



THE **STANDARD BEARER**

**A Reformed
Semi-Monthly
Magazine**

The gospel finds nothing in the unbeliever, appeals to nothing in the unbeliever, attaches to nothing in the unbeliever, builds on nothing in the unbeliever. In the unbeliever whom God has chosen to salvation the gospel *creates* its contact by the regenerating Spirit.

See "John Frame on Cornelius Van Til: The 'Limiting Concept'" — p. 379

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In This Issue ...

The Report by the secretary of the Foreign Mission Committee of the Protestant Reformed Churches (PRC) informs us that the Foreign Mission Committee is recommending to this year's synod that the PRC authorize calling a missionary to work in Ghana, Africa. The proposal requires the help of volunteers.

The Foreign Mission Committee is also planning to send a delegation to the Philippines "to investigate this potential field for labor."

The secretary of the Domestic Mission Committee reports that Hudsonville PRC and the Domestic Mission Committee are recommending to synod 1996 that the Covenant Reformed Fellowship of Northern Ireland be organized as a church. The mission group desires to organize on the basis of the "Three Forms of Unity."

The British Reformed Fellowship has expressed its conviction that there is a need of a Protestant Reformed missionary in England. "The British Reformed Fellowship even requests of the Mission Committee to consider sending another missionary to the UK."

The report of the Domestic Mission Committee also gives information on the work of home missionary Thomas Miersma.

These reports indicate the nearness of the annual meeting of the synod of the PRC. Synod meets this year at Southwest PRC in Wyoming, MI. Synod convenes on Tuesday, June 11. The pre-synodical worship service will be held on Monday, June 10, at 7:30 p.m. in the auditorium of the Southwest PRC.

The next issue of the *Standard Bearer* will inform our readers of some of the main matters on the agenda of synod 1996, God willing.

*** *** ***

The editorial in the April 15, 1996 *Standard Bearer* referred to the book, *Spurgeon v. Hyper-Calvinism: The Battle for Gospel Preaching*, by Iain H. Murray. This book is published by the Banner of Truth Trust (Edinburgh, 1995). The 164-page paperback sells for \$5.95.

— DJE

Called to Come and Be Refreshed

"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

Matthew 11:28

In this verse we find a very comforting truth. Jesus Christ, our Savior, promises us a very important and blessed gift. In our King James version of the Bible we read that Jesus here promises us rest. That surely is a precious and blessed gift. However, the original Greek word which our Savior uses is not the word "rest." It is the word "refresh." Christ here promises those who come unto Him, that He will refresh them when they come unto Him. A few did come unto Him; but very many of the Israelites did not follow Him as their Savior.

That refreshment which our Savior promises is a most blessed gift. Jesus uses the same word which we find in I Corinthians 15:18, in II Corinthians 7:13, and in Philemon verses 7 and 20. Just look up those verses. In them we read of refreshments, rather than of rest. This means that He will give us a fresh, that is, surely a precious, gift.

What we should bear in mind, therefore, is that this word refresh refers to a spiritual gift promised by Jesus Christ, our Savior, to all the people who are eternally chosen in Him to be members of His body, that is, to be His church. All

the descendants of Adam and Eve were born spiritually dead, even though they did for a time have a physical life. Satan had caused them to die spiritually, and he moved them to try to become gods. But our Savior, here in the verse quoted above, promises to God's elect spiritual refreshment. He also promises enjoyment of a new spiritual life, wherein they will love God and serve Him with heart, mind, soul, and strength.

Now the prefix "re" (with which this word refresh begins) means "back again." Thus, in words such as repeat, return, remember, and many other words beginning with "re," we have the idea of becoming fresh once again, as God had created Adam and Eve spiritually fresh. Our Savior here promises us that He will make us spiritually fresh.

By all means, we must deny that false doctrine called common grace. It teaches that some of those, not chosen in Christ, are dealt with by Him in His grace. For, indeed, He does give them many earthly possessions. But we, as Protestant Reformed Churches, came into being because God enabled us to maintain the truth that God's grace does not deal at times with some of those not eternally chosen in Christ Jesus, our Savior. God's grace is not temporally upon those not chosen in Christ. They may become millionaires while still remaining spiritually dead. They are constantly under God's wrath, even when they have what they enjoy for the flesh. Nowhere in Scripture can we find God's grace

on those not saved by Christ Jesus. Those not chosen in Christ are constantly on their way to hell and all its torment.

What is more, our God's name is Jehovah, which declares that He never changes in His grace. Jehovah means "I AM"; and that name denies that He for a time is gracious to those not chosen in Christ. God never changes His mind, and plainly does not change His treatment of those not redeemed by His Son. Jehovah never, for one split second, becomes the I Was Gracious. Satan likes to get people to consider God to be changeable. He is very, very crafty in his attempt to turn believers away from God. And in the church-world Satan has gotten many lies taught, in his attempt to turn men away from God. Some call those who present the lie about God Christians. But literally they are anti-Christians in the sense that they fight against Christ, the Son of God in our flesh. We do well to hold on to the name Jehovah. Let us *never* teach the lie that Jehovah, the I AM becomes for a while the I Was! Satan wants us to do that. But let us hold on tightly to that name I AM! That name expresses the truth that He was never, in any way, the I Was Gracious.

Now the word "refresh" is indeed an interesting and comforting word here in our Savior's statement, calling us to come unto Him, and thereby receive refreshment. In John 10:9 we read: "I am the door; by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pas-

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

ture." In that verse we find the truth revealing what it means that He will give us rest. We are called to come unto Him, not because he depends upon us, but because the only way to refreshment is knowing Him as our Savior, who earned salvation for us by His cross. He does not depend on us. He does not wait until the moment that we come unto Him.

What we should bear in mind is that our Savior promises to make us fresh spiritually. That refreshment means that we will be brought out of guilt and punishment. Refresh means to return to spiritual freshness. Our Savior will make us like Adam and Eve were before Satan got them to turn away from God and to consider themselves to be gods. Indeed He will make us far more spiritually glorious than Adam and Eve were. We will be eternally free from Satan and his devilishness.

We must reject the claim that we let Him change us spiritually. Being by nature spiritually dead, we cannot refresh ourselves spiritually. A man physically dead cannot, by his will and strength, bring himself back to a holy, spiritual life. In the text quoted above we do not ask our Savior to save us, until He has already begun it in us. He is our Savior because of what He does, not because of what we by nature desire and do. As we correctly sing *Psalter* number 383:1, which is based upon what we read in Psalm 139:14:

All that I am I owe to Thee,
Thy wisdom, Lord, hath fashioned me;
I give my Maker thankful praise,
Whose wondrous works my soul amaze.

Our God eternally decided who would be refreshed. In fact, that word "refresh" which is found in Matthew 11:28 makes it very plain that by nature we are wholly stale spiritually. Our God Him-

self stated to Adam, in Genesis 2:17: "But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat: for in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." On that day Adam and Eve did die spiritually; and they could not bring forth any child that was not by nature spiritually dead. Our Savior Himself, born of Mary, had no earthly father, and therefore He had a body that was holy, was not guilty of sin, and was not unable to walk in holiness before God.

We must, therefore, reject the doctrine of Arminianism. Jesus does not offer salvation to any human being. For no one born to a man and woman can in any way

*Jehovah
never,
for one
split second,
becomes
the I Was
Gracious.*

or for any brief moment want salvation from sin. Indeed, he would like to escape the punishment for which guilt calls; but he enjoys and wants to stay in sin and guilt. And our Savior declares in our text what He does to those eternally chosen to be children of God. In

John 14:6 Christ states that important and wonderfully comforting truth: "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."

We should, therefore, also hold on tightly to the truth that our Savior gives us refreshment. We give God nothing, even as far as our earthly lives are concerned. We do not even want to come unto Christ until He has already come into our hearts by His Spirit and earned the right to do so by His own suffering for our sins upon His cross. We have the desire for every bit of salvation, because He has begun it in us. Just go back again to that blessed truth mentioned above: "All that I am I owe to Thee."

Yes, we need to call our Savior to come unto us in order to receive that gift of refreshment. But we also need to be made by God able and willing to come unto Him. Indeed, there were very few Israelites who wanted our Savior

to come. Many of these Israelites did labor. But the sad thing is that their labor was that of crucifying our Savior. As we read in Matthew 27:1: "All the chief priests and elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put Him to death." We even read in Acts 9:1 and 2 that Saul, who later on was called Paul, who was "breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest" and desired to get men and women to be brought bound to Jerusalem. He wanted to promote hatred against those who followed Jesus Christ. God did change Paul shortly thereafter; but note that God changed him, and brought him that refreshment, so that he became fresh in confessing Christ Jesus, and he became one of His apostles. Indeed, he was given refreshment. He did not refresh himself spiritually.

Indeed, all that we are spiritually we have by our Savior, who calls us to come unto Him. And when He calls us to come, He does not offer salvation. He commands us to come. Our God does not offer salvation, and then present it after we ask for a spiritual rebirth. We are all born physically without our request. And, by all means, we are created spiritually as children of God, by His work in us. His grace enables us to desire and seek salvation. That He reveals so clearly in the 14th verse in Psalm 139. All that we are we owe to God, as His gift of grace through His Son in our flesh. He commands us to come unto Him. But doing that in His grace, He enables us to hear it and to act according to it. We must thank Him for our desire and ability to come unto Him.

Very correctly we, every Sunday, sing: "Praise God from Whom all blessings flow." Sing it every day, when you wake up in the morning, and just before you go to sleep at night. God does not merely have His promises made known to us, He also works that

thankfulness for salvation in us as part of our salvation. Do not forget that an important part of our salvation is the joy and confidence of its blessedness.

God calls us to come. We depend entirely upon Him for every bit of salvation, including the desire for it. Thank God, not merely for the salvation, but also, and by

all means, for the knowledge of what He does in His grace, when He saves us, and makes us His holy children. □

Editorial

A Defense of (Reformed) Amillennialism

7. Matthew 24 (concluded)

Standing decisively against J. Marcellus Kik's interpretation of Matthew 24:3-35, particularly verse 34, in his book, *An Eschatology of Victory* (Presbyterian and Reformed, 1971), are the following considerations drawn from the passage itself.

1) Kik's interpretation ignores that part of the disciples' question that asks about "the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world" (v. 3). Again and again in his explanation of Matthew 24:4-31 Kik presents the question that Jesus is answering as though it were only the question, "When shall these things (of the destruction of Jerusalem) be?" Kik begins his treatment of Matthew 24:23-28, e.g., with the words, "The disciples desired to know when the destruction of Jerusalem and its Temple would take place." Not surprisingly, Kik immediately adds, "In answer to that question Jesus first gave preliminary signs in verses 4-14." Kik then goes on to make Jesus' words in verses 23-28 also refer only to the destruction of Jerusalem (*An Eschatology of Victory*, pp. 121, 122).

But the question of the disciples was not only about the destruction of Jerusalem; it

"blended," to use Calvin's term, two events: the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the world. In answering the disciples' question, Jesus also "blended" the two events, and He did so from the very outset of His answer. That His answer, already in verses 4-31, had in view, not only the destruction of Jerusalem but also the end of the world at His second coming is indisputably evident both in verse 6 and in verse 14, where He speaks of "the end."

2) Kik's interpretation is forced to make two different comings of Christ out of the (identical) mention of His coming (Greek: *parousia*) in verse 27 and in verse 37. In accordance with Kik's iron-clad rule that everything before verse 34 refers only to the destruction of Jerusalem, the "coming of the Son of man" of verse 27 is only the judgment upon Jerusalem in A.D. 70, whereas the "coming of the Son of man" of verse 37 is His second, bodily coming at the end of the world. This is arbitrary, illegitimate exegesis, violating the canon of biblical interpretation that insists that the same word in the same context must mean the same thing, unless something clearly makes this impossible. Kik's dif-

ferent explanation of "coming" in verse 27 and in verse 37 is especially irresponsible in light of the question of the disciples, "... and what shall be the sign of thy coming...?"

3) Similarly, Kik is forced to explain "angels" in the passage in completely different ways. In verse 31, "angels" have to be preachers of the gospel. But suddenly in verse 36, they are the heavenly spirits. Why? Because to let "angels" be 'angels' in verse 31 would imply that verse 31 is referring to the second coming of Jesus at the end of the world (which it surely is), and this would conflict with Kik's rule that everything preceding verse 34 refers only to the destruction of Jerusalem.

4) Kik's interpretation is demolished by the obvious, incontrovertible references in verses 4-31 to events that take place *after the destruction of Jerusalem*. Such is the reference in verse 14 to the preaching of the gospel "in all the inhabited earth (Greek: *oikoumene*) for a witness to all nations." Such also is the reference in verses 29-31 to the catastrophes in the heavens; the sign of the Son of man; the mourning of all the tribes of the

earth; the coming on the clouds of the Son of man, visible to all; and the gathering of the elect from the dead by the angels with the sound of the trumpet. Kik's explanation of these references, indicated earlier, is nothing but allegorizing in order to explain them all away.

5) Kik's interpretation founders on verse 36: "But of that day and hour knoweth no man...." "That day" refers to some "day" that has been the main topic of the entire preceding discourse. This is the "day" of the second, bodily coming of Jesus Christ, as verse 37 makes explicit. Jesus has been setting forth this "day" in verses 4-31, typically in the destruction of Jerusalem and really in His second coming. Kik's thesis, therefore, that Jesus begins to treat His second coming only at verse 36 is shattered by "that day" in verse 36. It is as if Jesus says in verse 36, "That day that you asked about in verse 3 — the day of my second coming at the end of the world, of which the destruction of Jerusalem is a type — and that I have been talking about in verses 4-31 is unknown as regards the exact time of it, except by my Father."

6) The device itself of separating Scripture's treatment of type and reality in a passage by a neat dividing-line, so that everything before the line is type and everything after the line is reality, is artificial. It is wholly foreign to the actual way in which Scripture presents its prophecies, especially its prophecies about the last days. Where in Psalm 2 is the neat dividing-line between David and the Messiah? Where in Psalm 72 is the neat dividing-line between the kingdom of Solomon and the kingdom of Jesus Christ? Where in the book of Revelation is the neat dividing-line between the persecuting Roman empire and the kingdom of the beast, antichrist? Scripture knows of no such neat dividing-lines. It presents its prophecy as one whole, with type and reality interwoven throughout. This

is what makes exegesis difficult, as every Reformed minister knows by experience.

The Postmillennial Problem

The interpretation of Matthew 24:34 by Kik and the Christian Reconstructionists is a daring, if desperate, attempt to save the postmillennial scheme of a future, earthly, carnal kingdom.

Against their postmillennial enterprise stands the entire, massive New Testament prophecy for the church of apostasy, persecution, antichrist, and great tribulation. This prophecy of the church's struggle and suffering in the last days originates in Jesus' eschatological discourse in Matthew 24, 25. How to deal with this? This is, indeed, the question for postmillennialism, especially that of the Christian Reconstructionist stripe.

Why, shove it all into the past upon the Jews!

But this demands a new and different interpretation of Matthew 24, an interpretation that delivers the New Testament church from last-days struggle with false doctrine and apostasy and from end-time persecution at the hands of antichrist.

Such an interpretation is provided in the explanation of verse 34 that holds that everything mentioned prior to verse 34 happened exhaustively, exclusively, and in reality in the destruction of Jerusalem.

A stunning coup, if it could be carried off.

It cannot.

In Matthew 24 our Lord Jesus Christ taught His church to expect spiritual struggle and physical persecution to the very end in a world that becomes increasingly evil and hostile.

Just as all the history of the church in the world proves.

Just as we see today with our very own, Scripture-enlightened eyes.

The Kikkian and Christian Reconstructionist interpretation of the chapter is a failure. Worse, it is grievous false doctrine that makes the Lord predict the very opposite for His true church of what He actually did forecast: earthly victory in a carnal kingdom rather than spiritual victory through tribulation.

Since postmillennialism, at least the Christian Reconstructionist brand, by its own admission stands or falls with its interpretation of Matthew 24, postmillennialism is now exposed as erroneous. Those holding this view should repent of it, and abandon it forthwith for amillennialism.

But postmillennialism is fundamental to theonomic Christian Reconstructionism. Gary North is certainly correct when he asserts, "Theonomy without postmillennialism is impotent...." ("Foreword," in Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr., *He Shall Have Dominion*, p. xxxvi). Therefore, Christian Reconstructionism hereby falls.

A Practical Issue

The issue is practical.

Christ and the apostles warn the church that she must expect hard struggle in the last days — our days — with heretics, apostasy, antichrist, and the great tribulation.

The church needs this warning.

More often! Louder!

Her salvation is at stake.

This warning, with the encouraging comfort of the true church's preservation and spiritual victory, Reformed amillennialism can and does give.

Only Reformed amillennialism.

□
— DJE

To Keep the Record Straight

(3)

It was in the months following Schilder's visit that the first indications of difficulty began to come to the surface.

The difficulty was first with Schilder himself. If he had really believed our differences to be only a matter of terminology, was it not to be expected that on his return to the Netherlands he would have begun to explain the essential similarities between our positions, and thus work toward developing a common terminology which would bring us together? Instead, however, his writings went on as though his trip, with all of its intense personal interaction, had made no difference at all, and they sounded as much like Heyns as they ever had. It was almost as though, after Schilder pronounced his verdict, everyone was simply to accept things as they were and everything would work out all right.

What he did do, however, was to advise those who were emigrating from the Netherlands to join our churches, which for us actually presented a problem. On the one hand, we were more than willing to receive these people into our churches and to help them in every way we could. After all, we were small; and any growth of this kind had its appeal. Nor would it have been a problem if our differences were only in terminology, as

Schilder said. But, if behind the words there were real differences, as we felt there were, honesty required that this be explained to anyone intending to join our churches. And so, from the start, we followed the policy of carefully explaining to everyone we worked with, in as positive a way as we could, our commitment to particular grace, together with its confessional and biblical base, which they could expect to hear under our preaching. But for them at that point this seemed to present no problem (although later, of course, under the tensions which would finally develop, this would change). It was as though they accepted Schilder's judgment, and were quite content with what they heard, so that in due time congregations were formed, first in Hamilton and later in Chatham.

It was, however, in the fall of 1948, just as Hoeksema was taking up his work as editor of the *Standard Bearer* again, that a letter arrived with quite a different tone; and, although it was a personal missive, Hoeksema published it immediately (and, we might note, without complaint of impropriety from anyone). Written by a Liberated pastor, it reflected on Hoeksema's covenant view in this way:

I am going to oppose that view, my colleague, because I am of the opinion that this view is untenable on the basis of the Word of God and the accepted Confessions.... You call us Remon-

strants because we accept the doctrine of Prof. Heyns. (There may be a difference in conception here and there: in the main, all our ministers are thinking in that direction.) You want to see only one line in Scripture, and there are ten times as many texts that draw another line, repudiated by you.... I therefore believe that we must fully express ourselves about this matter before we can fully recognize each other as sister churches. Also in regard to the advice which, for instance, I must give to our members in Canada (SB, Oct. 1, 1948).

For Hoeksema this came almost with a sense of relief. In spite of his deep regard for Schilder, this letter he felt came closer to reality than anything Schilder had said; and he was relieved to hear that someone in the Netherlands recognized this as well. But, at the same time, there was no eliminating the seriousness of what was said. Here was an open acknowledgment of real differences by this Liberated clergyman (and, according to him, by the rest of them also) who was admittedly committed to the Heynsian view of the covenant, and who covered the problems by accepting the view that there were two conflicting tracks of thought in the Word of God. Accordingly Hoeksema replied, after pointing out the seriousness of his denial of unity in God, in this way:

The matter of advising your members in Canada whether or not they ought to join our

Rev. Woudenberg is pastor of the Protestant Reformed Church of Kalamazoo, Michigan.

churches is not up to you only, but also up to us. We do not want Heynsians in our churches, still less, to organize Heynsian churches in Canada. If your members are really Heynsians, they must either become thoroughly Reformed, or they better join the Christian Reformed Churches. In them there is plenty of room. Or, better still, they could organize churches of their own, and call their own ministers from the Old Country.

Far more important to Hoeksema than gaining new members were the biblical and confessional principles upon which our churches stood (and which, if one will, were "settled and binding" in our churches, as Art. 31 stipulates), and this he wanted understood.

If, however, few in the Netherlands took seriously Dr. Schilder's claim that our differences were simply in terminology and emphasis, it was different here. Almost immediately after his departure there appeared a determined effort on the part of some to prove that, regardless of what Hoeksema and Ophoff might say, the differences between our churches were in terminology alone, and they would do so by demonstrating that the word "condition" could be used in a proper, Reformed way. I remember it well, for my friends and I cut our theological teeth on that debate; and, if ever there was a battle over words, that was it. But what few thought to consider were the deeper questions which Hoeksema and Ophoff tried almost futilely to bring to the fore: whether the Liberated covenant view was not simply that of Heyns with its implicit common grace base; and whether it did not rest upon a dual approach to Reformed theology, in which what was said at one point might be properly contradicted at another, quite in

conflict with that principle upon which our Reformed creeds were built.

But the problem had become even deeper than that. It was almost as though, after Hoeksema's illness and Schilder's visit, a subtle shift of loyalties had taken place, at least with some. When for a short time it had appeared that Hoeksema would no longer be leading the denomination, the vision of a new leadership arose before the minds of some; and, particularly with that sense of personal competence which Schilder had engendered in them, they saw themselves as a potential part of it. Thus, when Hoeksema so quickly recovered to take over the helm again, their dream was dashed, but never really died. In any case, it was clearly evident that on the part of many the attitude toward Hoeksema was no longer what it had been, and tensions began to develop.

Then Holwerda's letter came.

Far more important to Hoeksema than gaining new members were the biblical and confessional principles upon which our churches stood....

It was the summer of '49, as Hoeksema and Ophoff were together on a preaching engagement in Chatham, that they were shown it by Mr. J. Koster. Actually, if I understand it correctly, the letter had been written to Mr. Dingman Scheele — a man I came to know well in later years, and with whom I often reviewed the events of those days. The group in Chatham wanted to organize, but were intent on doing it in the right way. Thus Scheele, an unusually spiritual and gifted man, took up a correspondence with Prof. B. Holwerda, the results of which were then shared freely among the members of the Chatham group, as Holwerda certainly understood and encouraged. It was no doubt as a result of this that the Chatham people asked to be organized with the provision that the Liberated view of the covenant could be maintained in their

church; but that, they had been told, was impossible according to Article 31 of the Church Order (which was explained to them and which they came to understand and appreciate fully, as is reflected in Scheele's later letter to the *Standard Bearer* — Vol. 27, pp. 104-106). In turn, they were also quite aware of the fact that both Rev. Kok and Rev. DeJong served on the committee which had insisted on this. And thus Holwerda's next letter came with a shock, for it read:

Day before yesterday we held a meeting with Rev. Kok and Rev. DeJong, the purpose being mutual discourse. We had a wholly openhearted exchange of thoughts. They said this: Indeed, we have much to be grateful for to Rev. Hoeksema. But his conception regarding election etc. is not church doctrine. No one is bound by it. Some are emitting a totally different sound. Their opinion was that most (of the Prot. Ref.) do not think as Rev. Hoeksema and Rev. Ophoff. And sympathy for the Liberated was great also in the matter of their doctrine of the covenant. They do accentuate differently in America, considering their history, but for the conception of the Liberated there is ample room.... I believe that joining the Prot. Ref. Church is calling. And let them then as Liberated preserve their contact with Holland by all means, and also spread our literature.... If Rev. Hoeksema's conception was binding, I would say, Never join. Now I believe, however, that accession is calling; and then so that the Liberated also help to disseminate the dogmatical wealth of Holland in the Prot. Ref. Churches.

Now, I would suppose that, if one chooses, this letter can be read as little more than a friendly greeting together with some interesting information; but I can assure you that Mr. Scheele, to whom after all it was written, didn't see it that way. To them in Chatham at that

time something had to be wrong. They could hardly believe that Kok and DeJong would have said what Holwerda reported they did, in direct conflict with what so shortly before these same men had presented to them as the position of our churches; but neither could they believe that Holwerda would have misrepresented what went on. Quickly the letter was handed about; and it is not surprising that, when Hoeksema and Ophoff appeared, the letter was shown to them as well. Nor did they see any reason to keep it secret, for, after all, it concerned a public matter already being discussed by all. Without hesitation they gave Ophoff a copy, dictating it word for word when the script proved too difficult for him, and expressed their full approval for him to do with it as he would.

What followed, however, was a classic example of the old adage, "If you don't like the message, shoot the messenger." Immediately protests began to pour in, not to what Holwerda had written, or to what Kok and DeJong were reported to have said, but to Ophoff's publication of it. (Perhaps it was indiscreet, for he did soon apologize for having done so — at least as quickly as he had). But the fact was that this letter and its publication brought to the fore a reality that had to be met. The differences between our churches were real, as everyone knew; and there could be little question but that they were dividing our churches and separating many from the principles on which we had always stood.¹

And then a second blow fell. From the Netherlands arrived a brochure written by Dr. C. Veenhof, entitled *Appèl*, filled throughout with things like this:

Baptism, which is being given us by the Lord, always remains effectual, every day, every hour, until our death, yea, unto eternity.... Every second Jehovah repeats it:

Carl, William, Mary, I baptize thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Or, better yet, Jehovah does not repeat that word but *He continues to say it; it comes to us from His heart in unbroken power, seriousness and grace.*

This was not just emphasis and terminology; it was common grace through and through — not just the natural or cultural common grace of Kuyper, but a soteriological common grace like that of Heyns, in sharpest contradiction to the Canons. Even those among us who were most sympathetic to the Liberated were clearly embarrassed by it.

And with that, for all practical purposes, *De Kous was Af*.² Our men continued to go to Canada to work; but wherever they went the question was the same. Did our churches have a covenant view or not; and, if so, what was it? And whatever answer was given, no one was satisfied. With the letter of Holwerda, our credibility had been lost. Nothing could be done but for the synod to speak, which it was requested to do by the committee in charge. And the result was the Declaration of Principles, a simple restatement of what had been established at our inception, and was confirmed by numerous ecclesiastical decisions all through the years, making it "settled and binding" as Art. 31 requires such to be (if we need say it yet once more).

But in actuality it came too late. Before one word of the Declaration was ever penned, Rev. Hettinga had come from the Netherlands and was going about recruiting members from our churches to organize a separate Liberated denomination — which, in terms of the Liberated concept of the church, could only be a *de facto* declaration that we were to them no longer a true church.

By that time, however, this had become the least of our problems.

The friendship we had extended to Schilder and the Liberated churches had resulted in a sizable number of our men leaving our historical commitment to logical conformity in the Scripture, to the point where they finally left us to join themselves, not to the Liberated as might have been expected, but to the Christian Reformed Church, which "out of conviction" they had once left.

Decades have now passed, of

¹ Although we can not be sure, at this point we can hardly but consider the possibility that, while Schilder was here and Hoeksema appeared to be permanently out of the picture, some kind of an understanding was arrived at between him and some of our men that they would see to it that our churches would back off from their historical emphasis on particular grace, and he would work at bringing our two denominations together in a sister-churches relationship, and direct their emigrants to join us when they arrived over here. In turn, it would seem to have been that Kok and DeJong, in traveling at the same time to Holland as they did, had in mind to assure the leaders there that, in spite of what Hoeksema was saying and the official policy being followed, they had sufficient backing still to bring this about, which in the end they certainly tried to do, and nearly did.

² This is an allusion to a Dutch saying, *De Kous is Af*, which may be paraphrased to mean "the knitting of the stocking is stopped," which was used by Dr. Schilder as the title of a rather bitter article in which he terminated his friendship with Herman Hoeksema after we had adopted the Declaration of Principles. It was as though he felt personally betrayed that we had not accepted his verdict that our differences were only in terminology, and had not received his view of the covenant as acceptable in our churches — even though Hoeksema had often reminded him from the start that the adopting of that would have been the equivalent of denying the principles to which our churches had been committed from their beginning.

course, and one would hope that the need for judgment or recrimination may be left in the hand of the Lord who alone can judge aright. Still at times the dream lingers that someday we might be able to sit down and discuss these things freely with our Liberated brothers — who still are reputed to have remained, in the midst of the apostasy of the Netherlands, among the most faithful to the Reformed faith. But realistically it is hard to see how it could be, at least as long as they continue to reject

the need for logical consistency; for, after all, if what is said at one point may be contradicted at another (or, as Rev. J. Tuininga so strikingly put it, that to be Reformed is not to be a consistent — or “hyper”—Calvinist, or an Arminian, but both), what standard can be left by which truth may be set forth. It would seem in the end Hoeksema’s melancholic last words to Schilder are still as much as can be said:

In conclusion, I want to empha-

size once more that the stocking is not finished. And if Dr. Schilder feels that because of the stand of our churches as revealed in the Declaration of Principles he does not want to unravel the tangle and start knitting anew, it suits me. Nevertheless, I want to state that in that case I am disappointed in him, and for the rest say, “Vale, Amice Schilder.”

It was sad that it had to come to that within just a matter of months before Dr. Schilder was taken to be with their God. □

All Around Us

Rev. Gise VanBaren

■ “Whom say the people that I am?”

It was Christ Himself who asked the question of His disciples. The answer, recorded in Luke 9:19-20, was, “John the Baptist; but some say, Elias; and others say, that one of the old prophets is risen again. He said unto them, But whom say ye that I am? Peter answering said, The Christ of God.”

Through the ages many have sought to answer that question as well — though most do not give the answer of Peter. Who is this “Jesus”? What did He really teach? How many still today believe that He is the Son of God come into our flesh? How many believe that the Word of God, Holy Scripture, speaks infallibly and therefore reliably in answer to this question?

At the time of Resurrection Day, now several months ago, a rather striking thing was observed. The three major weekly news magazines, *Time*, *Newsweek*, and *U.S. News and World Report*, all featured a “picture” of Christ on

the cover, and all contained lengthy articles as part of their cover story — all on the same week. It was, of course, “Easter.” This would be the most appropriate time for the appearance of such feature articles — but three at the same time? Although I read only the article in *Time*, I understand that the contents of the others were similar. The articles in *Time* were of a nature as to create doubt in the mind of the reader concerning the reliability of the biblical account of Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection. Though the article appeared to present “both sides” of the argument, still the preponderance of “evidence” was presented as favorable to those who questioned the biblical accounts.

Another impressive fact is that those in the secular realm implicitly acknowledge through such articles the great importance which Christ has had in the history of the world. The unbeliever may deny the existence of Christ, or question whether an individual called Jesus actually did the miracles reported or whether He truly arose from the dead. But these cannot avoid Him, nor the mention of His Name, nor the consideration of His effect upon the history of this world.

A third fact which one notes is that articles such as these level

their attack now at the foundations: the infallible Scriptures and the Christ revealed therein. This is nothing other than the attack of Satan himself, who would seek to destroy the foundation upon which Christianity rests. This surely is another sign of the end of this age. When one intends to destroy a castle, he cleverly seeks to undermine the foundation — not simply shoot at some of its towers.

But what are some of the thoughts expressed in the secular press? What does *Time* magazine have to say? The heading of its feature article says it all: “The Gospel Truth?”

...There are, after all, four Gospels, whose actual writing, most scholars have come to acknowledge, was done not by the Apostles but by their anonymous followers (or their followers’ followers). Each presented a somewhat different picture of Jesus’ life. The earliest appeared to have been written some 40 years after his Crucifixion. Which was most accurate? Even Luther had a favorite Gospel (*John*) and appeared to regard the rest as less essential. And starting with the 1835 critique *The Life of Jesus* by David Friedrich Strauss, apostles of the new scientific method raised additional questions with increasing urgency: Might faith have caused the writers of all four Gospels to

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embellish on actual fact? Did the politics of the early church cause them to edit or add to Jesus' story? Which parts of the New Testament were likely to be straight reportage rather than pious myth-making?

Depressingly few, the so-called higher critics found. There are only two or three references to Jesus in six pagan or Jewish sources, providing precious little corroborating data. Even if the standard for authenticity were agreement between the Gospels, there is less of that than one might imagine: the Prodigal Son and the Good Samaritan are just two of several parables that appear in only one version. By 1926, Rudolf Bultmann of Germany's University of Marburg, the foremost Protestant scholar in the field, threw up his hands: he called for a halt to inquiries regarding the Jesus of history. So unreliable were the Gospel accounts that "we can now know almost nothing concerning the life and personality of Jesus." He advised good Christian scholars to concentrate on the Jesus of faith. But, as it turns out, they didn't....

...According to *The Five Gospels*, only 18% of the words ascribed to Jesus in the Gospels may have actually been spoken by him. *John* was eliminated completely; only one sentence in *Mark* met muster. Of the Sermon on the Mount in *Matthew*, the only words in red were "Our Father" and "Love your enemies," and four other brief sayings.

However, some conservative scholars were also quoted and some good points were made:

Crossan and other liberal Jesus scholars, [Johnson] believed, were exploring avenues "subtly contemptuous of the convictions of faith." As long as the debate had been quarantined in the corridors of the academy, he had held his peace. The advent of the Jesus Seminar, however, marked a major outbreak of what Johnson considered a dangerous contagion. "Americans generally have an abysmal level of knowledge of the

Bible," he says. "In this world of mass ignorance, to have headlines proclaim that this or that fact about [Jesus] has been declared untrue by supposedly scientific inquiry has the effect of gospel. There is no basis on which most people can counter these authoritative-sounding statements."

Hosea also declared, thousands of years ago, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge" (Hosea 4:6). The ignorance of so many about the contents of the Bible leads increasingly to an acceptance of what the "scholars" have to say about it. If there was ever a time that the church with its individual members must be well-grounded upon Scripture, it is today. The attacks against the Bible and the Christ presented in it will only grow in intensity. A clever devil will surely attack foundations, especially when he sees the "lack of knowledge" so evident in the churches (and, perhaps, in our homes?).

■ High Grain Prices

Farmers, obviously, rejoice in reports of high grain prices. Reports of scarcities have raised those prices. The *Denver Post*, April 11, 1996, stated:

Not in 20 years has agriculture seen anything like this: record crop prices, booming farm exports, raucous grain markets and farmers planting fence row to fence row.

It's a volatility that epitomizes the new world of American farming. For the last two decades, the U.S. Department of Agriculture has overseen a world of chronic overproduction. Now the sudden arrival of scarcity — however temporary — is forcing the USDA to look at the world anew. A review of the department's arsenal of farm policies shows how much has already changed.

For years, the USDA required farmers to idle farmland. That's gone under in the new farm law,

signed last week. Large government storehouses of grain? They're gone, too. Grain export subsidies? They've been discontinued. And iron-clad conservation programs that idled more land? Glickman altered those, to allow planting on some better-quality cropland....

Another article in the *Denver Post*, April 13, 1996, warned about the dire consequences of overpopulation in the world with the headline, "Hunger poses peace threat, Wirth says."

Closing out the 48th annual Conference on World Affairs yesterday, former Colorado Sen. Tim Wirth left participants with a dire warning about global overpopulation.

"In my own lifetime, the world's population has gone from 2 billion people to 5.6 billion people," Wirth told his audience at the University of Colorado's Mackey Auditorium. "And we are scheduled to double again in 35 or 40 years."

Overpopulation, he said, threatens peace around the world. "Empty stomachs in large cities lead to political instability."

Well, we've heard it all before. Over the past several hundreds of years there have been warnings issued about overpopulation and famines which surely follow. Yet, at the same time, one wonders if these current reports are not different. The U.S. government no longer has large grain surpluses. There is a real possibility of drought — affecting future crops. The world's population is truly large and rapidly increasing. Are we not hearing the sound of the hooves of the black horse (Rev. 6:5-6) and, closely behind, that of the pale horse (Rev. 6:7-8)? The signs mentioned in Scripture are rapidly being fulfilled. Christ's return cannot be far behind! □

Man: Created in God's Image

When we discuss man's creation, we are immediately drawn to the truth that man was created in the image and after the likeness of God.

We read in Genesis 1:26, 27: "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them."

A proper understanding of man as God's image-bearer will also take into account what we read in Genesis 2:7. "And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul."

Man as a living soul

That man became a living soul does not itself explain the difference between man and the animals. The expression "a living soul" is not unique to man. For the Bible terms any creature that moves "a living soul." See Job 12:10 and Revelation 16:3, for example. Whether a canary, a carp, or a cow, the animals, along with man, are living souls. That means

the animals all have one thing in common with man—they are all of the earth and earthly creatures.

Man in the totality of his being was created a part of this earthly creation. He is organically united to this creation.

That organic unity of the creation also explains the so-called "balance of nature." Unbelieving scientists, because of their spiritual blindness, are all confused concerning the organic unity of creation. They do not want God and His revelation, so they look to evolution for a basis for this unity. After all, there are close similarities between different kinds of creatures. There are even creatures which partake of the nature of plants and animals both. And as you proceed upward in the animal world, you seemingly get closer and closer to man.

As we have stated before with no vague language: evolution is a theory of unbelief. Man did not develop from a lower life form! To the Bible-believing Christian such a thought is totally out of the question! Nor do we have to expend our energies looking for a missing link between the animals and man. Unbelieving scientists will look in vain for that link until Christ returns in judgment.

But if the scientist wants to know why the similarity between the creatures, yes, even between man and the ape, the answer is found in Scripture: all of creation is an organically created whole.

Also man is united to the earthly creation. He is dependent upon it, inseparably related to it, can only live within it.

That is emphasized concerning man when God tells us specifically that He formed man out of the dust of the earth. God did not simply create man's *body* out of the dust of the earth. That is not what Genesis 2:7 teaches. God formed *man*. Man in his entirety, body and soul, was formed out of the dust of the earth. We are of the earth earthy.

That is true of our body. We are strictly dependent upon the earth for our physical existence. We eat from the earth, just as do the plants and trees and animals. The only difference is that we eat prepared food.

But also man's soul is of the earth earthy. We can only think earthly things. We can only see earthly things. We can only speak earthly language.

That, among other reasons, is why the so-called covenant of works does not fit with the teaching of the Scriptures. The covenant of works says that if Adam had not sinned, he would have gone to heaven. The covenant of works says that if man had walked in obedience to the stipulated regulations God set before him, he would have received the reward of everlasting life in heavenly glory. But he could not! That is clear from I Corinthians 15:47-

*Man
in his
entirety,
body and soul,
was formed
out of
the dust
of the
earth.*

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50. It is impossible for an earthly man to live in heaven. Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of heaven. If man, if you and I, are to go to heaven, a tremendous wonder must take place. Christ must come down to earth and make a doorway through which you and I can go to heaven. And He must prepare us for that life outside the realm of our present earthly existence. That is also God's eternally wise purpose, according to Scripture. God created man unto that end.

But into man's nostrils God breathed the breath of life! By that act another aspect was added to man's nature.

When we read that God formed man of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, we must not think of God forming a lifeless clay statue and breathing into it in order to make it live. Rather, there is here one creation in which God gives to man a physical and a spiritual side. By one unfathomable creative act man was formed a living soul with physical and spiritual parts that are so closely related that man is one personal, thinking, willing, rational, and moral creature.

Indeed, the Christian, understanding this truth, sings with the psalmist in Psalm 139: "I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvelous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well."

Man as an image-bearer of God

Man was created an image-bearer, a creature adapted to bear the image of God. He was created a rational, moral, willing, and thinking creature. Of this capacity to bear the image of God man can never rid himself. But not only was man created capable of bearing the image of God. Adam, as he came from the hand of his Creator, was the perfect man, endowed with the perfections of the image of God.

God created man in His own image. And God created man, as He had said to Himself within His own Triune Being, "*after our likeness.*" That term *likeness* is a further description of the term *image*. God created man in His own image in a way that the image was also a likeness, so that man in a creaturely way was not only *capable* of bearing the image of God, but actually carried that image. He was created after God's pattern.

That is rather difficult for us to understand. We want immediately in our own minds to try to make God like us. But that is to twist things around. God is not like man. Man, rather, is created in the image and after the likeness of God.

This does not mean that man was given a "divine subsistence." Man is not God. Man is not divine.

That is an error that permeates many of the Eastern religions. It is an error that stands as a main tenet of the ancient heresy of Gnosticism, which is the wicked philosophy underlying New Age thought in our day. So, we are told, God is within man. The history of man is merely the story of man coming to consciousness of his own deity. Christ plays a role in this. That role is not to remove our guilt by His atoning sacrifice. That is said to be nonsense. There was no such thing as guilt. Just a lack of knowledge! The human plight is not a matter of guilt and misery from the offenses against a holy God, but ignorance of our human origins and potential, our own divine subsistence. Christ came as a revealer of *gnosis*, to help man come to the consciousness of his own deity.¹

That is an error seen in New Age philosophy today, and even permeating a segment of the nominally Christian church, but one which had its origin with the devil, who gave his own interpretation

of the image of God in man. His interpretation of God's image in man was this: "Ye shall be as God, knowing good and evil."

The lie of the devil notwithstanding, man is and remains a creature. There is only One of whom it is said, according to Hebrews 1:3, that He is the express image of the essence of God. That

is Jesus, the Son of God Himself. There remains forever an infinite chasm between the being of God and that of man. God is the Creator; man is a creature. God is absolutely independent, the sovereign I AM; man is dependent in all his existence. That distinction must always be maintained.

Although God surely dwells with man, He is always infinitely above him.

But Adam, as he came from the hand of his Creator, was the perfect man, endowed with the perfections of the image of God. He was not only an image-bearer. He was not only a creature capable of showing forth some of the virtues of God in his own being. But Adam actually possessed the image.

The image of God

If we try to penetrate into the meaning of this image of God, we learn from Ephesians 4:24 and Colossians 3:10 in particular that

¹ Very striking is the fact that nearly 80 years ago a young minister in the Christian Reformed Church, Rev. H. Hoeksema, exposed this same error in his position as editor for the department "Our Doctrine" in *The Banner* (October 3, 1918). Today the same error prevails and has been exposed as inseparably connected with the New Age movement. One book in particular which treats this connection is *The Gnostic Empire Strikes Back: An Old Heresy for the New Age*, by Peter Jones. This book was reviewed in the *Standard Bearer*, February 1, 1994.

the image consists in spiritual perfection and integrity. Specifically, it consists in man bearing the true knowledge of God, righteousness, and holiness.

The knowledge that belonged to the perfect man consisted of the clear and constant apprehension of the revelation of God in the things that are made. His mind was not an empty vessel, to be filled by experience. He was created with actual knowledge, true spiritual knowledge. He knew his God; he knew the world; he knew himself in relation to God and to the world. As he looked over the handiwork of God, Adam could understand the Word of God in each creature. In the whole creation he tasted of the lovingkindness of his God. He enjoyed life in the fellowship of his Creator.

So clear was Adam's apprehension of that revelation of God in each creature that, as God brought the animals and birds to

Adam, he named them perfectly. Today man looks at a cow and never thinks about the word of God in that cow. He thinks about how much milk or how much beef he will get out of it; he thinks about how much the price is for that milk or beef and how much money he will profit from it. But he never thinks of the word of God in that animal. How far we are fallen from our original state! Adam knew. He instantly knew how every creature served to show forth the glory of its Creator.

And Adam was righteous. His righteousness was not an imputed righteousness, as is the righteousness by faith in Jesus Christ; nor was it a righteousness *acquired* by Adam, established by the works of the law. But as man stood in the image of God, his righteousness was that God-created integrity of his will and his whole nature. Man's life fulfilled God's perfect standard from the very moment of creation. From the instant of his

creation, it was man's desire to do the will of his heavenly Father. He longed to live and to labor for the sake of his Friend-Sovereign.

And man was holy. That holiness came not in the way of a constant battle of sanctification. But his holiness was that in-created virtue of his whole nature, according to which in all things he longed and thirsted for the living God and consecrated himself to his Creator.

Yes, God created man good. Man was created to fill the place which God had appointed for him. He was able to love the Lord his God with all his heart and soul and mind, and his neighbor—his wife—as himself. A unique creation was man.

And only in that way could he realize his calling as friend-servant of God, and have dominion over all things. Adam was equipped with all that was necessary to realize his calling. He would serve and glorify his Creator—until the fall into sin. □

Rev. Allen Brummel

The Foreign Mission Calling of the Church

Christ's calling to His disciples and to the church of all ages is clear and unmistakable: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16:15, 16). Why such a calling? Christ has seen fit to use the preaching of the Word by ordained ministers as the

means through which He gathers His church. What an awesome privilege! The preaching of the Word by the church is the tool by which the elect are called and received into the fellowship of Christ and the reprobate are hardened.

The elect are gathered in no other manner! "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call upon him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard: and how shall they hear without a preacher? And

how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things" (Rom. 10:13-15). The elect will be gathered by the preaching of the Word. Christ, by His Spirit, applies the Word to the hearts of His sheep. "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me" (John 10:27). Christ's sheep must hear His voice! Christ places the urgency of missions upon His disciples and upon His church. Christ lays the urgency of missions

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upon the Protestant Reformed Churches.

This work of missions begins in the lives of each of the members of the church of Jesus Christ. Believers, knowing the joy of their salvation, cannot be silenced. They know the mercy of God toward them in removing the shame and guilt of their sins. They know God's overwhelming love as manifest by the sacrifice of His own righteous Son for their sins. The believer talks about the joy and peace which is his by grace. He talks to his family, with his fellow workers, with his neighbors, all with a goal of bringing them under the voice of Christ in the preaching. Some are gathered, some are offended. Some rejoice, others mock. God's will is accomplished. God is glorified.

The work of missions is the work of the local church as she preaches the Word to those who are brought under the preaching. The local church appoints an evangelism committee to spread the Word beyond their own congregation throughout the area. Contacts are made and groups of faithful believers are located. The work then is passed on to the churches as a whole so that the entire denomination might supervise and become a part of this mission work.

Currently the Protestant Reformed Churches have no foreign mission field. We have no missionaries in foreign fields. By God's grace this may change in the coming year. God has richly blessed the labors of some individuals and congregations within our denomination.

The Foreign Mission Committee (FMC) sent a delegation to Ghana early this year in order to determine whether or not a missionary ought to be called at this time. Rev. Bill Bruinsma and Elder Don Ver Meer concurred with the former delegations that we

should recommend to Synod 1996 that Ghana be declared a mission field and a missionary be called to labor there.

Our grounds for calling a missionary are the following: 1) We have found the field to be white for harvest and believe that God has opened the door for our work. 2) Many pastors and individuals have expressed their desire to be instructed by us. 3) The Ghanians' lives are not adverse to the covenant. The family is considered even by the pagans there as an important structure of society. There are many families, including many young people, male and female, who are interested in the Reformed faith. The institution of marriage is honored. 4) The government of Ghana is relatively stable, making Ghana a safe place to labor. Although a local language would have to be learned, English is the official language of the land and is taught in all the schools.

We are proposing that the missionary begin an independent labor in the city of Accra. This is in harmony with the work of the apostles, who began their labors in the population centers. We desire to begin our own labor with a few committed believers who will be willing to be instructed by our preaching and teaching in our church structure. Others will be admitted only after they understand and believe what we preach and teach.

We are recommending the obtaining of the labors of a volunteer to accompany the missionary to Ghana. This volunteer would be a man, couple, or family, who would go to the field for a minimum labor of one half year at a time, preferably a year. We are recommending also that the call to the field be made contingent upon the obtaining of such volunteer laborers. Their labor would consist of ministering to the physical and

This work of missions begins in the lives of each of the members of the church of Jesus Christ.

material needs of the missionary and the field. We believe that such volunteers are to be found in the midst of our churches, and that they would welcome the opportunity to serve the Lord in this manner.

All of this work is the result of the faithful labor of a few of our local congregations. God raised up men and women in our denomination who have a burden to witness beyond our congregations to all the world. As a result of this burden, the work in Ghana was started over 15 years ago. An elder from one of our churches was in the hospital recovering from an illness. He asked for some magazines, and in one of them a note caught his eye. A man from Ghana, Africa was asking for instruction in the Reformed faith. The elder decided to answer the request. And what began as personal correspondence soon became a full-scale tape and literature ministry. Later the FMC became involved, corresponding with various individuals, visits were made, and now the FMC is proposing that our churches call a missionary to this land.

The FMC has also been busy with contacts in other parts of the world, especially in the Philippines. The FMC believes that the contacts in the Philippines merit sending a delegation to investigate this potential field for labor.

The work of the FMC in the Philippines is also the fruit of diligent labor on behalf of local congregations. The local evangelism committees of a couple of churches made contact with some individuals in the Philippines. Tapes, books, and pamphlets were sent to them, along with careful explanations of the Reformed faith. The fruit of these efforts is that there are pastors in the Philippines who have grown in the truth of God's Word and have come to know and love the Reformed faith. The FMC is now planning, the Lord willing, to make a trip to the Philippines

in order to evaluate the situation and see how we as churches can be used to gather the church in that island country.

The FMC is grateful for the local congregations and faithful men and women who witness on behalf of our churches. Our experience certainly demonstrates that God is pleased to use that kind of witnessing, by individuals and local evangelism committees, to initiate labor for the denomination through its Foreign Mission Committee.

If you as individuals or evangelism committees have contacts in foreign lands, we encourage you to bring them to our attention so that we can assist you in bringing the Word of Christ to them. We patiently instruct our contacts in the truth of Scripture by answering their questions with careful biblical exposition. We send pamphlets, tapes, and books one at a time, and only after the contacts have grasped and understood what we have sent do we send more material. In this way the in-

dividuals are slowly built up in the truth.

The FMC cautions against sending money to foreign contacts. We receive hundreds of requests for money and other personal items. Although there is a valid place for benevolence, our primary calling is to bring the Word of Christ (Acts 3:6). We write these individuals and inform them of this primary responsibility. Good stewardship requires that we not send money and other items to those whom we do not know. Even the deacons of our churches distribute the mercies of Christ with wisdom and discretion only to those whom they know have valid needs. Also, sending money to foreign contacts can hinder the work and make it difficult to determine the sincerity of the contacts. The FMC has experienced the difficulty of trying to determine whether contacts were interested in the Word or simply motivated by a desire for financial gain. Our desire is to establish contacts and organize churches which are

indigenous, that is, self-supporting, self-governing, and self-propagating. We do not want to convey a wrong idea concerning our intent and labor with them.

The FMC sends a sincere thank you to all who are assisting us in this important work on behalf of the church of Jesus Christ. The FMC also wishes to encourage all of our congregations and all members of the church of Jesus Christ to be diligent in spreading the wondrous truth of the gospel. The work is difficult. The work is discouraging at times. But we do not perform it alone: "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (Matt. 28:20b). The Word will not go forth void, but will accomplish its purpose.

In the power of the risen Christ let us go forth to all the ends of the earth, proclaiming the wondrous truth of God's sovereignty and the joy of our salvation. May we, as insignificant and small as we are, be used to gather the church. To God be the glory! □

Mr. Don Doezema

Domestic Mission Committee Report

"In response to the question: 'Is one missionary for all of Great Britain realistic?' the answer is clearly, 'No,' but we can hardly expect the PRC to sanction more than one man!"

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The British Reformed Fellow-

Mr. Doezema is secretary of the Domestic Mission Committee.

ship (which offered the above assessment of needs in the UK) was established in 1990 by a group of Christians "concerned for the defence and propagation of the historic Reformed Faith in the British Isles." One of their stated objectives is "to organize meetings, conferences, preaching services and other activities in order to further the Reformed Faith and to give practical expression to the unity enjoyed by Christians of Reformed

persuasion." Familiar to our readers, surely, are the bi-annual "family conferences" sponsored by the British Reformed Fellowship, the third of which will be held this summer in Sussex, England, and which will again feature Profs. Engelsma and Hanks as conference speakers. The BRF's reason for existence can be found in the fact that, though there are few existing Reformed churches in the British Isles, there "are many true children

of God who embrace the Reformed faith but live in spiritual isolation deprived of Reformed ministry and fellowship." It was that reality which prompted the BRF, a year ago already, to write to the Mission Committee that, while they "appreciate the work being performed by Rev. Ron Hanco in N. Ireland, such is the nature of the need on the mainland that nothing less than someone permanently stationed in England will really address the problem. Moreover," they continued, "Rev. Hanco is himself already highly stretched and is able to make no more than a couple of trips to the mainland each year."

*** *** ***

"Highly stretched" is no exaggeration. In a single monthly report to the Mission Committee and calling church, Rev. Hanco can write about four lectures, two special Bible classes, and two "open-air" services — some of which activities brought our missionary "to the mainland": Morley, S. Yorkshire; and Wrexham, N. Wales. All of that ... in addition to the preaching, twice every Sunday. And that's just the speaking. There's also the writing. In that same monthly report, Rev. Hanco makes passing reference to no fewer than six articles written for the News-sheet of the Covenant Reformed Fellowship (CRF), one ad for *Evangelical Times*, and an article for the *Ballymena Guardian*. A fruit of the advertising of the CRF, by the way, is the distribution of vast amounts of literature. On one single day, Rev. Hanco mailed out 1,200 pamphlets and 800 copies of the News-sheet, and gave orders for 10 books to the CRF bookstore manager. Most of the requests come from people in the British Isles, of course, but the CRF has filled orders from Malawi, Kenya, and the Philippines as well. "Our presence in the UK," writes Rev.

Hanco, "continues to have an impact much beyond Ballymena and even Northern Ireland."

Hardly is it the case that Rev. Hanco does all the work of the CRF. Typical of reports we have received, oral and written, regarding the CRF is one received last summer from then-Candidate Doug Kuiper, who had spent five weeks in Northern Ireland during Rev. Hanco's furlough: "The people of the CRF are a well-read, mature, and solidly Reformed people.... They are, furthermore, a very energetic group in promoting their faith.... By this I mean that they are active in evangelism, both with regularly scheduled mid-week meetings, and with open-air meetings in other parts of Northern Ireland. The Lord has blessed the CRF both with a sizable group and with men who are well qualified to serve in the special offices. This made it a joy to work in their midst."

Not surprisingly, the Covenant Reformed Fellowship believes that the time has come for them to organize as a congregation. Three years they have labored hard under the guidance of Rev. Ron Hanco, and have seen their membership grow to eight solid families (not including that of Rev. Hanco), seven individuals, and a number of regular visitors showing varying degrees of interest in the cause of this Reformed work. The recommendation of the calling church and of the Mission Committee is that Synod approve the CRF's request for organization. The date for organization has been tentatively set for July 24, just prior to the BRF Family Conference this summer.

In anticipation of that long-awaited event the CRF has made several important decisions. Late last fall they reconsidered an earlier decision to organize on the basis of both the Three Forms of Unity and the Westminster Standards, and decided instead to organize on the basis of the Three

Forms of Unity only. Further, after giving serious consideration to adopting a Constitution based on the Church Order of Dordt, they decided instead to adopt the Church Order of Dordt itself, with just two exceptions, viz., the eliding of Article 67 (worship services on special days) and the modifying of Article 69 to limit the singing in worship services to the 150 Psalms — both exceptions reflecting, by their own testimony, a difference not of principle but of practice.

In addition to the matter of the organization itself, there are two related questions which must be faced by Synod 1996. The first is the relationship between the newly organized congregation and the PRC in America. The intention of the CRF is that the new church be the beginning, D.V., of an indigenous denomination. And the preference of the CRF is that a temporary relationship be established with the PRC which would provide them opportunity to seek advice from Hudsonville PRC as a kind of "neighboring consistory." They desire too that they and the PRC may "continue to work together more or less on the same basis as at present in the cause of missions here in the United Kingdom and Ireland." The carefully formulated grounds for this preference are these: "1) This [relationship with the PRC] would avoid in great measure the dangers of independentism while at the same time avoiding the difficulties of the [new church] being part of the PRC. 2) In matters of discipline particularly, this would allow the [new congregation] to function in accord with the principles of Reformed church order and of Scripture. 3) This would avoid the difficult and even undesirable situation of the [new congregation] immediately passing from complete dependence upon the PRC to complete independence."

Regrettably, there was insuffi-

cient time, before the deadline for material for Synod, to give the proposal of the CRF the careful study which it requires. Hudsonville therefore, with the concurrence of the Mission Committee, will advise Synod to postpone action on this longer term relationship until Synod 1997, meanwhile allowing for the CRF, between the time of their organization and Synod 1997, to seek advice if necessary from the Hudsonville Council or from two or three neighboring Protestant Reformed Churches.

The second question which must be faced by Synod 1996 is the status of Rev. Hanco after organization of the CRF. The CRF, after considering various options, offered their preference that Rev. Hanco remain as missionary pastor of the PRC in Northern Ireland. The calling church and the Mission Committee are of a mind to recommend that arrangement to Synod. It seems to us that the precedent of Singapore is applicable here. In both instances — a compelling need for continued pastoral leadership and continuity in the work. And in both instances — a great, continued need for mission work. Hudsonville, in fact, in its grounds to Synod, makes reference to the "hundreds of good contacts" which Rev. Hanco has "throughout the UK." Hudsonville adds that "the efforts begun in Portadown (NI) and Wrexham (Wales), as well as others, ought to be nurtured. The BRF even requests of the Mission Committee to consider sending another missionary to the UK."

*** *** ***

Ah, yes, to send another missionary to the UK. How we would like to do that!

Immediately, however, questions arise. What about calls for help in our own country? Earlier this year Rev. Thomas Miersma spent several weeks in the Cincin-

nati, OH/Florence, KY and Pittsburgh, PA areas, the former being a follow-up on the evangelism efforts of our South Holland congregation. It's becoming increasingly clear to Rev. Miersma and to the Mission Committee how difficult it is to do any kind of justice to calls for help in the east — to say nothing of possibilities for labor in Canada — while the home missionary is laboring in Alamosa, CO. Besides, the Domestic Mission Committee must labor in the context of commitments of our denomination on other fronts. The commitment, for example, to call another professor in 1996. The commitment to consider seriously a recommendation by the Foreign Mission Committee to call a missionary or missionaries to Ghana. Manpower, therefore, is already a legitimate concern. But add to that the expressed interest of the FMC in investigating possibilities for labor in the Philippines ... and the work of the Contact Committee, especially in Singapore ... and the expense involved in radio broadcasting (Denver, Houston, Long Island). Financial resources also obviously become a matter of concern.

*** *** ***

Manpower. Financial resources.

By these the mission labors of a federation of churches are necessarily limited. These are factors that must be, and will be, part of the deliberation of the Mission Committee when decisions are finally made with respect to what we already recognize as legitimate, urgent appeals for help — from sources in the British Isles, in the eastern U.S., and more.

The Protestant Reformed Churches cannot, and are not called to, preach the gospel in every nation of the world. But they are called to use their resources willingly, enthusiastically, sacrifici-

cially in the work of missions whenever and wherever the Spirit leads and gives opportunity — "to the measure of our God-given ability," as the constitution of the Mission Committee has it. That same constitution assigns to the Mission Committee the duty "to find possible fields and recommend them to the churches." The Mission Committees (foreign and domestic) of the Protestant Reformed Churches do not take that responsibility lightly. May God grant us wisdom to decide among the opportunities which are presenting themselves in growing numbers. May God grant Synod the wisdom to evaluate correctly the recommendations it faces regarding missions, in the light of the utilization of denominational resources overall. And may we have such a heart for missions, and for all of the work of the church, that we will view even a sizable increase in a synodical budget as evidence of God's favor.

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We had intended to give in this article a broader overview of the work of the Mission Committee. But, after focusing first on the work in Northern Ireland, we find we have already used up our space allotment. We wish however to add just three things. First, a public expression of the Mission Committee's great appreciation for the labors of Rev. Hanco and Rev. Miersma; for the careful oversight of the calling churches; and for the leadership provided by Rev. Gritters and Rev. VanBaren in Hudsonville and Loveland respectively. Second, an acknowledgment of the generosity of the members of the San Luis Valley Mission. Their provision of funds for a down-payment on a house in the San Luis Valley has made it possible, at the time of this writing, for our churches to secure much better housing for our home-mis-

sionary, at a cost which is well within our budget for renting. This kind of commitment to the cause is most gratifying. For this

and every other instance of the cooperation we enjoy on every front the Mission Committee humbly thanks the Lord, who has been pleased, for His own good pur-

pose, to prosper our efforts. Third, we covet your continued prayers for us, to God, on whom we are totally dependent for every labor. □

Bring the Books

Prof. David Engelsma

John Frame on Cornelius Van Til: The “Limiting Concept”

(A Review Article)

Cornelius Van Til: An Analysis of His Thought, by John M. Frame. Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 1995. 463pp. \$24.99 (cloth)/\$19.99 (paper).

In commemoration of the one hundredth anniversary of the birth of Cornelius Van Til, Professor John Frame has written what must be the definitive single-volume analysis of his mentor's thought. Frame is a sympathetic analyst. He acknowledges Van Til as “the major theological influence upon me” and lauds him as “the most important Christian thinker of the twentieth century.”

Indebtedness and admiration do not, however, blunt Frame's critical faculty. He recognizes Van Til's weaknesses, e.g., his lack of clarity in teaching and writing; his related failure to define terms; and his heavy-handed, take-no-prisoners conduct in the controversy with Gordon H. Clark. Frame sufficiently differs with Van Til in the

area of apologetics as to leave an outsider wondering whether certain “*gnesio* (‘real’)-Van Tilians” might not charge Frame with apologetical apostasy.

The value of Frame's magisterial study is that it presents the whole of Van Til's thought in a systematic manner, making the distinctions, venturing the definitions, and offering the careful explanations of difficulties that are lacking in Van Til's own writings. Van Til becomes intelligible.

Frame devotes some 240 pages to Van Til's theology, including his doctrines of the Trinity, the sovereignty of God, revelation, the antithesis, and common grace, before treating of Van Til's “apologetics proper.” He concludes with some observations on Van Til's successors and influence.

Of greatest interest is Frame's explanation, defense, and criticism of Van Til's presuppositionalist apologetics. Van Til “believed that God's revelation has absolute authority (and thus a certain priority) over all human thought” (p. 135). With this, Van Til urged the reality of the antithesis between believer and unbeliever. Spiritually, believer and unbeliever have nothing in common. The

unregenerated sinner is totally depraved. Depravity affects the sinner's mind so that he can know nothing truly. It is senseless to reason with him, appealing to his mind and attempting to prove the verities of the Christian faith to him on his own grounds. Worse, this approach is the acknowledgment of his autonomy.

The trouble is that Van Til, rather than consistently holding the Reformed, biblical doctrine of total depravity, compromises the doctrine by his “limiting concept,” common grace. Common grace is fundamental to Van Til's theology and apologetic. There is a gracious operation of the Holy Spirit “‘deep down’ in the heart of the unbeliever” that produces knowledge of God in him. This is the “point of contact” in the natural man for the practice of Reformed apologetics (p. 206).

This work of grace in the unbeliever occurs with and through the revelation that God gives of Himself in creation, according to Romans 1:18ff. — “general revelation.” There is grace in the revelation spoken of in Romans 1:18ff., according to Van Til, so that the knowledge of God that the ungodly has from creation can

Prof. Engelsma is professor of Dogmatics and Old Testament in the Protestant Reformed Seminary.

serve the revelation in Scripture. At least, it can serve as a positive point of contact for the Reformed defender of the faith or evangelist: "all men know the true God through natural revelation, to which special revelation adds supplementary content" (p. 248; cf. pp. 116-119).

But this is nothing other than the natural theology of semi-Pelagian Rome. There is no point of contact in the natural man for the gospel, whether the gospel is being defended or proclaimed. The unregenerated sinner is dead spiritually. The gospel finds nothing in the unbeliever, appeals to nothing in the unbeliever, attaches to nothing in the unbeliever, builds on nothing in the unbeliever. In the unbeliever whom God has chosen to salvation the gospel *creates* its contact by the regenerating Spirit. We call this contact faith, and faith is the gift of God (Eph. 2:8).

The knowledge of God that the pagan has from creation is at once held under in unrighteousness. Not for one split second does, or can, the unregenerated sinner use this knowledge rightly. The sole purpose of God with this knowledge is to render the pagan inexcusable. This knowledge, turned as it is immediately into the lie of idolatry, is never a *point of contact*, but always a *point of conflict*. It rages against the gospel; the gospel wars against it. There is no room in the inn for Christ.

Our Reformed criticism, therefore, of the apologetics of Van Til is not at all that this apologetics is presuppositional and antithetical, or even that it is too presuppositional and antithetical. Rather, the criticism must be that Van Til's apologetics is not presuppositional and antithetical enough. Van Til has compromised Reformed apologetics by the semi-Pelagian notion of common grace.

Frame, however, is favorable

toward Van Til's weakening of his own antithetical stance by means of the "limiting concept" of common grace. The vehemently antithetical Van Til is troublesome to Frame. In this connection, Frame shows himself soft on Arminianism:

Arminianism ... (has) much in common with the Reformed faith at the deepest level.... I am confident that Reformed believers are, in general, of one heart with their Arminian brothers and sisters (p. 212).

That Van Til holds, or claims to hold, both the antithesis and its opposite, common grace, points up the contradictory nature of Van Til's theology. This is the significance of "limiting concept" in Van Til's thought. Every doctrine is contradicted by another doctrine that is its "limiting concept." The "limiting concept," in reality, does not limit, but contradicts. Not some, but "all teaching of Scripture is apparently contradictory" (cited in Frame, p. 159). "Apparently" is misleading. For there is no possibility of reconciling the contradictions. Nor does Van Til make any effort to demonstrate the real harmony of the apparent contradictions.

There is no difference between Van Til's theology in this fundamental respect and the neo-orthodox "theology of paradox" that Van Til castigated as the new modernism.

Contradictory thought makes knowledge impossible. A theology of contradiction makes the knowledge of God impossible.

Frame recognizes the gravity of the problem in Van Til.

Once we allow that Scripture contains contradictory teachings, we must also admit that anything at all may be validly deduced from Scripture. Indeed, if Scripture contains even one contradiction,

it implicitly teaches everything, and therefore nothing. The presence of contradictions in Scripture would entirely invalidate the statement of the Westminster Confession that the counsel of God is to be found in the "good and necessary consequences" of Scripture as well as in Scripture's explicit statements. If there are contradictions in Scripture, then everything, and therefore nothing, is a "good and necessary consequence." ... apparent contradiction poses the same problems as real contradiction for the logical analysis of Scripture.... If we are to draw logical inferences from Scripture, as the Westminster Confession prescribes, will we not find ourselves in the same bind, deducing nonsense from apparently contradictory premises? ... if "all teaching of Scripture is apparently contradictory," then *any* logical deduction from scriptural premises would seem to be ruled out. Since there are apparent contradictions not only in the doctrine of the Trinity, but also in the doctrine of the divine attributes and the doctrine of God's overall relation to the world, how can we draw any logical inferences at all from biblical teaching? (p. 160)

Fair enough, although Frame ignores the implications of the charge, or admission, that "all teaching of Scripture is apparently contradictory" for one's doctrine of Scripture. If the entirety of Scripture is contradictions, can Scripture be divine revelation? Can the Word of God be essentially apparent contradictions throughout?

Frame tries to mitigate the seriousness of Van Til's view of Scripture by observing that, in fact, Van Til is usually quite logical in his theological work. But this only suggests that, in accordance with his view of truth, Van Til himself is paradoxical: affirming one thing, namely, the contradictory nature of all truth, he proceeds on the basis of its opposite, namely, that truth is logical.

This paradoxical position en-

ables Van Til to inhabit the best of all possible theological worlds. When teaching, he can be logical to a point (and how else can one teach?). But when someone challenges one of his teachings, e.g., that the predestinating God also loves all men and sincerely desires to save all, he can readily take refuge in the "apparent contradiction."

Frame too opts for the paradoxical nature of truth. He does so in a statement that ranks with the classic examples of paradox: "revelation presents apparent contradictions to our minds, while also overwhelming us with its own logical unity" (p. 175).

Say what?

For Van Til and Frame, the first and fundamental contradiction is the biblical doctrine of God as Trinity. Frame defends Van

Til's controversial statement that God is one person as well as three persons. Frame's defense compounds the confusion. For Frame proposes that "it is also orthodox to say that God is one substance and three substances."

It is surely not orthodox to say this, but heterodox. Orthodoxy for Presbyterians is determined by the Westminster Confession of Faith, and the Confession clearly says, "In the unity of the Godhead there be three persons, of one substance..." (2.3). To say that God is one person as well as three persons and that God is one substance as well as three substances creates mass trinitarian confusion. Now we have a purportedly Presbyterian doctrine of the Trinity that teaches that God is one person and three persons, as well as one being and three beings.

Frame thinks that such a formulation is "valuable in curbing human intellectual pride." In fact, such contradiction amounts to nonsense. It makes mockery of the sanctified mind of the Christian, reduces theological affirmation to meaninglessness, and destroys faith's knowledge of God in His trinitarian life.

The source of this bad theology is "the idea of the apparently contradictory" (pp. 65-71).

I challenge any practitioner of Reformed apologetics, whether presuppositionalist or evidentialist, to explain, defend, and promote such a doctrine of the Trinity to an unbeliever, cultist, or heretic: one person and three persons; one substance and three substances. Will they not say that the defender of the faith is mad? □

Book Review

Fighting the Good Fight: A Brief History of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, by D.G. Hart & John Muether. Philadelphia, PA: Committee for the Historian of the OPC, 1995. 217 pp. \$11.95 (paper). [Reviewed by Prof. Herman Hanko.]

The authors have produced an excellent work in their description of their church: the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC). It is eminently readable; it is informative; it is a solid defense of the place in the ecclesiastical world which God has given the OPC; and it is even-handed in its evaluation of the OPC and her work.

The book is more than a history in the strictest sense; it includes a description of the mission work of the denomination, its development and struggles in fulfilling her ecumenical calling, and the "ministry of the church," the lat-

ter including its education program, its worship, and its struggle with how to define and respond to social issues.

In the first section, which deals with the origin of the OPC, the authors point out how the OPC was born out of the modernist controversy of the early part of our century. They demonstrate the terrible hierarchy and boardism found in the apostate Presbyterian Church which led to Machen's ouster. And they describe the struggles of the new denomination which began with 34 ministers and 17 elders and which was soon torn by the split with MacIntyre, Buswell, and MacRae over premillennialism; the authors characterize this split as being basically a split with Fundamentalism which threatened the church.

The book is not uncritical of the fact that the Independent Board of Foreign Missions and

Westminster Seminary, both formed at the time of the struggle, were independent of the church and were, therefore, para-ecclesiastical organizations. But they justify the formation of such institutions on the grounds that "emergency situations require unusual tactics" (32).

In the chapter on Missions, the authors have included a fascinating discussion of the work and sufferings of Bruce Hunt, missionary to Korea prior to World War II. Also described are the many discussions held in the OPC over missionary methods.

The chapter on Ecumenicity was very interesting to me. This is partly due to the fact that the Clark case was discussed under the heading of Ecumenicity (something of an eye-opener in its own right and indicative of what the authors consider to be the essential character of that struggle). But

the interest of the chapter is also due to a rather extensive treatment of the so-called Peniel Case, a struggle to repudiate charismatic thought and practices which appeared in the church.

Repeatedly the OPC was tempted to involve itself and become more active in the social is-

ssues of the day. These efforts, according to the authors, have been successfully resisted as the OPC defined her calling in the light of her character as the church of Christ.

The book is filled with information about the OPC for anyone who wants to learn more of this

denomination, only a bit younger than our own. And learning about the OPC, one can learn about the struggle of one church in her efforts to remain faithful to her calling and to "fight the good fight." The book can be ordered from the publisher as listed above, P.O. Box 48, Coraopolis, PA 15108. □

News From Our Churches

Mr. Benjamin Wigger

Evangelism Activities

The Evangelism Committee of the First PRC in Grand Rapids, MI, in its ongoing efforts to advertise and publicize the mission and calling of First Church in the north-east and east part of Grand Rapids, decided to advertise an invitation to attend both their Good Friday and Resurrection Sunday services. This was done in part by placing that invitation in a local area newspaper the week of April 1st, and it also involved the congregation by encouraging them to invite their families and neighbors to those services. On Good Friday, First presented a service commemorating Jesus' death on the cross. It was entitled "Truly this was the Son of God," based on Matthew 27:54. That was followed Resurrection Sunday with a service entitled "Jesus is Risen," taken from Matthew 28:1-8.

The Evangelism Committee of the Southwest PRC in Grandville, MI sponsored the area-wide annual Spring Lecture this year. On April 19 Rev. R. Cammenga, pastor at Southwest, spoke on "Promises, Promises, Promises... (A Reformed Look at Promise Keepers)."

On April 12 Seminarian Cheah

Fook Meng spoke at Southwest Church on "Mission Opportunities for Singapore." A week later he made that same presentation for the Byron Center, MI congregation and the Adult Bible Study of the Grandville, MI PRC.

Young Adult Activities

The Young Adults' Spring Retreat was held this year again at Covenant Heights Conference Center in Estes Park, in the shadow of Long's Peak of Rocky Mountain National Park, near Loveland, CO. This year's retreat, sponsored by the Young Adults of the Loveland PRC, was held April 1-4 under the theme, "Conquering in the End Times," based on Romans 8:37-39. The speakers were Rev. G. VanBaren, who spoke on "Our Preparation for the End Times," followed by Rev. Doug Kuiper, who spoke on "The Assurance in the End Times." There were also scheduled discussion groups on witnessing. We can add, from talking to one young adult who attended this year's retreat, that there were about 60 who attended this year's conference, and that some of the other activities that week included a debate, and time spent hiking and snowshoeing around the mountains, with lots of volleyball and board games squeezed in between. This individual also went on to say that, with all the friends he made and

the good times he had, he is already making plans to attend next year, D.V.

Denominational Activities

The Reformed Witness Hour Radio Committee invited members of the Michigan churches to join them for a night of celebration and thanks to our God for 55 years of broadcasting. This celebration took place at the Faith PRC in Jenison, MI on April 18. Part of the program that night included the recording of a half-hour broadcast of the RWH marking that anniversary. Rev. C. Haak, the radio pastor of the RWH, spoke on the gospel message, "That All the World May Know," based on I Kings 8, and stressing God's faithfulness for the past 55 years of broadcasting. He also urged the RWH to continue proclaiming the one great truth of the Bible, that Jehovah is God.

In Rev. Haak's closing remarks, after the taping of the broadcast, he asked those who were there to consider two requests. First, he asked that our churches continue to maintain the truth of the Scriptures, and second, that we continue to pray for the work that is being done by the RWH. And we could also add here a third: continue to support, financially, the RWH. The committee would like to expand our evangelical outreach. Your con-

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

tributions are their only means of support.

On April 16 the Mr. and Mrs. and Adult Bible Societies in and around Grand Rapids, MI were invited to attend their semi-annual League Meeting, held this year at the First PRC in Grand Rapids. Prof. D. Engelsma spoke on "Lovers of Pleasure More Than Lovers of God."

School Activities

At a school society meeting held in early April, the Adams School Society voted to purchase a school building from the Freedom Baptist Schools, located at the corner of 56th and Byron Center

Ave. in Wyoming, MI. This school sits on 10.5 acres of land, with 4.5 of those acres wooded. Since the school has only four large classrooms, with two other smaller rooms, the school society is looking at purchasing three portable classrooms for the coming school year. Adams has also hired an architect to draw up plans for needed additions to the school building in the coming year.

Mission Activities

Rev. W. Bruinsma, who earlier this year spent a month in Ghana, presented a slide program on his trip to Africa in late March at the Hope PRC in Walker, MI.

Congregational Activities

The choir of the Randolph, WI PRC presented the cantata, "Hallelujah, What a Savior," on April 14.

The Choral Society of the Peace PRC of Lansing, IL presented an Easter Singspiration after their evening service on April 7.

The Choral Society of the Faith PRC in Jenison, MI gave their annual spring concert on Sunday, April 21.

Food for Thought

"Heaven will pay for any loss we may suffer to gain it; but nothing can pay for the loss of heaven."
— R. Baxter □

ANNOUNCEMENTS

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On May 14, 1996, our parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents,

MR. and MRS. GERALD BOUWKAMP,

celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary. We are thankful to God for the faithfulness He has shown through their love, guidance, and prayers. May our heavenly Father continue to bless them to each other and to us. "I will sing of the mercies of the Lord forever: with my mouth will I make known thy faithfulness to all generations" (Psalm 89:1).

- * Henry and Shirley Bergman
Barb and Randy Moorman
Stephanie and Matt
Tom, Julie, Dan
- * Gary and Rachel Bouwkamp
- * Bill and Ruth Rutgers
Pam, Sandee, Ruthie, Katie,
Billy, Chad
- * Garry and Kathy Schut
Doug, Todd, Kyle
- * Dave and Dawn Bouwkamp
Jeff, Courtney, Joshua
- * Dave and Carol DeVries
Kim, Matthew
- * Kelly and Lori Ellerbroek
Bradley, Rebecca

Hudsonville, Michigan



WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On May 21, 1996, our parents and grandparents,

MR. and MRS. JAMES RAU,
will celebrate their 25th wedding anniversary.

We, their children and grandchildren, are grateful to God for His gracious care in the past 25 years. Above all we are thankful for their love and guidance, and it is our prayer that God will continue to bless and keep them for many years to come.

"I will sing of the mercies of the Lord forever: with my mouth will I make known thy faithfulness to all generations" (Psalm 89:1).

- * Dan and Carol Bouve
- * Kimmy and Cheryl Kooiker
Christina and Brady
- * Jeff and Kim Scholten
- * Rodney Rau

Jenison, Michigan

NOTICE!!!

Rev. Carl Haak has a new telephone number. Please make note of this change:

(847) 524-4676.



WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On May 9, 1996, our parents and grandparents,

MR. and MRS. JOHN TOLSMA,
of Lynden, Washington, celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary.

We thank God for these years they had together, and it is our constant prayer that God will continue to bless and keep them in His care.

"For the Lord is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations" (Psalm 100:5).

- * Sid and Emma Top
- * Jerry and Henrietta Kaptein
- * Harold and Winnie Tolsma
- * Dick and Olga VanderKooi
- * Frank and Sheryl Tolsma
- * John and Carolyn Tolsma
43 grandchildren
12 great grandchildren

CALL TO SYNOD!!

Synod 1995 appointed Southwest Protestant Reformed Church, Wyoming, MI, the calling church for the 1996 Synod.

The Consistory hereby notifies our churches that the 1996 Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America will convene, the Lord willing, on Tuesday, June 11, 1996 at 9:00 A.M. in the Southwest Protestant Reformed Church, Wyoming, MI.

The Pre-Synodical Service will be held on Monday evening, June 10, at 7:30 P.M. Rev. Gise VanBaren, president of the 1995 Synod, will preach the sermon. Synodical delegates are requested to meet with the Consistory before the service.

Delegates in need of lodging should contact Mr. Clare Kuiper, 2669 Byron Center Ave. S.W., Wyoming, MI 49509. Phone: (616) 534-0098.

Consistory of
Southwest PR Church
Mr. Clare Kuiper, Clerk.

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Martha Ladies' Aid Society of the Hull PR Church express their sincere Christian sympathy to their fellow member Mrs. Lois VanMaanen in the loss of her brother,

MILTON SANDBULTE.

May she and her family find comfort and peace in God's Word, "But though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion according to the multitude of his mercies" (Lamentations 3:32).

Rev. Richard Moore, Pres.
Mrs. Pete Brummel, Sec.

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On May 8, 1996,

MR. and MRS. HENRY VANDER KOLK

celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary. We, their children and grandchildren, are thankful to God for their many years together and their Christian example to us. May the Lord continue to keep them in His care.

"All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth unto such as keep his covenant and his testimonies" (Psalm 25:11).

- ✿ Jerry and Shirley VanderKolk
 - ✿ Jim and Kathy VanderKolk
 - ✿ Mike and Linda Zuverink
- 16 grandchildren

Zeeland, Michigan

NOTICE

With thankfulness to God, the faculty of the Protestant Reformed Theological Seminary inform the churches that they have licensed seminarian Martin VanderWal to speak a word of edification in the meetings for public worship. The scheduling of his speaking in the worship service of the congregations will be done by the rector of the seminary.

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

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On April 29, 1996 our parents, MR. and MRS. PHILIP KRAIMA, celebrated their 30th wedding anniversary. We give thanks to our heavenly Father who has blessed us with God-fearing parents who have guided and instructed us in love through these years. We pray that the Lord will continue to bless them in their life together.

"I will sing of the mercies of the Lord forever: with my mouth will I make known thy faithfulness to all generations" (Psalm 89:1).

- ✿ Marty and Tricia VanderWal
- Catherine Joy
- ✿ Arthur and Andrea Kleyn
- Ruth

Grandville, Michigan

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On May 15, 1996, our parents, parents-in-law, and grandparents,

REV. and MRS. GEORGE LANTING,

celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary. We celebrate with them and thank God for preserving them in the way of truth in His church and in His covenant. Our prayer for them is: "The Lord bless thee, and keep thee: the Lord make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: the Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace" (Numbers 6:24-26).

10 Children
29 Grandchildren

South Holland, Illinois

CASSETTE TAPES

on
Promise Keepers
Lecture available.

*"Promises, Promises,
Promises ...
A Reformed Look
at Promise Keepers"*

by Rev. Ron Cammenga
delivered at a public lecture
on April 19, 1996.

Available from:
Evangelism Committee
Southwest PR Church
4875 Ivanrest Avenue
Grandville, MI 49418

\$3.00 per tape

Pamphlet of the lecture
also available
on request.