider what

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a personal relationship with Jesus Christ means."

Soon after its formation, *Wide Awake* Publications was certified as a qualified student organization. Some 118 such student groups existed on campus receiving partial funding from the University's Student Activity Fund, which had been established for extracurricular activities. The University paid for the printing costs of some student publications from this fund. But when Rosenberger applied for funding to pay a printer for the printing costs of *Wide Awake*, the University refused, stating that *Wide Awake* "primarily promotes or manifests a particular belief in or about a deity or an ultimate reality," which was prohibited by the Student Activity Fund guidelines.

Rosenberger and his fellow student newspaper editors then filed suit in federal court alleging the University's denial of funding for their printing costs violated their First Amendment right to freedom of speech. The lower court held that although the University's "viewpoint discrimination" violated the Speech Clause, this discrimination was justified by the necessity of complying with the Establishment Clause.

On appeal, the U.S. Supreme Court agreed with the lower court that the University's denial of *Wide Awake*'s printing costs (while funding printing costs for other student publications) was indeed a denial of free speech, but also ruled that the funding of the Christian newspaper's printing was not forbidden by the Establishment Clause.

First, the majority held that the Student Activity Fund program was neutral toward religion since there was no evidence that the Fund was created to advance or aid religion. Secondly, the court found it significant that none of the money went directly to *Wide Awake* productions; the funds in question went to a third party off-campus printer. And since the University funded printing services to a broad spectrum of student newspapers, the University

could not single out *Wide Awake* because of its unique religious "viewpoint" or "content." Printing, said the majority, is a "routine, secular and recurring attribute of student life."

The minority of the Court bitterly disagreed. Dissenting Justice Souter found the newspaper to be a "straightforward exhortation to enter into a relationship with God as revealed in Jesus Christ" which is nothing more than "preaching the Word." Thus, preaching, not printing, is at issue, Justice Souter declared (see dissent quote above). He lamented that the Court "for the first time approves direct funding of core religious activities by an arm of the state."

Evangelical constitutional scholars, although lauding the *Rosenberger* decision as a qualified victory for religious expression, were somewhat disappointed that the Court again did not set any firm guidelines for future disputes in related areas. Accordingly, although public universities are now prohibited from "content" or "viewpoint" discrimination among student publications on a public university campus, the lack of articulate Supreme Court guidelines makes the *Rosenberger* decision arguably of little help in deciding future Establishment Clause cases.

In a recent *Christianity Today* guest editorial reviewing the *Rosenberger* decision, Steve McFarland, the director of the Christian Legal Society's Center for Law and Religious Freedom, declared the *Rosenberger* decision a "tenuous" victory:

But this major victory for free religious expression came from a Court that promises no bright lines, only "quite fine" ones in this area of public aid for religious expression. Four dissenting justices categorically concluded that the university *must* disqualify from equal funding any religious voice. And the critical swing vote (Justice Sandra Day O'Connor) announced that she could not extrapolate the ruling into a compass usable for

navigation in future cases. So the federal judiciary will leave us to grope our way forward, one case at a time. This is hardly good news for Americans who cannot afford the time and dollars to get direction from the Supreme Court.

McFarland and other evangelical constitutional scholars accordingly suggest that since the Supreme Court will not clarify the current "legal muddle" surrounding the First Amendment's freedoms regarding religious expression, perhaps the only guarantee for the equality of religious expression in our increasingly secular society is a constitutional amendment. But because of the national consensus required for passage, such an amendment is indeed unlikely. Therefore Christian organizations and individuals will continue to be compelled to litigate whenever the government asserts hostility toward religious expression in the public sector, where all viewpoints are seemingly tolerated (even subsidized) except those of conservative evangelical Christians.

The *Chicago Tribune's* (6/30/95) report on the *Rosenberger* decision included the statement that "legal experts said the Court's reasoning suggests it now may be willing to allow public funding of other religious activities, such as the use of government-issued vouchers to pay for education in a church-run school." What the legal experts are *not* saying is how such non-public schools will escape the governmental interference and control that historically and inevitably accompanies governmental funding. Indeed, perhaps then the only way to shield non-public schools honoring such proposed vouchers from governmental interference would be an appropriate constitutional amendment protecting such parental and parochial schools from state interference. □



# Children in the Covenant

*For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.*

Acts 2:39

At the heart of the controversy over the covenant which took place in the Netherlands fifty years ago was the question of what happens to a child at the moment of his baptism. Between the two sides, the Synodicals (those who agreed with the decision of the synod on this matter) and the Liberated (those who considered themselves liberated from the tyranny of that synod), there was one point of agreement: both maintained that something real must happen to the child that is baptized. Where they differed was over the question of what, and whether it was to all of them or not.

The synod took the position that, presuming the child is regenerated (which, in their view, all elect covenant children are), he receives through the administration of baptism a special covenantal grace which will make him receptive to the Word of God in a special way. This grace may not evidence itself immediately (it may, in fact, lay dormant for many years); but in the end it will work effectually to bring that child to Christ; and thus those who live within the covenant should ever be looking within themselves for evidence of this grace being there.

To this the Liberated took strong exception because, in the first place, it is based on a presumption which is not necessarily true, with the result that baptism is real and effective only for some of the children (those which are elect) and not for all. This, as they see it, is contrary to the terms of the promise, impugning the very veracity of God. In turn, it leaves those who are baptized in confusion and uncertainty as to whether it is personally for them or not, and encourages them to rely on subjective introspection rather than on the objective promise of God, a spiritually unhealthy and unreliable practice at best.

Thus the Liberated presentation regarding this matter seeks to be different. It claims that every child that is baptized receives the benefits of baptism equally; and what they receive is a firm assurance from God that they belong to Him, and that He bestows salvation upon them together with all of its benefits — although with a distinct reservation. This promise comes with demands and warnings, conditions which must be fulfilled, lest by the failure to do so one become a covenant-breaker and fall under the condemnation of God.

To those involved in this debate, these distinctions seemed clear and important; although one looking on from the outside may wonder whether the difference is all that real. Both views speak very positively of a real bestowal upon the baptized child, only then to draw back and, each in its own way, limit the final result to only some. The difference

may well be more one of rhetoric than substance; and it is a question whether either in the end escapes arousing within many growing children a sense of lethargic presumption rather than a true spiritual reliance upon God.

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In order to understand this matter, therefore, we should proceed carefully. To begin with, it is important to recognize one basic fact, namely, that God can, and at times does, regenerate children in early infancy. This does not mean that it happens at the time of baptism, or to every child; but it can take place early in life, as early as birth itself, and even before. This must be recognized, both because it is clearly taught in the Bible, and because it is basic to the principle of infant baptism as historically held in the Christian church.

Among the most dramatic instances of this is undoubtedly that of John the Baptist, while he was still in the womb. We are told that, at the approach of Jesus (also still in the womb), John leaped for joy, with the result that Elisabeth was moved, under the inspiration of the Spirit, to exclaim, Luke 1:44, "Lo, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in mine ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy." Although there was certainly an element of the miraculous involved — we can hardly assume that children in the womb are normally conscious of what is happening around them, or able to respond to it — this was without

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question an act of real faith and of joy on the part of John, as surely as the Scriptures are true.

Actually, we have a rather similar instance with David, as he, also under the inspiration of the Spirit, reflected concerning his own early life, Psalm 22:9, 10, "But thou art he that took me out of the womb: thou didst make me hope when I was upon my mother's breasts. I was cast upon thee from the womb: thou art my God from my mother's belly." As far as he was concerned, faith had been real for him from the very moment he was born, if not before.

And we have the same kind of thing indicated, even if somewhat less clearly, with others, such as Isaiah (49:1,5), Jeremiah (1:5), and Timothy (II Tim. 1:5; 3:16), each of whom is recorded as having experienced spiritual activity in the very early stages of his life, and even from birth. These instances, in turn, may well give greater meaning to such passages as Psalm 8:2; Matthew 18:2, 3; and Mark 10:14, which speak of the spiritual response of children, leading to the possible conclusion that they too may have been younger than we might otherwise be inclined to think. Clearly the thought runs through the Scriptures that spiritual activity may begin while a child is still an infant; and, if this was true in Bible times, there is no reason to assume it is not so still.

The question is, when this takes place, how does it work?

What this does not mean is that, when a child is brought to the baptismal font, some kind of a conscious response takes place, as though he were in some way aware of what is happening to him. Nor does it mean that through that act of baptism the child thereby receives some special and mystical imputation of grace. The sprinkling with water is, after all, only an outward sign pointing to an internal baptism by the Spirit which only Christ can impart, as John stated in Luke 3:16, "I indeed baptize you with water; but one mightier than I cometh ... he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and

with fire." It is that internal baptism which is the essential element for salvation, as Jesus said, John 3:3-8, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.... The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit." This is the essence of baptism, that which must take place for anyone, child or adult, to become a true participant in a living, covenant relationship with God. The Holy Spirit must give him life; and in response to the Word the child will live.

This is because there is one thing that does take place at the moment of baptism — and it happens to every baptized child — the child which is baptized, is by the act of baptism, received as a member of the church of Christ as it is manifested in the congregation gathered there, and under whose auspices that child is given baptism, especially inasmuch as the parents there vow "to see these children, when come to the years of discretion ... instructed and brought up in the aforesaid doctrine; or help or cause them to be instructed therein, to the utmost of your power" (Reformed Baptismal Form). With that vow it is assured that this child is to be brought up under the ministry of the Word of God as it takes place in that congregation, and as a participant in its congregational life.

If then that child is regenerated in infancy — as we have seen can be true — because he is spiritually "born again," he will, as Jesus said, "see the kingdom of God," or, in other words, be responsive to the Word of God which comes to him in his covenant life. And the result will be, as his consciousness develops, spiritual faith and growth, as we are told in Romans 10:17, "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." He hears the Word of God, and his heart responds in faith.

Nor is it difficult to see just how this actually realizes itself in practi-

cal life. When such a child, whose heart the Spirit has prepared, comes to his earliest consciousness of what is happening around him, he will meet firsthand the life of his parents, including their life of faith: their prayers, expressions of dependence upon God, efforts to live pleasing to Him, their attendance at worship in the church, etc., as well as their insistence that he live as a Christian should, and their discipline of him when he does not. All of this becomes for the child his covenant heritage; and, because he is spiritually alive, he will respond to it in faith and follow where it leads. This does not mean that he will do so without sin or struggles of faith. In fact, depending on the nature God has given him, his struggles may be more intense and evident than those of many less spiritually inclined than he — driving his parents to their knees in prayer for him again and again. But he will know, as all through his life he was told, that God is real, he a sinner, and he must seek his redemption through the way of repentance and faith in the blood of Christ. And this faith will have its victory in the end. He will experience what so many mature Christians have testified of through the ages, that he does not remember a time when he did not know himself to be a sinner saved by grace. Already as a child, in his childlike way, he knew that his covenant relationship with God is vital and real. And it may well be precisely that of which David spoke in Psalm 22:10 when he said, "I was cast upon thee from the womb: thou art my God from my mother's belly."



This does not mean, however, that this happens to every baptized child, or even to all that are elect. All of Scripture warns that such must never be presumed.

When we go through the record of the Bible it is very clear that, while countless children have received the sign of the covenant — circumcision



in the Old Testament age and baptism in the New — many of them, and often most, have remained outside of a true relationship with God. Throughout the generations of the church there has always been a continual falling away. Before Christ came, many received the circumcision of the flesh, without that of the heart (Deut. 30:6; Jer. 4:4); and, after Him, countless numbers have been baptized by water, without that by the Spirit. But unless there is such internal, regenerating baptism, true covenant fellowship with God cannot be known. Some of these may be elect, but in the wisdom of God left unregenerated. Such may grow up under the Word and remain unmoved by it until God touches their souls, as with the prodigal son (Luke 15:10ff.), at which time what they knew and did not appreciate at the time may come home (Luke 15:17-18). And then there are those who, like Esau (Rom. 9:10-13), never do come to know the Spirit of God, even

though they may pass through times of tears (Heb. 12:17). It is as Paul said, Romans 9:6, "For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel. Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called: 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 fact is, however, that between one and another of these three kinds of children it is not in our ability to tell the difference; God alone knows the heart. There are children who grow up in the church, often with amiable natures, who take on the life-style of the covenant for no other reason than their desire to please their parents and superiors, or because they find it the most convenient way in which to live, while having at heart no genuine feeling for God and His Word. These may even appear for years as more dedi-

cated and committed than others who pass through honest struggles with sin. But God knows, and He will bring it out in his time. Our place is simply to warn each and every child that grows up in the church that God will never accept pretense or presumption. Only a repentant and believing heart will bring one into covenant fellowship with him.

This we must understand: we and our children are in the hand of God. Our salvation must come from him; as our baptismal prayer implies, "O Almighty and eternal God ... be pleased of thine infinite mercy, graciously to look upon these children and incorporate them by thy Holy Spirit, into thy Son Jesus Christ...." We may bring the children to the waters, but only God can cleanse their hearts and bring them into fellowship with him — which is what the covenant is all about. □

#### Protestant Reformed Seminary Graduates and Candidates for the Ministry



**Allen Jay Brummel**  
(Crysta Bonestroo)  
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## News from Seminary Hill

The Protestant Reformed Seminary began what promises to be a very active school year on August 28. Eleven men registered for classes or internships. Another, presently in college and purposing to attend Seminary, enrolled in the Dutch Theological Reading course.

There are students in all four years of the Seminary curriculum — two in the fourth (and final) year; six in the third year; one in the second year; and two in the first year. Nine aspire to the ministry in the Protestant Reformed Churches (PRC). One third-year seminarian is being trained for the Evangelical Reformed Churches of Singapore. One intends to seek the ministry in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

The two fourth-year students are working as interns in area churches (Hudsonville and Southeast) the first semester. Both will return for classes the second semester.

Seven seminarians will have practice preaching this semester.

Members of the PRC in Western Michigan and Illinois (all three churches in Illinois were represented), as well as one family from as far away as Randolph, Wisconsin, gave the Seminary a rousing start at the annual convocation, and special dedication, exercises on August 30. The audience filled the auditorium of the Southwest PRC in Grandville to overflowing. A goodly number had to sit in the narthex.


On the same day, there was open house at the Seminary. Many saw the recently completed new addition and the remodeled old facilities for the first time.

The faculty, student body, and support staff express their thanks to the members of the PRC and others who have provided this lovely, functional facility. We invite those who have not yet seen it to stop in for a tour. The main feature is the new, large library with study-areas for the students. The faculty are buying the books that are needed to build up the library.

At this writing, we are looking forward to the Seminary-sponsored conference on "Reformed Church Government" to be held on September 21 and 22. Arrangements have been made that Dr. Morton H. Smith, professor at Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary in Greenville, South Carolina and one of the lecturers at the conference, will speak to the faculty and seminarians on the history of and recent developments in the Presbyterian Church in America.

We ask, and need, the prayers of the saints, that the work goes well and is fruitful in the gift by Christ of pastors and teachers to His church.

For the faculty,



Prof. David J. Engelsma



# Seminary Open House



*Finishing touches put on the landscaping.*



*Third-year student Daniel Kleyn  
conducts tour of library.*



*First-year student Garry Eriks  
greet the Kooles.*



*Prof. Engelsma answers questions  
about the new facilities.*



*Prof. Decker shows off office to special guest.*



# The Sincere Offer of the Gospel\*

The last point of the *Complaint* concerns the so-called sincere offer of salvation on the part of God to all men, particularly to the reprobate.

Here the *Complaint* descends from the stratosphere of philosophical contemplation and theological debate to the lower spheres of plain, even superficial reasoning, where even common mortals that may have been present at the examination of Dr. Clark, and at the subsequent debate about the questions involved, must have felt that they were able to participate in the discussion.

Here, too, the *Complaint* reveals, more clearly than anywhere else, its distinctly Christian Reformed tendency, particularly its sympathy with the three well-known decrees of the Synod of Kalamazoo, 1924.

Because it is especially on this point that the controversy of the Presbytery of Philadelphia, which, as it now appears, is to be continued in the General Assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, is identical with our own controversy with the Christian Reformed Church in 1924, it may not be superfluous to refresh our memory in this respect, so we will try to analyze the argument of the *Complaint* somewhat in detail.

If the standpoint of Dr. Clark with respect to the paradox of God's

sovereignty and man's responsibility was described as more than amazing, his view *in re* the "well-meaning offer" is characterized as "surpassing strange" (13).

The complainants put it this way:

In the course of Dr. Clark's examination by Presbytery it became abundantly clear that his rationalism keeps him from doing justice to the precious teaching of Scripture that in the gospel God sincerely offers salvation in Christ to all who hear, reprobate as well as elect, and that he has no pleasure in any one's rejecting this offer but, contrariwise, would have all who hear accept it and be saved (13).

Let us try to define the difference between the complainants and Dr. Clark as sharply as we can.

The difference is not that the complainants insist that the Gospel must be preached to all men promiscuously, while Dr. Clark claims that it must be preached only to the elect. This would be quite impossible, seeing that no preacher is able to single out the elect and separate them from the reprobate in this world. They are agreed that the Gospel must be preached to all men.

Nor is the difference that the complainants openly deny the doctrine of reprobation, while Dr. Clark professes to believe this truth. We read in the *Complaint*: "He believes — as do we all — the doctrine of reprobation" (13).

Again, the difference does not consist in that the complainants characterize the Gospel as an "offer" of Christ or as salvation, while Dr. Clark objects to that term. If the

term "offer" is understood in the sense in which it occurs in the confessions, and in which also Calvin uses it (*offere*, from *obfero*, meaning *to present*), there can be no objection to that term, though, to prevent misunderstanding, it would be better to employ the words *to present*, and *presentation*.

Again, even though Dr. Clark objects to the word "sincere" in the sense in which the complainants use that term, afraid to leave the impression that he preaches Arminianism, even this does not touch the real point of difference between them. That God is sincere in the preaching of the Gospel no one would dare to deny. As the complainants rightly ask: "Would it not be blasphemy to deny this?" (13).

But the difference between them does concern the contents of the Gospel that must be preached promiscuously to all men.

It is really not a question to whom one must preach, or how he must preach, but what he must preach.

According to the complainants the preacher is called to proclaim to all his hearers that God sincerely seeks the salvation of them all. If this is not their meaning when they write: "in the gospel God sincerely offers salvation in Christ to all who hear, reprobate as well as elect," their words have no meaning at all.

According to Dr. Clark, however, the preacher proclaims to all his hearers promiscuously that God sincerely seeks the salvation of all the elect. The elect may be variously named in the preaching: those who repent, they that believe in Christ, that hunger for the bread of life, that thirst for the water of life, that seek, knock,

\* Chapter 9, in *The Clark-VanTil Controversy* (Hobbs, New Mexico: The Trinity Foundation, 1995.) Reprinted by permission. See the editorial in this issue.



ask, that come to Christ, etc. etc. But they are always the elect.

We may define the issue still more sharply, and limit it to God's intention and attitude in the preaching of the Gospel *with regard to the reprobate*.

For it is more especially about the reprobate and their salvation that the complainants are concerned. Strange though it may seem, paradoxical though it may sound, they want to leave room in their preaching for *the salvation of the reprobate*. For the sake of clarity, therefore, we can safely leave the elect out of our discussion. That God sincerely seeks their salvation is not a matter of controversy. To drag them into the discussion of this question simply confuses things. The question very really concerns the attitude of God with respect to the reprobate. We may limit the controversy to this question: *What must the preacher of the Gospel say of God's intention with respect to the reprobate?* And these, too, may be called by different names, such as, the impenitent, the wicked, the unbelievers, etc.

The answer to this question defines the difference between Dr. Clark and the complainants sharply and precisely.

The complainants answer: The preacher must say that God sincerely seeks the salvation of the reprobate through the preaching of the Gospel.

Dr. Clark answers: That is not true; the preacher may never say that in the name of God.

And, in the light of Scripture, he should say: God seeks His own glory and justification in preparing the reprobate for their just damnation even through the preaching of the Gospel.

That, in thus formulating the difference, I am not doing an injustice to the complainants is very plain from their own words. They say that in the preaching of the Gospel God sincerely offers salvation in Christ to the reprobate, that He has no pleasure in their rejection of the offer, that He would have them, the

reprobate, accept the Gospel, and that He would have them be saved. Besides, it is in this sense that they interpret Ezekiel 33:11: God has no pleasure in the death of the reprobate, He would have them live; and 2 Peter 3:9: God does not will that the reprobate should perish, but that they all come to repentance; and Matthew 23:37: Christ would have gathered the reprobate under His wings; and 1 Timothy 2:3, 4: God our Saviour will have all the reprobate to be saved and come unto the knowledge of the truth (13, 14). And it is with the doctrine of universal salvation in mind that they write: "The supreme importance for evangelism of maintaining the Reformed doctrine of the gospel as a universal and sincere offer is self-evident" (14).

Now, you might object, as also Dr. Clark does, that this involves a direct contradiction: God sincerely seeks the salvation of those whom He has from eternity determined not to save. Or: God would have that sinner live whom He does not quicken. Or: God would have the sinner, whom He does not give faith, to accept the gospel. Or: God would have that sinner come to Christ whom He does not draw and who cannot come.

You might object that this is not rational.

But this objection would be of no avail to persuade the complainants of their error. They admit that this is irrational. But they do not want to be rational on this point. In fact, if you should insist on being rational in this respect, they would call you a "rationalist," and at once proceed to seek your expulsion from the church as a dangerous heretic. The whole *Complaint* against Dr. Clark is really concentrated in and based on this one alleged error of his: He claims that the Word of God and the Christian faith are not irrational. According to the complainants, to be reasonable is to be a rationalist. They write that the trouble with Dr. Clark is that

his rationalism does not permit him

to let the two stand unreconciled alongside each other. Rather than do that he would modify the gospel in the interest of reprobation. [This, you understand, is a slanderous remark. — H.H.] Otherwise expressed, he makes the same error as does the Arminian, although he moves in the opposite direction. The Arminian cannot harmonize divine reprobation with the sincere divine offer of salvation to all who hear; hence, he rejects the former. Neither can Dr. Clark harmonize the two, and so he detracts from the latter. Rationalism accounts for both errors (13).

To accuse the complainants of irrationalism is, therefore, of no avail as far as they are concerned. They openly admit — they are even boasting of — their irrational position. To be irrational is, according to them, the glory of a humble, Christian faith.

We shall, therefore, have to prove to them that in their claim that God sincerely seeks the salvation of the reprobate in the preaching of the Gospel, they not only contradict themselves, but they directly contradict Scripture.

And this we hope to do, not because Dr. Clark is in need of our defense, but because we are interested in the pure Reformed truth, and cannot allow it to be camouflaged and corrupted by some self-confessed irrationalists.

But before we proceed to do so, we must prove two things: 1. That the position of the complainants is not irrational as they claim, but involves an Arminian conception of reprobation. 2. That their argumentation on this point in the *Complaint* is very superficial, and characterized by many errors.

In this issue, we will have room only to elucidate point 1.

After all, even though the complainants themselves insist on being irrational, we will have to deal with them according to the rules of logic. If they refuse to be treated rationally, they really forfeit the right to present a complaint to any assem-



bly of normal Christians. And treating them as rational human beings, we must insist that they do not and cannot possibly accept the proposition: God sincerely seeks the salvation of those whom He has sovereignly from eternity determined to be damned.

In other words: I know that they claim to believe this, but I deny their

claim; I do not accept it.

Hence, I must try to rationalize their position for them. How can any man, with a show of rationality, insist that God sincerely seeks the salvation of the reprobate? Only when they define reprobation as that eternal act of God according to which He determined to damn all

those whom He eternally foresaw as rejecting the Gospel.

In other words, I insist that the position of the complainants, as soon as you reject their claim to irrationalism, is purely Arminian.

And their irrationalism is only an attempt to camouflage their real position. □

*Search the Scriptures*

*Rev. Carl Haak*

# The Miracle at the Pool of Bethesda

## John 5:1-18

We cannot be sure what feast it was to which Jesus went up, and at which He healed the man beside the pool of Bethesda. If it was the Passover, and we are inclined to think that it was, then Christ's ministry covered a space of about three and a half years. (See ch. 2:13; 5:2; 6:4; and 12:12.) This much is certain, it was our Lord's second appearance in Jerusalem recorded by John.

While in Jerusalem Jesus went on a Sabbath day to walk among the porches around the pool of Bethesda. This pool was situated near the market where sheep could be obtained for religious purposes. It was also one of the city's resorts where people came for relaxation. Besides this, it attracted a large number of the physically afflicted, who waited for an angel to come down and stir the water. The first one in the water after it was so troubled would be healed of his affliction.

Here Jesus heals a friendless and

hopeless man who had long lain by the water, and who had seen many others healed while he himself was unable to get into the water quickly enough due to his lameness. The compassion and power of Christ are beautifully shown in His taking notice of this man's helplessness and healing him instantly by His word. He warns the man not to return to His former sin and to walk in true gratitude and repentance.

The reaction of the Jews to this miracle shows the hardness of their hearts. They at once suspect that it was Jesus who had performed this miracle, and they discredit it because it was done on the Sabbath day. He answers the charge of Sabbath violation by telling them that the keeping of the Sabbath does not consist in inactivity but in doing the works of God. This is true of God Himself. God's rest consists in preserving, sustaining, and rejoicing in the works of His hands (Gen. 2:1-3). Jesus, as God's Son, may also work the works of God on the Sabbath. He declares that His authority to heal on the Sabbath is exactly this, that He is the eternal and natural

Son of God (Heb. 1:3). The Jews now have even a greater reason to hate Him. He has clearly stated that He is equal with God.

A few of the important truths which we must see in this passage are:

1. Christ's healing of the impotent man is a sign of the power of salvation to take us who cannot walk in the ways of God and give us to live according to God's will and walk in genuine thanksgiving and repentance.

2. The Sabbath day is not, as the Jews interpreted, merely to cease from one's work, in the belief that this will merit with God. Rather, it is to be consecrated to God with works of gratitude for the salvation God has given. This consists primarily in attending God's house diligently, meditating on the mysteries of the faith, and performing works of mercy. The Sabbath is not hardship and idleness, but *spiritual rest and work*.

3. The Jews are correct in interpreting His words in verse 17 to mean that He stood in a closer, personal, and particular relation of

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Sonship to the Father. His words mean that there is a unity of nature between Himself and the Father.

#### OUTLINE:

1. The setting for this miracle (vv. 1-5).
2. The miracle itself (vv. 6-9).
3. The reaction of the Jews to the miracle (vv. 10-16).
4. Jesus' response to the charge of Sabbath violation (vv. 17, 18).

#### QUESTIONS:

1. Can we determine what feast it was to which Jesus goes up to Jerusalem to celebrate? Passover? Purim? Pentecost? How does this bear on the question of the length of Jesus' earthly ministry?
2. What do we know about the pool of Bethesda and its five porches? What was the purpose for the pool? What is the significance of its being by the sheep market (Neh.

3:1)? Why was it a place where the impotent folk would congregate?

3. Most commentators think that verse 4 and verse 7b are inserted and thus not inspired Scripture. (The NIV, as well as other translations, omits these verses.) Without entering into the details of the testimony of the manuscripts, show from the narrative itself that these verses *are to be retained* if the passage is to make sense.

4. How are we to conceive of the angel's coming to stir the water? Is this the record of the superstition of that day or is this something that really happened?

5. The various sicknesses recorded in Scripture are signs of different aspects of our sin. Jesus' healing of these different sicknesses represents aspects of His salvation. (For example: demon possession is a sign of the *dominion* of sin over us, and the Lord's casting out demons is a

sign of *His power to free us from the service of sin.*) What does lameness (impotent man) represent concerning our sin? What aspect of salvation is represented in this miracle?

6. Discuss the sovereignty of Christ in this healing? Show His compassion for this man. Why does Jesus so quickly convey Himself away after healing this man?

7. What was the Jews' conception of the Sabbath law?

8. Was there a connection between the infirmity this man suffered for 38 years and a sin he had committed? How are the healing mercies of Christ to us the warning to keep His ways in the future?

9. How does Jesus answer the charge that he had violated the Sabbath?

10. The Jews interpreted Jesus' words in verse 17 to mean that He makes Himself equal with God. Explain how this is so. □

*When Thou Sittest in Thine House*

*Rev. Ron VanOverloop*

## "Maturity"

No one likes to be told that he is immature. Children want to be older, so they may be allowed to do the things they see their parents or older siblings doing. Young people want to be considered adults, or old enough to be allowed to do certain things.

And no one likes to be told he is an immature Christian. At least twice in the New Testament, Christians were called immature. The apostle Paul charged the Corinthian Christians with being "babes in Christ" (I Cor. 3:1). Paul declares that the envying, strife, and divisions that existed in their congregation were because they were immature

Christians. And in Hebrews 5 the Hebrew Christians were told that they "ought to be teachers," but they "still have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat." Those who are "unskillful in the word of righteousness" are babes, "but strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age" (Heb. 5:12-14).

No Christian would like to hear these biblical statements written or said of him. It is one thing to be immature physically — that is not sinful. It is another thing to be an adult physically, but to act immaturity — that is often foolish. But it can be a serious sin to be immature spiritually. Every adult believer wants to be mature spiritually.

Godly parents seek to train their children so they will be mature Christians. The apostle Paul prayed that the Philippians would ever grow. "And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; that ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ; being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God" (Phil. 1:9-11). This passage clearly implies that we must never stop growing.

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What does it mean to be a mature Christian?

There is always the danger of

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mis-identifying spiritual maturity. First, there is the error of equating having membership in a local congregation for a certain length of time with spiritual maturity. Church membership, in itself, has nothing to do with spiritual maturity because church membership, in itself, does not mean spirituality. All who are spiritually mature will seek church membership, but not all who hold church membership are spiritual.

Secondly, there is the danger of equating a certain length of time in the faith with spiritual maturity. But maturity, while it often does come over a period of time, does not automatically do so. It depends on what you do with the time. Maturity has to do with attitude, not with time.

Thirdly, the perversity of the "body of this death" (Rom. 7:24), which remains with every believer until he enters eternal glory, is great. Therefore there is the constant, serious danger that what was once an activity of great purpose and zeal becomes routine. It is wrong to equate habit and custom with maturity. That one attends church services regularly (or even faithfully) does not necessarily mean spiritual liveliness and strength. Regular and faithful attendance can just as easily come out of empty custom, meaningless form, and/or a jaded spiritual sensitivity. Regular and faithful attendance could as easily indicate a kind of commitment to a church building, or to a congregation or denomination in which one grew up, as it could be an indication of spiritual maturity.

It is so easy to become complacent in one's walk with God. It is so easy to take for granted the precious heritage of the faith of our spiritual fathers. It is so easy for the wonderful words and concepts of Scripture to become only words, little understood and even less appreciated. It is so easy for the repeated petitions of our prayers to be only the movement of the lips without the movement of the heart.

Spiritual maturity is determined

by considering one's attitude toward God. I Corinthians 3:1, 2 teaches that our attitude toward God will be manifested in our attitude toward God's people; and Hebrews 5 teaches that our attitude toward God will be manifested in our attitude toward His teachings and commandments. There may be daily and even hourly fluctuations of mind and heart, but the judgment of maturity considers not these fluctuations (no one is perfectly consistent or totally unaffected by the circumstances of divine providence). Rather, what is my basic attitude toward God? What is my basic attitude toward God's people? And what is my basic attitude toward God's Word?

An equally interesting question is: How should my attitude toward God, His commandments, and His people, change as I accumulate years in the kingdom of God? Should God grow larger as I know Him better? Should God's teachings inspire more awe, the more I study them? Should God's people become more the object of my love, the more I understand what God has done for them? Or does increased familiarity cause complacency?



Spiritual maturity once attained is not automatically kept. Unlike physical maturity, we must constantly grow spiritually. Spiritual maturity is not something you reach and then you will have it until death. We need ever to grow. We need to "abound yet more and more" (Phil. 1:9). We need always to "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (II Pet. 3:18). The presence of sin in every believer makes this necessary.

It is normal that the initial experience of the knowledge of the Savior and forgiveness in Him is accompanied with great enthusiasm. There is what is called "first love." It is also normal that growth in the knowledge of the Savior and of Him who sent Him is accompanied with deeper humility and hence less out-

ward expressions of enthusiasm. This difference has been equated to a stream, which makes a lot of noise and show when it is shallow, but runs quietly when it is deep.

Our concern is that the quietness of a professing mature Christian is not that of the cemetery, but of waters which run deep. Depth does not mean routine or complacency, for where the waters run deep (and without a lot of noise) there is a great volume of running water. But mere frequency can make for habit.

Some believers who profess maturity seem to be of the opinion that their maturity gives them mastery. Of course, this professed mature believer would never admit to such a mastery — he knows well that to say such would indicate pride. Nevertheless his attitude toward God's people shows his pride. In God's Word and in the preaching of that Word he finds more material for showing the weakness of others than he finds fresh and vital nourishment to his own soul. God's Word is his guide for theology and life, but it is most often used to show off knowledge and ability, especially over against others. To such supposedly mature Christians the awe and wonder and excitement exhibited by others is considered immaturity.

The maturity desired is not intellectual sophistication, but a high level of spiritual sensitivity and discernment. As I truly "grow in the grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (II Pet. 3:18) the things of the Lord grow. God's Being, His most high majesty, and His glory become greater. He is seen increasingly as worthy to receive glory and praise via my obedience. His love becomes deeper and sweeter. His character becomes more awesome and wonderful. New depth is given to old truths so they are fresh, and these truths are more precious than silver and gold. The importance and value of God's Word as described in Psalm 119 is frequently appreciated.

For those growing in an under-



standing of theology, not only does the Word of God grow more enriching, but also all the commands of our Father grow in importance and vitality. To attend worship services is considered a blessed privilege, not just something to be done, or a duty, or a face-saving measure with an eye to those we know are watching us. Worship is considered a privilege because it is praise given to Him who is so worthy, because it is communion with the One who is so gracious, and because it is gratitude to One so wise and loving. Worship services are happily anticipated, and approached with the assurance that they will be greatly edifying and richly satisfying.

For those growing spiritually, to love and forgive their fellow-saints is also considered a privilege, and not just a duty. It is a privilege to love those so loved by God that He redeemed them at an infinite cost to Himself. As we grow in grace and in knowledge of Christ, the rest of

God's children grow more lovely to us. We learn more and more to see them in Christ and to see more of Christ in them. It becomes easier to prefer them before ourselves, because we see who is in them. We find ourselves more and more hesitant to criticize their persons because nothing can be laid "to the charge of God's elect," for "it is God that justifieth" (Rom. 8:33).

Along with growth in an understanding of the worship of God and of God's people, many other things grow in depth and magnitude as we grow in Christ. Prayer is more and more an amazing privilege. Faith grows stronger as it is exercised. Also the power of Satan and sin grows in our minds as we grow in Christ. And God's creation gives increasing evidence of the handiwork of its Creator.



What is your attitude about

God? His people? His church? His Word? Have you lost your first love? Do you find yourself attending church services and Bible studies more out of habit than because of sincere gratitude? Are you abounding still more and more? Have you gone beyond the basics in doctrine? Do you find yourself responding to differences with your fellow church members with hatred and by shouting?

Length of church membership should not mean complacency, but it should be the occasion for increased growth. Increased knowledge of God should show with increasing clarity His infinite greatness and glory, not less. Increased maturity should give us greater appreciation for God's people, not less. Continued spiritual growth gives rise to increased confession and humility before God and others, and to an increased joy and gratitude at the miracle of forgiveness. □

## News From Our Churches

Mr. Benjamin Wigger

### Denominational Activities

The warm, lazy days of summer have given way to the cool, crisp days of fall, and it's time for you and me to roll up our sleeves and get to work.

Not just you and me, of course, but our churches, schools, and seminary as well.

That's just what happened on the evening of August 30 in the auditorium of the Southwest PRC in Grandville, MI. Our denomination's seminary went back to work for another year. A crowd overflowing into the narthex at Southwest gathered for two very worthwhile reasons. First, they were there to be part of and participate in our seminary convocation. And second, they

were there to take part in the dedication and open house of a large new addition to that seminary.

By rotation, Prof. D. Engelsma gave the convocation address, based on Amos 3:7, 8, entitled, "The PR Seminary: The Lion Still Roars." Prof. Engelsma pointed out first of all that, from its earliest beginnings in one room in the basement of the old First PRC in Grand Rapids, to its present modern expanded and up-to-date facility in Grandville, there really has been no change in the purpose and goal of our seminary. It remains the same, to provide preachers for our churches, men who will preach the gospel of salvation. We can thank God that today, as in the past, our seminary is governed by the entire Word of God, the Lion's roar. And by God's grace our seminary stands in service to that lion.

Included with Prof. Engelsma's address on the program were the

singing of a couple of *Psalter* numbers, a beautiful solo, "How Beautiful Upon the Mountains," sung by Mrs. Jane Woudenberg, and the introduction of this year's student body. This year there are eleven young men enrolled in our seminary, nine from our churches, one from the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, and one from the Evangelical Reformed Church of Singapore.

After the Convocation, visitors also had the opportunity to tour the new seminary. This building contains a new, enlarged library and individual office space for each professor. In addition, each student has his own private study area set aside just for him.

The newly added basement also will house a climate-controlled, fire-protected room for our churches' archives, plus plenty of room for storage and other possible future uses.

If this wasn't enough, the existing building has been given a face-

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



lifting of carpet and paint, in addition to a partial remodeling which took existing space and made it into usable office space for the seminary office secretary, besides adding a work room for future editions of this magazine and other projects of our churches. Truly we have a splendid building, one we can all be proud of. What a work God has done. Who will not fear?

#### **School News**

This past summer the school society of the Adams St. Christian School voted to approve the sale of their school property to the public schools of Grand Rapids, MI. Our school may use the building for the 1995-1996 school season. That means that by this time next year they must have decided where to relocate — no easy decision for Adams' Board or the families that support her. Remember this need in your prayers.

On August 2, the Ladies' School Circle of the Faith Christian School in Randolph, WI held their first annual Talent Program to benefit the school. This program was held in the sanctuary of our church in Randolph and, from a personal account, it was a very nice program with lots of talent.

#### **Young People's Activities**

Not all money raised by our churches' young people is earmarked for their annual conventions. The young people of the Georgetown PRC in Hudsonville, MI recently received a big thank you from their congregation for contributing close to two thousand dollars toward the purchase of a copy machine.

Other fund-raisers by several of our churches' young people during this past year have included a slide program by Pastor A. denHartog on

Singapore (about their new church building and dedication) sponsored by the young people of the Hope PRC in Redlands, CA; a car wash and wax by the young people of the First PRC in Holland, MI; a garage sale sponsored by the young people of the Lynden, WA PRC; and a combined pancake breakfast/car wash sponsored jointly by the young people of the South Holland and Peace PRCs in Illinois.

#### **Minister Activities**

Rev. K. Koole, serving our Faith PRC in Jenison, MI, declined the call he received from the Edgerton, MN PRC.

Since that decline, Edgerton has formed a new trio from which they

will call. That trio includes Candidates Allen Brummel and Doug Kuiper along with Rev. R. Flikkema of the Covenant PRC in Wyckoff, NJ.

The Byron Center, MI PRC also has a new trio, consisting of Rev. S. Key of the Randolph, WI PRC, Rev. R. Moore from the Hull, IA PRC, and Candidate Doug Kuiper.

#### *Food for Thought*

"Next after theology, I give to music the highest place and greatest honor. The devil hates to hear the saints sing Psalms, which is why I try to spend a good part of my day doing it." □

— Martin Luther

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

#### **NOTICE!!**

##### **Yearbook Correction**

The telephone number of Rev. Mitchell Dick was inadvertently omitted from the Yearbook, 1995, under PR Clergy. Please insert into your copy the number: (403) 782-5444.

#### **NOTICE!!**

Hope Protestant Reformed Christian School will be in need of a principal for the 1996-1997 school year. Those interested should contact the school at 1545 Wilson Avenue, Grand Rapids, MI 49504 (616) 453-9717, or John VanBaren (616) 532-7367.

#### **RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY**

The Consistory and Congregation of the Loveland Protestant Reformed Church grieves in the passing of one of our charter members,

##### **FRITZ SCHWARZ,**

on August 30, 1995, at the age of 89 years.

We express our sympathy to the members of our congregation: his wife, Clara; to his children: Jonathan and Mary Schwarz, Don and Lynnette Schwarz, Talitha Dotson, Virginia and Max Moore; also to his brothers: Hugo and Elizabeth Schwarz, Arthur and Florence Schwarz; his sisters: Louise Griess, and Luella and Gilbert Griess; also to numerous grandchildren, great-grandchildren, nieces and nephews.

May God graciously encourage and bless in the knowledge that He hears our cries in our times of distress and answers in mercy and grace (Psalm 69:1).

For the Consistory  
and Congregation  
Rev. G. VanBaren, Pres.  
David Poortinga, Clerk