



***A Reformed
Semi-Monthly
Magazine***

The Standard Bearer



Protestant Reformed Seminary

See "News from Seminary Hill" — p. 65

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In This Issue ...

From January through July of this year, a special academic course was given in Western Michigan under the auspices of the Federation of Protestant Reformed Christian Schools. The subject of the course was "Principles and Practices of Reformed Christian Education." The instructor was Mr. Jon J. Huiskens. The course was accredited by Hope College. Eighteen men and women, most of them administrators and teachers in Protestant Reformed Christian schools in the area, either took the course for credit or attended.

On the testimony of those who took the course, it was a resounding success. It accomplished its noble purpose and then some.

The Federation Board is to be commended for its vision in conceiving and promoting the course.

To Mr. Huiskens is owed a great debt of thanks, for creating the course, gently pushing to get it off the ground, arranging authorization by Hope College, and doing a superb job of teaching.

The school boards who encouraged their teachers to participate may not be forgotten. Nor should we overlook the 18 who took the course. Many, strictly speaking, did not need the course, but enrolled because of zeal for the cause of Reformed education in our Protestant Reformed Christian schools.

Now, as Mr. Huiskens suggests in his report on the course, this good beginning must be continued, developed, and expanded. The course must be taught again for others, especially the younger teachers and the college students who intend to become teachers. Other, follow-up courses should be planned.

Let us discuss the project!

Especially parents, boards, administrators, and teachers should explore other possibilities along this line.

For the sake of solid, sound, Reformed Christian education among us.

That is to say, on behalf of the covenant.

— DJE



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

EDITORIAL COMMITTEE

Editor: Prof. David J. Engelsma
Secretary: Prof. Robert D. Decker
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DEPARTMENT EDITORS

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EDITORIAL OFFICE

The Standard Bearer
4949 Ivanrest
Grandville, MI 49418

CHURCH NEWS EDITOR

Mr. Ben Wigger
6597 40th Ave.
Hudsonville, MI 49426

BUSINESS OFFICE

The Standard Bearer
Don Doezeema
P.O. Box 603
Grandville, MI
49468-0603
PH: (616) 531-1490
(616) 538-1778
FAX: (616) 531-3033

NEW ZEALAND OFFICE

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

UNITED KINGDOM OFFICE

c/o Mr. Jonathan McAuley
164 Church Rd., Glenwherry
Ballymena, Co. Antrim BT42 3EL
Northern Ireland

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

That All the World May Know*

That all the people of the earth may know that the LORD is God, and that there is none else.

I Kings 8:60

We come together tonight to thank God for His faithfulness to us in the Reformed Witness Hour. God's faithfulness always carries the note of His tenderness. It suggests that God knows our weaknesses and our lack of zeal, our disappointments and our discouragements. Yet we can confess tonight that for fifty-five years, over the peaks and valleys, God has proven His Word to us: "I will not leave thee nor forsake thee."

We praise Him tonight for giving to us dedicated men and women who have made this broadcast possible through the unnoticed, and often unappreciated, work which is performed week after week. We gather together to thank God for faithful pastors who have prepared messages mined from the Word of God. And, above all these things, we thank God tonight for His faithfulness in keeping our program faithful to the Bible. That is something which, to our eyes, is grand and glorious.

*Rev. Haak is pastor of Bethel Protestant Reformed Church in Itasca, Illinois, and "radio voice" of the Reformed Witness Hour. *We publish here the message brought by Rev. Haak at the public celebration, earlier this year, of the 55th anniversary of the RWH broadcast.*

Specifically we praise Him for keeping the Reformed Witness Hour faithful to the one truth that stands as the core of all the truths of the Bible. It is a truth which breathes life into every truth of the Bible, and which unites all the truths of the Bible into one beautiful, majestic unity which is more radiant than the sun. That truth is this: Jehovah is God, the God who has made Himself known to us in the Bible, whom to know in His Son Jesus Christ is life eternal and peace and joy.

God has kept us faithful to the theme that God is God, and that the person who, by God's grace, has been given to know, love, trust, serve, and obey Him shall live. Apart from Him, the God of the Scriptures, and apart from faith in His Son Jesus, there is only death, woe, and ruin.

We do not gather tonight only to express our praise to God. We also gather tonight to rededicate ourselves to the work of the Reformed Witness Hour. We gather in order that we might warm and inspire our hearts — lest those hearts, after fifty-five years, become cold and complacent. We wish to warm those hearts with the Word of God.

It is not my intention tonight to try to move you with mere human emotions, to find some kind of human pry-bar to renew your zeal for the work of the Reformed Witness Hour. It is my purpose to bring to you the Word of God which, I trust, will produce rededication within sanctified hearts.

I Kings 8:60, "That all the people of the earth may know that

the Lord is God and that there is none else." Solomon spoke these words at the dedication of the temple which he had built in Jerusalem. A great assembly had been gathered and had seen the ark of the covenant of God brought to its place of rest in the Holy Place. The ark was the symbol to Israel of the presence of God, the God who dwelt between the cherubim in all of His holiness and majesty, faithfulness and graciousness. It was His glory which now, we read, so filled the temple of Solomon that the brightness of it prevented the priests from standing before the Lord to minister.

There was one theme that was pulsating through the crowd that day. That was God's faithfulness. Solomon says in verses 15 and 56, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, which spake with his mouth unto David my father, and hath with his hand fulfilled it.... There hath not failed one word of all his good promise, which he promised by the hand of Moses his servant." This faithfulness of God prompts Solomon to fall upon his knees in order to lead the people in prayer, a prayer which expressed the felt need for God's continued graciousness. Now, arising from that prayer, and calling upon the people of God to walk in God's ways, Solomon goes back again to the theme of God's faithfulness. He says, "The Lord our God be with us, as he was with our fathers: let him not leave us, nor forsake us" (v. 57). And again, he says, "... that he maintain the cause of his servant, and the cause of his people Israel at all times, as the

matter shall require" (v. 59).

Now we ask the question, Why? Why does Solomon plead for God to maintain the cause of His people, to maintain His people in the truth? Why does he ask that they be maintained in the true worship of the living God, and in a life of obedience to this God? Why does he plead this? For this reason: "That all the people of the earth may know that the Lord is God and there is none else." There is a principle here. That principle must be riveted to our souls. It is this, God maintains the cause of His people, and God maintains a people for Himself in His truth for this purpose: In order that all the earth might know that Jehovah is God. God's purpose in preserving a people, in preserving congregations, in preserving individuals who know, love, and worship Him is so that through them the world might know that He is God. Lay hold of that tonight in your heart!

Solomon brings the truth that God does maintain, and He must maintain, His truth in His people. He must maintain His cause as represented by His people. But why, what is the purpose of God in doing this? Is the purpose, perhaps, that we may settle down in sickly self-complacency and in spiritual smugness and say, "We are the people of God"? May God forbid that that be our response. Is it that God preserves His truth in order that we might enjoy and receive the benefit of that truth? Yes, that is true. That God preserves among us the truth that He is our God, the sovereign and sure Savior, is surely an evidence of His pure love and goodness to us and of His blessing on us.

But God's ways do not end with us. God's ways are higher, broader, than our enjoyment. His purpose is greater. God has made known His truth to us and given us to know and confess it so that we might be faithful witnesses of that truth. As Solomon says, "so that the world might know."

When God makes known His truth, that congregation, that people, that person now exists for this purpose: In order that, now knowing God in all of His adequacy for sinners, in all of His purity, power, glory, and justice, they might make known this God as God gives them the opportunity to do it.

This is not an isolated passage of the Word of God. We read in Isaiah 43:21, "This people have I formed for myself." That is wonderful. God formed us, for Himself. But was there another purpose in God in forming a people for Himself? Yes, this people have I formed for Myself; they shall show forth My praise.

That is the principle that stands behind the Reformed Witness Hour. That is why we air the messages that we do: that all the earth may know the God who has made Himself known to us.

Herman Hoeksema, in the very first message of the Reformed Witness Hour on October 12, 1941, struck this note as the theme of our program. After demonstrating that the messages heard in his day and in the world around him centered in man, in man's inherent goodness and resiliency, he gave this passionate call: "The supreme and, in a sense, the only task of the church in the world is to preach the Word of God. But if there is a Word of God to be proclaimed by the church, it must needs be a Word which God Himself speaks and which He speaks concerning Himself. And if God speaks concerning Himself, the basic and all-pervading note of that speech must invariably be, I am God! God is God. Unless the church proclaims this truth in all of its implications, in all of its purity, and without compromise, she cannot preach. She has nothing to say. Unless she proclaims this truth, not as one of the tenets of her faith but as the truth of all truths, not occasionally but always, she forfeits the right and lacks the

power to say anything at all about man, the world, Christ, salvation, life, and death. And, the Lord willing, we hope to make this theme the keynote of our radio broadcasts. Whatever may be the particular subject of our discussion, whether we speak of Him directly or of man, of Christ and salvation, of the church, of the world, of sin and grace, of life and death, we shall say, God is God!"

This was the keynote from the very first broadcast of the Reformed Witness Hour. And God has kept us faithful to it. This is why we praise Him tonight.

But, perhaps, someone may ask the question, "Well, that means then that your program is somewhat abstract and somewhat irrelevant to man in his present situation. What about the unconverted whom we want to listen to our program? And what about the less skilled and trained in the Word of God? Would it not be better if we would, today, choose a different jumping-off point, something less dogmatic, less assertive, less accusatory, something a bit more negotiable than "Jehovah is God alone"?

Yes, the Reformed Witness Hour certainly wants to bring the Word of God to the need of man today! But there is nothing more practical, more urgent, for you and your neighbor and for anyone listening to our broadcast right now, than to know that Jehovah, He is God. For, first of all, the Bible will tell us that the Christian life does not begin with our standing as man to man or woman to woman, but the Bible is concerned, first of all, with our standing before God. The theme of the gospel of Jesus Christ is not, first, how to solve your problems in this life with your wife or husband, with your boss or friends, how to improve the quality of your earthly life. But its theme is, first of all, to teach us concerning the only way of standing before God who is God. It teaches us, first, not how to live

on the horizontal, but how to live on the vertical. The gospel, thus, deals with the reality of God, our sin, our natural enmity against God, and God's grace in Jesus Christ. The gospel brings us to stand before God, who is God, in all His glory; and causes us to love Him. Then, and only then, will the Bible teach us how to live with each other.

The key to it all is this: Jehovah, He is God!

That is the knowledge that will bring you to a deep and personal acquaintance with your own sinfulness. Do not measure your sin by the standards of others, not even by the measurement of what damage it has caused you. But measure your sin by the holiness of God. It is the vision of the glory and the majesty of the eternal God that brings the devastating knowledge of one's own corruption of heart.

But it is the same knowledge of God that brings to us a personal acquaintance with and a true faith in forgiveness. The word "forgiveness" becomes an overpowering and wonderful word to those who

know the majesty of God. The reason why the words "forgiveness" and "grace" are cheap today is that men think there is only half a step between themselves and God. But those who know and now stand in the light of the true God and His majesty are thrilled in their heart and awed that God would show grace to them and would forgive them.

Still more, it is the true knowledge of God which will bring us to an utter resignation before the great and the eternal God to do whatsoever He wills us to do. Those who know their God for who he is will be consumed with one question in all their living, namely: "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?"

God is God.

Jehovah has maintained this knowledge among us.

Do you possess this knowledge? Has God made Himself known to you in the holy Bible? Has He brought you, through His Word, to the reality of your own sin, to humility, and to confession of sin? Has He brought you to

utter submission before His sovereign throne? And are you filled with gratitude towards and joy and confidence in the God who reigns over all things through Jesus Christ?

If that is true for you personally, and if that is true for our churches, then we will declare to all around us, "Jehovah, He is God." Those who know God will be devoted to making Him known. Those who know Him best are the best equipped and will be the most zealous to do so.

Then the Reformed Witness Hour, as it serves that proclamation, will have a place in our hearts and in our prayers. Knowing Him who rides in His majesty in the heavens, and whose faithfulness stretches from age to age, the God of our salvation in Jesus Christ; we will let the world around us know that Jehovah, He is God.

Our Father, keep us faithful, in years to come, to this theme. May it be sounded in clarity and may it be used in power to bring sinners before the throne of God — in confession, in awe, and in love for Thee, the One true and eternal God. Amen. □

Editorial

Jesus Christ will be Lord on November 5

A presidential election will be held in the United States within a few days of the mailing of this issue of the *Standard Bearer*. As a presidential election, it will be of importance to all citizens of the United States, including believers and their children. It will be significant for the true (instituted) church.

It is not fitting that a minister of the gospel of the Lord of lords and presidents, or a magazine devoted to the only good news in the world on November 5 or any other day, engage in partisan politics.

In this election, it would be impossible for a Reformed minister and magazine to play partisan politics, even if this were proper. The incumbent is openly and convincingly portrayed by the un-

godly world itself as a promiscuous fornicator. The challenger, divorced and remarried, is living in adultery according to the Word of God.

The incumbent vigorously promotes the legitimizing and legalizing of the vile wickedness of homosexuality and shamelessly defends the cruelest form of the murder of half-born babies. The challenger had to be pressured by the

right wing of his party to accede to an anti-abortion plank in the platform.

There is no biblical basis, or Christian motivation, for voting for either of the candidates.

It is reason for gratitude that voting is not part of the calling of the Christian as regards the ordinance of civil government. That it is the Christian's calling is a bro-mide solemnly dispensed at the time of election by preachers who have not investigated the question in the light of Scripture.

The calling that Christ gives the Christian citizen in government is threefold according to Romans 13, I Peter 2, and other passages. First, he must honor the civil rulers on account of their office. For a short while, during this present, passing age, Christ loans them some of His own authority. He is pleased to use them to keep some outward order in society, so that His church can exist and do its work of preaching the gospel. Ignoring the personal depravity of the rulers, the believer must stare fixedly at their office.

Second, the Christian's duty is to submit and obey in all matters that do not require him to disobey the Lord Jesus. The qualification is fundamental. The true church in the United States will be compelled to pay attention to the qualification in the near future as it has never had to before.

When antichristian rulers demand that the church not discriminate against women by excluding them from office; when they forbid church and believer to condemn homosexuality; when they legislate that the Christian school hire the practicing homosexual (thus putting the fox in the hen-house), the Spirit of Him who is truth and light in a world of lie and darkness will compel us to say, "We must obey Christ rather than man."

But never may the Christian rebel. Christ the Lord forbids revolution unconditionally. This

must be impressed upon "conservatives" with urgency in our day. In times of morally despicable rulers, grossly unjust policies, and persecution, it is always a danger that outraged conservative Christians resort to earthly force.

There is no room in the Protestant Reformed Churches, because there is no place in the kingdom of Christ, for tax resisters, members of private militias, and weapon-hoarding zealots waiting (and practicing) for the opportunity to shoot it out with the federal government. "Put up again thy sword into his place.... Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?" (Matt. 26:52-54).

Christ the Lord has reserved to Himself the right of judging and destroying unjust rulers, His unfaithful civil servants. He wants to take care of Antichrist Himself (II Thess. 2:8).

Third, the calling of the believer is to pay his taxes, *all* of his taxes. For the money exacted of him by state decree is no longer his, but theirs.

Voting is not an aspect of the Christian calling in the sphere of civil government.

The day will come when the Reformed Christian refuses to vote on grounds of conscience.

If we vote in this election, it will be without enthusiasm. The standard of the choice will be the lesser of two evils. Which man and party are less radically opposed to the law of God, e.g., the law that sexual relations are limited to one male and one female in marriage? Which, therefore, is less the foe of the family?

Which candidate is less eager to subvert fundamental justice in the basic service of the state, e.g., protecting unborn human beings, innocent before the law of the land, and executing abortionists, suicide-assisting doctors, and other murderers?

Which man as president would be less inclined to appoint lawless (the euphemism is "liberal") supreme court justices who will create laws to conform to the wishes of an increasingly unrighteous people, rather than judge laws in accordance with the Constitution?

Who is less likely to oppress the Christian workingman and the Christian school, because he is not so completely in the pocket of the ungodly labor unions?

A precarious stance at the voting booth.

But one that we can still defend before the Lord of our conscience.

Our confidence on November 5 regarding political and social developments in the United States will be that Jesus Christ is Lord. He is sovereign over this mighty nation, this important election, and these candidates for office.

This will be our only confidence. We have no confidence in the American people, in the main political parties, or in the candidates.

Confidence in Christ affords perfect serenity with regard to the outcome of the election. It protects us from discouragement. It guards us against any undue joy.

Jesus Christ will be Lord on November 5.

The ascended Christ sits at the right hand of God governing the presidential election in the United States. He decides who will be president, as He decides the make-up of the congress and the composition of the supreme court. He will give us the man of His will.

What will move Him will be His reading of the counsel of God concerning the last things — how this election fits into God's plan for the endtime. Christ will be opening the book with the seven seals (Rev. 5).

This by no means implies that the better, or even less unworthy, man will win. Christ raises up the basest of men to rule the world's great nations (Dan. 4:17).

That Christ will be Lord on November 5 certainly does not assure the United States of four years of divine blessing. Christ gives rulers in His wrath — self-aggrandizing rulers who deceive, oppress, and ruin, just as an unrighteous nation deserves (Hos. 13:11).

But neither does the fact that Jesus Christ will be Lord on November 5 mean easy times and happy days for the church. The days of relative earthly ease for the church in the United States are fast coming to an end. Just in time to keep the church from fatal compromise with the pleasure-madness of the world and with the un-Reformed ways of the apostate churches.

The most ominous feature of the election of 1996 is the indifference of the majority, or near majority, of American voters to recognized lack of all principle; disregard for truth; flagrant immorality of personal life; and support of homosexuality and abortion in one who runs for the highest office in the land. Regardless of the outcome, this election will be the judgment of the United States as a nation. The people will not so much

be judging as judged. All Christian influence and restraint are repudiated and cast off. The nation now gives itself over, with abandon, to the worship and service of Man (Humanity, of course, to a feminist society), the real — and terrifying — god of the United States.

There is no turning back. The scoffers are wrong when they allege that all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. So are we wrong when we suppose that all things in the United States will continue pretty much as they have been in the past 50 years, or even 200 years. The schools, the media, the false church, and the spirit of Antichrist control the mind and behavior of the people and drive the nation, with all of Western civilization, to its end in the beast of Revelation whose number is the number of Man.

As determined by God and governed by His Christ.

This will mean hard times for the true church.

Soon.

Every kingdom of Man, when it has developed somewhat, no-

tices the rival Kingdom of Christ in its midst — the light of truth, principle, integrity, holiness, and life in the midst of its falsehood, moral squalor, and death. In the confession and conduct of the citizens of the Kingdom of Christ, the kingdom of Man hears and sees, first with irritation and then with hatred, the Lordship of Jesus Christ, true God.

Persecution follows.

In this, too, Jesus Christ will be Lord. The church is effectively delivered from the temptation to become worldly. Christ accomplishes, in His persecuted people, the full measure of His suffering at the hand of the world. And the world fills its cup of iniquity, so that Jesus Christ can come in the body, on the clouds, to take vengeance on the wicked and to glorify His saints.

The prayer of the Reformed Christian, as he votes on November 5, is not for the victory of either Democrat or Republican.

His prayer is, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly."

Through the election of November 5. □

— DJE

Special Article

Prof. Robert Decker

Brethren, Pray for Us*

"Brethren, pray for us."

I Thessalonians 5:25

What have you, the believer, to do with the seminary? Perhaps in your mind, very little. The semi-

nary is governed by the synod of the churches through its Theological School Committee. The professors teach their classes, preach in the vacant pulpits, lecture from time to time, teach catechism classes, and lead Bible Study societies. The students do their assignments, write the research papers, take the tests and exams, and, after sustaining the oral examination before the synod, are declared candidates for the ministry. And you, the believer, pay

the bills through the synodical assessments. This is about all you have to do with the seminary.

But there's more, much more. The Heidelberg Catechism teaches that the *first* requirement of the Fourth Commandment is "That the ministry of the gospel and the schools be maintained...." By "schools" the Catechism means the Theological Schools, the seminaries. How are the ministry of the gospel and the seminary maintained? By the financial support

*Prof. Decker is professor of Practical Theology in the Protestant Reformed Seminary. *This is the text of the Seminary Convocation address at the start of our fall term.*

of God's people? Certainly. By the words of encouragement and, sometimes, admonition? Certainly. But primarily the ministry of the gospel and the schools are maintained by the prayers of God's people.

As we begin another school year, therefore, the Word of God to us, and especially to you, the people of God, is this: "Brethren, pray for us" (I Thess. 5:25).

Paul the apostle was deeply conscious of his need of the prayers of God's people. Notice, Paul addresses the brethren. Some commentators say the apostle is speaking here to the elders and pastors, the officebearers of the church. This is incorrect. All through this epistle, Paul repeatedly addresses the congregation as brethren. So also here in the text he addresses the believers, the entire congregation. This, therefore, is the calling of the church always and in every age. Believers must pray for us.

Note, too, that this is an imperative. We have no choice in the matter. This is a command of God to all believers, pray for us. The exhortation is emphatic. We could translate it, "Brethren, always be praying even, or especially, concerning us." Paul means himself and his fellow apostles and the pastors and teachers, the elders, and the evangelists. And, really, what he is saying is, "Let your prayers encircle us," or "Bathe us in your prayers."

Paul is deeply conscious of the absolute necessity of the prayers of the believers. He needs their prayers with respect to his calling. He is a preacher of the gospel. He is busy establishing churches and governing those churches. Paul has a tremendous responsibility before God. He is unable to carry out his task without the prayers of the believers. Remember, too, that Paul is doing all this in a very hostile environment. He came to Thessalonica from Philippi where he had been imprisoned. He was

forced to leave Thessalonica prematurely because of the persecution by the unbelieving Jews. Paul went to Berea and was followed by these Jews of Thessalonica. And now Paul is writing this epistle from Corinth, which was a church troubled by all kinds of serious problems.

Thus he writes this urgent command, "Brethren, pray for us." We desperately need your prayers. This is the calling of the church today as well. You, the believer, must always be praying for us.

The Calling of the Professors

The calling of the professors is explained in Article 18 of the Church Order and the Form for the Installation of Professors of Theology. According to Article 18 of the Church Order the professor's calling consists of two elements: he must expound the Holy Scriptures, and he must vindicate sound doctrine against heresies and errors. The Form teaches the same, but in a little more detail. The professor must instruct and establish the students in the knowledge of God's Word by expounding to them the mysteries of the faith. He must caution the students in regard to the errors of the old, but especially of the new day. He must seek to explain to them how they are to shepherd the flock of God. He must maintain order and discipline among the students. To this the Form adds that the professor must be an example to the students, "a living illustration of the power and practice of true godliness."

Both the Church Order and the Form accurately reflect the teaching of Holy Scripture. II Timothy 2 teaches that the professor must commit the truth of Holy Scripture to faithful and able men in order that they may teach others. He must study and rightly divide the Word of truth, and he must warn against errors and ungodliness. I Timothy 4 requires the professor to be an example of the believers

in doctrine and manner of living.

Hence the professor must expound Holy Scripture. This does not mean that he merely interprets the Bible — in exegesis classes, for example. He certainly does this too, and this is a very important part of his teaching. But this means he must teach the truth to the students. He teaches them the doctrines of Holy Scripture, and the history of those doctrines and of the church. He shows how that doctrine applies to the life of the child of God. He teaches the students the principles of preaching and shepherding God's people. And all his teaching must be rooted in Holy Scripture.

In his teaching, the professor must be antithetical/polemical as well. He must caution the students against all error — the heresies which have plagued the church of the past and the heresies of the new day. He must always present the truth of Scripture as it stands over against the lie.

Still more, the professor must be an example of true godliness to his students. They must be able to see in their professors how they are to conduct themselves as faithful ministers of the Word among God's people. Never must the professor contradict by ungodly living what he teaches from God's Word.

Because all this is possible only by the grace of God, brethren, pray for us.

The need for your prayers is accentuated by the perilous times in which we are called to live and work. We too must do our teaching in a very hostile environment, one characterized by terrible apostasy. That apostasy/departure from the truth concerns not some minor/peripheral matters of the doctrine and life taught in Scripture. It does not have to do with doctrinal hairsplitting. The apostasy concerns the very heart/essence of the truth of Holy Scripture as summed in the Reformed confessions. The great falling

away we are seeing in our day concerns that fundamental truth upon which depends the whole truth of Scripture and the godly life of the Christian founded upon that truth. In one word, *God is rejected!*

The result is that our little seminary stands virtually alone. Even those few conservative seminaries left in the world are fatally compromised by a commitment to the error of common grace and the well-meant gospel offer. And that error denies the antithesis between the church and the world and leads inevitably to Arminianism and modernism. The evidence for the truth of that last statement is written in huge, bold letters on the pages of the history of the church.

Consider the fact that God as the sovereign Creator is denied. The Bible's plain teaching that God created all things by His Word in six days is rejected. And various forms of evolutionism are openly taught in the churches and schools. This is a rejection of God and of His Christ, by whom and for whom all things were made.

God as the sovereign Redeemer of the elect in Christ is rejected. God's sovereign decree of election and reprobation is denied. Jesus, whose Name is the only Name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved, is denied. In place of these cardinal truths universal salvation is openly taught. God doesn't send anyone to hell. Islam, Judaism, Hinduism, and other world religions are, along with Christianity, ways to salvation.

The God of Scripture who sovereignly causes all things to work together for good to those who love Him, those who are the called according to His purpose, is denied. Lewis Smedes, a well-known, highly-respected, evangelical theologian who taught at Calvin College and Fuller Theological Seminary, according to a recent article in the *Banner*, disagrees with the view that God plans bad things with a good pur-

pose in mind. Said Smedes, "I don't believe there will ever, ever be a good purpose in the Holocaust, and if there is I don't want to hear it; and if God did that because he had good in it too, I don't know if I like God anymore.... To me, the answer to the problem of pain and suffering is hope — not a philosophy of the all-controlling God but a hope that an all-loving God will rescue the world." This is rank heresy!

God the sovereign Holy Spirit, who gave us sacred Scripture by the wonder of infallible inspiration, is rejected.

The rejection of these fundamental truths affects the worship, ethics, and life of the Christian. In worship, anything goes. No longer is worship governed by the teachings of Holy Scripture. Worship has become entertainment. The chief means of grace, the preaching of the Word, is replaced by liturgical dance, drama, dialogue, and individual testimonies. Sabbath desecration is widespread. If people go to church at all, they go only in the morning, and then use the rest of the Lord's Day for their own pleasures. Worldliness has won the day. Nothing is regarded as sinful anymore. The Law of God, the teacher of our misery and the rule for our life of gratitude, is not even read, much less obeyed, in many a church. There is divorce for any reason, and the remarriage of divorced persons. And the worst of it all is the approval of homosexuality and lesbianism.

In the midst of this kind of society and church world we must prepare men for the gospel ministry. Brethren, pray for us!

The Calling of the Seminarians

And in those prayers pray for the seminarians. They must receive the instruction. They must know the doctrine of the Word of God as summed in the Reformed confessions. They must know it thoroughly so as to be able to re-

fute on the basis of Scripture the errors of the past but especially of the new day. They must know the history of the church and the battles she has fought over the centuries. They must acquire the skills necessary to interpret Holy Scripture correctly. They must be adept in the original languages of the Bible. They must be able rightly to divide the Word of Truth. They must develop their God-given talents for preaching and teaching the Word of God. And they must develop their God-given talents so as to be able to shepherd the flock of God with the compassion of the Great Shepherd of the sheep, the Lord Jesus.

To this calling the seminarians must give their all. They must let everything in their lives be subservient to this. They must work very, very hard at this, for God is not pleased with mediocrity. God demands our very best efforts.

But there's more. The instruction given in the seminary is not merely academic. It is a special aspect of the preaching of the Word by the church. And this means that the seminarians must receive the teaching with believing and obedient hearts. The Truth of God's Word must be the burning conviction of their hearts. Only thus will they be faithful pastors and teachers in the church of Jesus Christ.

Brethren, pray for us, the seminarians!

The Calling of the Believers

That is the believers' calling, your calling! Pray always, especially concerning us. Pray earnestly, fervently, that the professors may be obedient to their calling to commit the truth to faithful men who shall be able to teach others. Pray that the seminarians may be obedient to their calling to receive the instruction with believing hearts and minds. Pray that in this way the churches, our children and children's children, may continue to receive from the semi-

nary able and faithful pastors, men who will continue the great tradition God has so graciously given us.

This is the Word of God to the congregations. This means that the ministers in the congregational prayers must lead the congregation in petitions for the seminary. I know that in some instances, I hope they are few, this is not done. This ought not be. The ministers, in at least one of the congregational prayers, ought to pray for the seminary. Further, they ought to instruct the congregations to pray for the seminary. This, as we noted earlier, belongs to obedience to the Fourth Commandment of God's Law.

This means we must be praying for the seminary in our family devotions. Parents ought to instruct their children to pray for the seminary. We are called to pray for the seminary in our personal

devotions as well. We ought not let one day pass without praying earnestly for the seminary.

There is urgent necessity here! What we do at the seminary, what we will be doing this academic year, shapes the future of our churches. Brethren, pray for us. Church history shows that denominations last for only a hundred years or so. Our churches are already making plans for the celebration of our 75th anniversary in the year A.D. 2000.

Will our churches continue to manifest the marks of the true church of Christ in the world? Will our churches continue to send out faithful, Reformed missionaries to preach the blessed gospel of sovereign and particular grace in Christ to the nations? Will your children and grandchildren attend a faithful Protestant Reformed congregation? Will they be worshipping just like you are now? Will

they be singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs as you do? Will they hear faithful Reformed preaching which will enable them to live sanctified lives to God's glory just as you do? And, should the Lord tarry, will their children be faithfully catechized just as your children are now?

The answer to these questions is, yes! Yes, if the seminary remains faithful to its calling. Will the seminary remain faithful to its calling? The answer is, yes! Yes, if you the believers remain faithful to your calling to pray for your seminary.

Brethren, pray for us. Be assured God will hear and answer those prayers. God gives His grace and Holy Spirit to those who continually ask them of Him and are thankful for them. By means of your fervent, faithful prayers, God in His mercy will preserve His church. □

Christian Education Feature

Mr. Jon Huiskens

The Seminar on the Principles and Practices of Reformed Christian Education: An Evaluation, a Prospect, and a Prod

After a bit of ballyhoo, a bit of opposition, a bit of frustration, and a whole lot of anxiety on my part in planning and preparation, a course called a seminar on the principles and practices of Reformed Christian education was launched in January, 1996 and concluded in July, 1996. It's a bit awkward as the

creator and professor of this course to tell of its success, but I've been asked to comment about the course. I believe I can call it successful not just because I believe that the objectives of the course were met, but because the participants thought so too. They gave the course a very positive evaluation.

This course, in some sense, was a culmination of lots of activities sponsored by the Federation of Protestant Reformed

Schools. The Federation has sponsored many different kinds of activities aimed at the proper development of teachers in our schools — workshops, lectures, week-long seminars. Agatha Lubbers did an excellent job of summarizing all this activity in a recent issue of *Perspectives*. But this course is really a first of its kind for this group. This was a special course authorized by Hope College for credit. Now to many of you this makes little difference, I suspect,

Mr. Huiskens is registrar at Hope College, Holland, Michigan.

but to a teacher or prospective teacher it can make a difference. Those currently teaching are required to continue their education almost on a constant basis, and those who are currently in college studying to be teachers have their plates full with requirements to be certified. So, to offer a course, with credit, was significant in two regards: 1) it gives the course integrity because it is authorized by a college for credit, and 2) it gives transportability to the credit given for the course because it can be transferred to other institutions. I am pleased to report that several institutions of higher education have already recognized the course for credit to fulfill either major or elective requirements in several teachers' programs.

The course, even though offered for undergraduate or graduate credit, took on the nature of a graduate-level seminar. That translates into much reading, some writing, some discussion, and a final presentation which pulled together, in the minds of the students, the different aspects of the course. I considered this final presentation to be the test case(s) for the course. What difference did all the reading and discussing and lecturing make? I am pleased to report that, in my judgment, it made a great deal of difference. Let me explain a bit more about the objectives of this course to see how this happened.

The specific course objectives given to the participants in this course were as follows:

1. To understand the historical and theological roots of Reformed Christian education.

2. To understand the principles which form the foundation of Reformed Christian education.

3. To understand the mission, goals/aims, and objectives/outcomes of Reformed Christian education.

4. To understand the characteristics of the Reformed Christian teacher.

5. To demonstrate an understanding of the mission, goals, and objectives of Reformed Christian education and how they apply to teaching and administering of the Reformed Christian school.

It is interesting to note, first of all, that these objectives, in my judgment and in the judgment of those who took the course, were met. Secondly, it is interesting to note that there is a sense of progression in these objectives — they build upon each other. Third, it is interesting to note that the objective which caused the most struggle and pain was objective #3 — to understand the mission, goals, and objectives of Reformed Christian education. Part of the problem was that only one of our schools has any kind of a mission statement, and that statement was not very familiar to the teachers who worked there. So mission statements, statements of clear intent about what the school is and how it is distinguished from other like institutions, became — as intended — a focal point for this course. The writing of a mission statement required careful thought, required knowledge of the history and principles of the institution, and required careful articulation, because it defined what this Reformed Christian school was to be.

The results of this particular activity were quite remarkable. Work teams discussed, wrote, and then presented their mission statements to the class. But

it did not end there. The mission statement figured prominently in objective #5. The final presentations given by each participant to the class had to demonstrate how the project they presented related directly to the mission and goals of the institution. It became a required, and therefore inescapable, part of their thinking to do a successful presentation. The products speak for themselves. The comment heard most often was that it was too bad that board members and parents were not present to witness these presentations. They would have been happy and proud. I was.

So what did these students in this course come away with? First, I think they had a new or renewed sense of the historical and theological roots of Reformed Christian education as we know it in Protestant Reformed circles. In a sense that history is long — Christian education has been around for a long time. But, in another real sense, parental education, as we know it, has a very short history — no more than a hundred years. For this we owe a great debt to the likes of Abraham Kuyper,



Front: Ron Koole (Administrator, Hope PRC)
James Huizinga (Covenant CHS), David Harbach (Adams Chr.),
Jane Woudenberg (Calvin College Student), Dan VanDyke (Heritage Chr.),
Doug Boone (Heritage Chr.), John Huizenga (Faith Chr., Randolph),
Joe Brummel (Hope PRC Board), Agatha Lubbers (Administrator, Covenant
CHS, Federation Executive Director), Rick Gritters (Heritage Chr.)
Back: Sarah Decker (Heritage Chr.), Jon Huiskens (Seminar Director,
Registrar Hope College), Joanne Huiskens (Heritage Chr.), Brenda Pastoor
(Heritage Chr.), Dorothy VanderSchaaf (Homemaker and former Teacher),
Marlys VanMaanen (Heritage Chr.), Kristin Dykstra (Adams Chr.),
Gerald Kuiper (Administrator, Heritage Chr.), Rick DeVries (Adams Chr.)

Groen vanPrinsterer, and Herman Bavinck. I believe, further, that they came away with a heightened sense of how the doctrine of the covenant figures prominently in our thinking about Reformed Christian education. For this we owe a great debt to Herman Hoeksema and, more recently, David Engelsma. And, they have come to know and believe that if our schools are to remain as parental, covenantal, Reformed schools, they need to be clear about the

mission of these schools and intentional about the application of the theological principles upon which these schools are founded.

Will it make a difference? Time will tell. It became obvious to me, however, that, among the participants in this course, conversations became more focused on what they are and do as Christian educators. A bond was formed among them that will make it easier to have continuing conver-

sations about these matters. That, in my opinion, is what needs to happen if this course is to make a difference in our schools. School boards and administrators now have the opportunity and the responsibility to give these teachers the occasions and the financial support to make this happen. The conversation must continue; and, then, actions must follow the talk. It is very possible. This course, in the final analysis, gave evidence of that. □

Cloud of Witnesses

Prof. Herman Hanko

Martin Luther: German Reformer (2)

The Progress of the Reformation

We cannot, in this brief biographical sketch, give a detailed account of Luther's work. It is possible to mention, and then only in passing, some of the outstanding events.

Although the upheavals in Europe over Luther's theses soon came to the attention of the pope, Rome was not immediately perturbed by these events and dismissed the whole matter as "a monks' quarrel." But it was far more than that, and even Luther did not know the extent of it. But when the seriousness of it all became evident, some important events took place.

The Heidelberg Disputation

The Heidelberg Disputation, held in April of 1518, less than a half year after the theses came to

public attention, was a conference and debate within the Augustinian Order over Luther's views. The Roman Catholic prelates appealed to papal authority and thought that would end the matter. Luther took the opportunity to get behind the indulgence question to expose various theological errors: the merit of good works and the free will of man. Nothing much came of it all except that Luther gained many for his views, including Martin Bucer, later Reformer of Strassburg.

The Leipsig Disputation

Rome now began to take some interest in the matter and appointed Prierio, responsible for all that was taught in Christendom, to investigate. He wrote a tract attempting to refute the theses of Luther, but his chief appeal was to papal authority:

derive their strength and their authority, is a heretic.

Luther was ordered to appear in Rome to have his views examined, and Frederick, Elector of Saxony, was ordered to turn him over. Frederick refused and became Luther's protector throughout the Reformation.

The Leipzig Disputation, held from June 27 to July 15, 1519, was one of the great debates of all time. The main debaters were Martin Luther and John Eck, the latter a skilled orator and debater and a man devoted heart and soul to Romish orthodoxy. From a purely formal point of view, Luther lost the debate. He was charged with Hussitism and was forced to admit it. Eck proved to be the more skilled in debating techniques, and he drove Luther to positions he had not originally held.

But these positions were the positions where God wanted Luther to stand. Under the pressures of Eck's skillful attack, Luther was, step by step, forced to deny the infallibility of church

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

councils, the supreme authority of the papacy, the idea of priestly mediation, and the silly notion that the morality of monks in monasteries was superior to the morality of God's people. And so, finally, he stood where God wanted him to stand: The sole authority of Scripture; the truth that only that which is of faith is good in God's sight; the principle of the priesthood of all believers. Luther was forced to see the consequences, stark and naked, of the position he had taken.

The Diet of Worms

In June of 1520 the bull of excommunication was issued in Rome at Eck's instigation. Because the German people were behind Luther, it was difficult to deliver the bull to Luther personally. When finally it was done, Luther publicly burned the bull in the street of Wittenberg in December of the same year. It was the complete break between Luther and an apostate church.

The Diet itself was really a meeting of the Reichstag, a convocation of all the princes which ruled the different provinces of Germany. Present were also high and mighty officials from the Romish Church decked in all their splendid robes and mitres, determined to force the will of the pope on the Reichstag. Charles V, chosen by the princes to be ruler of the Holy Roman Empire, which included Germany, was there with his court. The meeting was to settle, if possible, "the German problem."

At crucial times God arranges affairs in His church in such a way that just one man alone, among the multitudes, is called upon to stand for the cause of God and truth. So it was at Worms. Luther, against the entire Romish Church. Luther, threatened by the cruelties of the Inquisition. Luther, against the might of the Empire. Luther, alone.

He went, it is true, under a

safe conduct issued by the emperor himself. But Luther and his friends remembered well that a safe conduct meant exactly nothing to Rome's charlatans, even though it was a sacred promise before God. When urged by his friends not to go, Luther responded that the cause of Christ required it, and if every roof tile in Worms were a devil, he would still need to go. Shortly before his death, reflecting on those perilous days, he said: "I was fearless, I was afraid of nothing; God can make one so desperately bold, I know not whether I could be so cheerful now."

He was not given opportunity to defend his position, but was asked whether the books lying before him on the table were his. When he acknowledged that they were, he was asked whether he would recant what he taught.

It was a solemn moment. Luther was awed by the assembly, nervous and excited, unprepared to be confronted with a question which could mean his life without any opportunity to defend himself. And so he asked for a day to consider his answer. After a brief consultation, the emperor granted it. Some thought he was about to collapse. His enemies were filled with glee.

But the respite of a day brought him renewed strength and vigor. He wrote that night to a friend: "I shall not retract one iota, so Christ help me."

The next day had to be the most important day of his life.

On the way to the hall, an old warrior is said to have clapped him on the shoulder and said: "My poor monk, my poor monk, thou art going to make such a stand as neither I nor any of my companions in arms have ever done in our hottest battles. If thou art sure of the justice of thy cause, then forward in God's name, and be of good courage: God will not forsake thee."

After some preliminary discus-

sion, and when finally instructed to make clear his position without equivocation, he uttered those words which have so many times moved the souls of the heirs of the Reformation, though they filled the enemies with consternation and dismay:

Unless I am refuted and convicted by testimonies of the Scriptures or by clear arguments (since I believe neither the Pope nor the councils alone; it being evident that they have often erred and contradicted themselves), I am conquered by the Holy Scriptures quoted by me, and my conscience is bound in the word of God: I can not and will not recant any thing, since it is unsafe and dangerous to do anything against the conscience. Here I stand. I can not do otherwise. God help me! Amen.

The Roman Catholics put a lot of pressure on Charles to break his safe conduct promise and arrest Luther, but Charles refused. It has been said that Charles' refusal was because of a memory of the blush on the face of Sigismund when John Hus, as he was led away to be burned, reminded him of the safe conduct he had issued. In any case, Luther was put under the ban of the empire.

Stay in Wartburg

Frederick, fearful that Luther would be captured after all, arranged for his "kidnapping" by friends who carried him to the castle at Wartburg. Here Luther stayed for 11 months, writing constantly. His chief work was his translation of the New Testament Scriptures into the German language. (The Old Testament was done later, and was completed in 1534 by a group of men.) It was an amazing accomplishment, for by it Luther not only gave the Bible to God's people, but he also determined the course of the German language for centuries following him.

Luther returned to Wittenberg only when he heard that the radical Zwickau prophets with their awful mysticism were disturbing the peace and tranquility of his city. If one wonders how important a role preaching played in the Reformation, one need only be reminded of the fact that Luther stopped the radicals in their tracks and sent them scurrying out of the city by means of a series of eight sermons which he preached from Wittenberg's pulpit.

From the time Luther returned to Wittenberg to the end of his life, Germany tottered on the brink of war between the armies of the Protestant princes and the armies of those princes determined to keep Germany Roman Catholic. It was a time of danger and struggle, but only after Luther's death did the Thirty Years' War break out, a war which left Germany devastated.

Luther the Preacher

Above all else, Luther was a preacher. This ought not to surprise us, for preaching is the one and only power of the church. And no reformation can be brought about in any other way than through preaching.

Luther's preaching is characterized by exposition of Scripture, but extremely down-to-earth imagery by which Luther made God's truth come alive in the minds and hearts of the simplest of God's people. The sermons reflected Luther's rapport with his own countrymen.

Yet the one characteristic which is most striking is the fact that Luther always brought the congregation to the cross. It is hard to find a sermon in which Luther did not do this. He himself had found the peace that passes understanding at the foot of the cross, and to that suffering and dying Savior Luther was intent on bringing God's people.

Luther's sermons are extant. They ought to be read. Nothing

tells us of the struggles of the Reformation more clearly than these sermons, and nothing shows us the power of the Spirit in Christ-centered preaching more vividly than to read what Luther preached.

Luther the Writer

Luther's writings are voluminous. In the edition in our library his writings take 54 volumes. Several are outstanding and sooner or later ought to be read by God's people — as they were read by God's people in Luther's day. In his *Bondage of the Will*, Luther refuted the heresy of the freedom of the will taught by the "Prince of the Humanists," Desiderius Erasmus. It was Luther's break with Humanism and is one of the great books of the Reformation.

Luther's three great pamphlets defined the basic truths of the Lutheran Reformation: "Address to the German Nobility," in which the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers was developed; "Babylonian Captivity of the Church," in which Luther made his case against Rome's sacramental system; and "Freedom of the Christian Man," a clear view of Christian freedom.

If anyone wishes to know Luther at his most down-to-earth and rugged character, he need only to pick up and read the "Table Talks." Here is Luther commenting on almost everything in life with simple expressions, biblical insights, humorous comments, and talk that would delight the soul of the rough-hewn peasant.

Luther the Husband and Father

One could write a book on this aspect of the Lutheran Reformation alone. Luther not only laid aside his monastic vows; he married Catherine von Bora, a former nun with a mind of her own and a force in her own right in the home. He married her, he said, "to please his father, tease the pope, and vex the devil." He affectionately called her Katie, my rib. She managed,

sometimes with exasperation, the tumultuous household which always had visitors and never had enough money. To them were born six children: three daughters, two of whom died young, and three sons. Especially the death of Lena (Magdalene) touched Luther with great sorrow. Schaff describes the scene at her bedside:

"I love her very much," he prayed; "but, dear God, if it is thy holy will to take her hence, I would gladly leave her with Thee." And to her he said, "Lena dear, my little daughter, thou wouldst love to remain here with thy father: art thou willing to go to that other Father?" — "Yes, dear father," she replied, "just as God wills." And when she was dying, he fell on his knees beside her bed, wept bitterly, and prayed for her redemption. As she lay in her coffin, he exclaimed, "Ah! my darling Lena, thou wilt rise again, and shine like a star, — yea, as a sun. I am happy in the spirit, but very sorrowful in the flesh."

Luther wrote extensively on education because the education of the children of the church was crucial to him. And, in writing on this important subject, from which we can learn today, Luther was far ahead of his times.

But instruction in the home occupied a crucial part of Luther's life. The home of Martin and Katie was filled with prayer, Bible study, theological discussion, and the example of godly people. One prayer of Luther lives in my memory in a special way because it shows his intimate life of fellowship with God, his dependence upon divine grace, and his love for the church. It was a prayer at the end of a busy day.

My dear God, now I lie down and turn your affairs back to you; you may do better with them. If you can do no better than I, you will ruin them entirely. When I awake, I will gladly try again. Amen.

By his home life, Luther brought true reformation into home and family, something sorely needed after the corruption of Rome. The effects of Luther's own example linger to the present in covenant homes.

Luther the Warrior

Luther fought courageously and unflinchingly in the battles for the truth. Whatever was necessary in his mighty blasts against Rome to show her evils, he did. By his work he threw the entire church into confusion.

And yet it must be remembered that he had to fight on two fronts: Rome on the one side, but, on the other front, the miserable Anabaptist radicals — the so-called "right wing" of the Reformation. That he could maintain his balance between these two ex-

tremes is evidence in itself of the power of grace in Luther's life.

By means of his theology he battered and destroyed the imposing and seemingly indestructible walls of the Roman citadel of heresy. While Calvin was the one to rebuild Jerusalem's walls, Calvin could not have done his work without Luther's fierce cannonades against Rome. But Luther also laid the foundations of the doctrines of sovereign grace, so that the truths of salvation by grace alone could be more beautifully and fully set forth by those who were to follow.

It is always reason for sorrow that, on the doctrine of the sacraments, Luther should also have felt it necessary to do battle with his fellow Reformers.

Luther's Death

Far from Katie, in Eisleben, where he had gone for some diffi-

cult negotiations, and in the city of his birth and baptism, at the age of 63, Luther went to be with his Lord, whom he loved and served. The date was February 17, 1546. He had for a long time not been well and suffered severely from various ailments. As death neared, in characteristic fashion he committed his soul to God with the words of Psalm 31:5 and with the request to those at his bedside that they would pray "for our Lord God and his gospel, that all might be well with him, because the Council of Trent and the accursed pope are very angry with him." He died with the words of Simeon on his lips: "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace. Amen."

The Reformer had gone to join the church triumphant. His work lives on. □

Search the Scriptures

Rev. Mitchell Dick

"Then I Go..."

John 7: 32-36

In the passage before us, John 7:32ff., Jesus is at the Jews' feast of tabernacles. He is there to teach (v. 14).

This was a bold move on Jesus' part. For the Jews were seeking to kill Him for His words and works (5:18, 7:11). And Jesus' instruction at the temple at this time only serves to fan the anger of some of the Jews towards Him (v. 30).

However, many of the Jews believed on Jesus (v. 31). For, according to verse 31, they could not

imagine that when Christ would come He would do more miracles than this man, Jesus of Nazareth.

It was when the Pharisees heard that the people were inclining toward Jesus, and speaking well of Him, that the Pharisees and the chief priests sent officers to take Him (v. 32).

At this time Jesus addresses them (v. 33). There were probably others who heard what Jesus said, but Jesus' words seem to be directed specifically towards those who had come to take Him. He speaks of the fact that He will soon depart from their midst to a place where they cannot come. He prophesies that though they would

seek Him, they would not find Him.

This puzzles the Jews no end.

For Study, Meditation, and Discussion

Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God

* In verses 33, 34, the Lord Jesus calmly announces His departure: "Yet a little while ... and then I go unto him that sent me." The reference, of course, is to His going to heaven. He will go there in a little while. The little while He will yet be on earth is about six months: for at the time He was speaking it was the month of October, and Jesus would be cruci-

Rev. Dick is pastor of Grace Protestant Reformed Church in Standale, Michigan.

fied during the feast of the Passover the next April.

* With these words Jesus shows complete confidence here in His glorification. "I go unto him that sent me," Jesus declares. This is an amazing statement in light of the present humiliation and sorrow of the man of sorrows, but also in light of the future suffering which our Savior knew He must undergo in the last week of His life on earth! Look up other verses which show the Savior's confidence in His glorification. In light of the complete confidence of the Savior, how do we explain His *praying* to be glorified in John 17:5?

* The *ground* of Jesus' confidence is the eternal decree of God. This is something Jesus knew. He knew that His being on earth was according to a plan. It was Father's plan. That He had come to earth was according to Father's plan. That He would be taken and crucified was Father's will. That after this He would be glorified was according to Father's eternal, sovereign purpose. Cite Scriptures to show that salvation in Jesus the Christ was ever the purpose of God (e.g., Ephesians 1; Colossians 1).

* When Jesus declares in verse 34: "Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me: and where I am thither ye cannot come," He shows Himself to be the Judge. He is not simply announcing a fact. Rather, Jesus is *pronouncing judgment* upon a certain people — the unbelieving Jews. Other Scriptures teach that God, by Jesus, judges the world. Which Scriptures are those?

* The statement in verse 34 is similar to many others in the Scriptures (Prov. 1:24-28; Amos 8:11, 12; John 8:21). In their light, explain the reason for the judgment of God upon the Jews (i.e., for what specific sins did God reject the Jewish nation?). In connection with this, consider this question: Are we to look for any revival of the Jews? That is, shall any or even

many of the Jews *find* Jesus and enter heaven?

Believest Thou This?

* In this passage we see the reaction of unbelief to the Person, words, and works of our Lord Jesus Christ. In fact, the Jews had some (sort of) faith in God. They even boasted of it. And they thought they did God service. But they denied and rejected the Christ of God. What does this say of their faith in God? (Cf. John 14:1, 6, 7; John 16:1-3; Rom. 10:2.) What words and works of Jesus did the Jews despise?

* This rejection of the Christ, God in flesh, our Savior revealed, is the principal fruit of unbelief of Jew and Gentile. Show from the history recorded in the Bible how the Christ had been rejected all along. How is such unbelief seen today in doctrine and life in both the church and secular world? Is Christ rejected when other ways to God are accepted? A popular church in the Grand Rapids area recently celebrated "Yom Kipper," the Old Testament Day of Atonement. How is this a rejection of Christ?

* If the Jews were such unbelievers, how can it be said that they would, at some time, "seek" the Lord (v. 34)? And how can they be said to seek the Lord and not find Him, in light of the promise of Matthew 7:7?

* The depth of the Jews' hatred of Jesus is seen in that repeatedly they sought ways to kill Him. This is shown in our text, too: the Pharisees and the chief priests sent officers to take Him. But note here also that the Pharisees and the chief priests are united. This is striking because many of the priests of those days were Sadducees. But the Pharisees and Sadducees were, for various reasons (cf. a good Bible Dictionary), sharply at odds! How hatred of the Messiah unites all in opposition to Him! Discuss how this same unification of all those who

deny Christ will occur under Antichrist. Do we see this today?

* Notice that unbelief leads to confusion and spiritual blindness (vv. 35, 36). The Jews had only carnal notions of that of which Jesus spoke in verses 33, 34. Discuss, in this connection, the doctrine of depravity, and hardening of sinners (cf. Is. 6:9-13; Rom. 8:6, 7; I Cor. 2).

* And you? *Believest thou?* Do you believe? As believers, we believe it is better that Jesus is no longer on earth in body, but is in heaven. Why? (Cf. the Heidelberg Catechism, and Scripture references, Q. 49, 51.) How is Christ with us still, and what encouragement is this?

* In believing we seek Jesus, and seek the truth as it is in Jesus. And the promise is that those who seek, by faith, shall find. Discuss the Scriptures which show how, and why, this promise is invariably kept by God as we seek to find direction, comfort, and the Lord Himself in all our life.

* Notice how the Jews, though they were confused about what Jesus said, did not ask Jesus for an explanation. Rather, they spoke among themselves. And their discussion among themselves (vv. 35, 36) was certainly not that they might understand what Jesus was saying. Rather, they spoke thus to mock the Savior! God grant us true faith and humility to ask the Lord for help in understanding His words and ever to reverence whatever He says!

Life Through His Name

* Jesus said He would go "unto" Him that sent Him, that is, unto the Father. Just as "in the beginning" the Word was "with" God (John 1:1: literally, "toward" God), so when Jesus ascended unto His Father He went to be "with" Him in glory again. There was, in Jesus' ascension, a reunion, a continuation of the life in glory that the Son incarnate enjoyed with the Father before the world began

(John 17:5). How does believing on the Lord Jesus take us "unto" the Father — already now? Is not this being in the fellowship of the Father what life is all about? How do we *show* that our life, and the joy of our life, is being with Father?

* Many view the joy of what they call "heaven" as freedom from pain and trial and the ability to do what they want to do for ever. Jesus' desire and expectation with regard to heaven was that in going to heaven He would

go unto the Father. Is that what you look forward to most about heaven? How do we begin, on this earth, to "cultivate" and show such hope and desire? What comfort do we derive in this present vale of tears from our life with Father?

□

News from Seminary Hill

Protestant Reformed Seminary

4949 Ivanrest Avenue
Grandville, Michigan 49418

The highlight of this school-year at the Protestant Reformed Seminary is the addition to the faculty of Prof. Russell J. Dykstra. Prof. Dykstra is teaching a course in Greek grammar to three pre-seminary students. He is working on obtaining the Th. M. degree in Historical Theology at Calvin Seminary. He is fully involved in the life of the seminary and in all faculty activities. Much of his time is spent in his office at the seminary preparing for the courses he will begin teaching next year. This enables him to cooperate with Prof. Hanko next door, whose classes he will take over. We are thankful to God and to the churches for this capable, energetic co-laborer in the seminary.



Prof. Dykstra — at work in his office and ...

There are seven full-time students. Six aspire to the ministry in the Protestant Reformed Churches; one will seek admission into the ministry in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. There is one student in each of the first three years of the seminary program. There are four seniors. The four seniors are finishing up internships in the churches the first semester of the present school-year. Daniel Kleyn is working in the South Holland, IL church; James Laning, in the Southwest, Grandville, MI church; Darren Thole, in an Orthodox Presbyterian church; and Martin VanderWal, in the Holland, MI church. All four will return for classes the second semester. They will graduate in June, 1997, God willing.

In addition, five men from the Heritage Netherlands Reformed Congregations are either auditing or taking for credit the dogmatics and church polity courses. We are glad that we can be of service to them, and appreciate their presence with us.

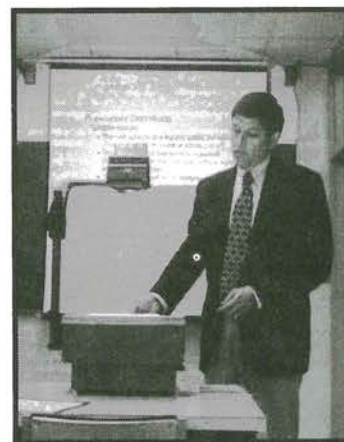
This month, the faculty publishes the Fall, 1996 issue of the *Protestant Reformed Theological Journal*. This issue of the journal is devoted to Reformed church polity, with articles on the principles of Reformed church polity, the autonomy of the local congregation, and the authority of the major assemblies.

The new addition to the building is used and appreciated by us all, especially the spacious, growing library. About \$30,000 remains to be paid on the addition. Synod has decided that the debt is to be paid by private gifts and collections in the churches. We commend this cause to the liberality of our supporters.

And pray for us, that our work on behalf of the churches may bear fruit in able, faithful preachers of the glorious gospel of God's grace in Jesus Christ the Lord.

Cordially in Christ,
For the faculty,

Prof. David J. Engelsma □



... teaching Greek in his classroom.

The Administration of Baptism

In the ceremony of baptism, both of children and of adults, the minister shall use the respective forms drawn up for the administration of this sacrament.

Church Order, Article 58

Adults are through baptism incorporated into the Christian church, and are accepted as members of the church, and are therefore obliged also to partake of the Lord's Supper, which they shall promise to do at their baptism.

Church Order, Article 59

The names of those baptized, together with those of the parents, and likewise the date of birth and baptism, shall be recorded.

Church Order, Article 60

Use of the adopted forms

Articles 58-60 conclude the section of the *Church Order* which deals with the administration of the sacrament of baptism. These articles concern certain details connected to the administration of the sacrament: use of the adopted forms for baptism, adult baptism, and maintaining accurate records of those who have been baptized.

Article 58 makes the use of the forms for baptism obligatory in the churches. Consistories and ministers are not at liberty to introduce their own forms. Neither is it permitted that changes be made in the forms, or liberties taken in the use of the forms, at the time of baptism. The forms have been approved by the churches in common. The use of them in the liturgy of the churches is an important expression of our unity.

Strictly speaking there are not separate "Forms" in use in our churches, but one "Form for the

Administration of Baptism." This form has two parts, the first "To Infants of Believers" and the second "To Adult Persons." The first part of the "Form" is the same whether an infant or an adult is being baptized.

Our "Form" can be traced to the Reformed churches of the Lowlands. Already the Synod of Wezel, 1568, made reference to a baptism form that had been drawn up by Peter Datheen and Caspar VanDerHeyden. Because of the multiplication of forms, the Synod of Dordrecht, 1574, urged the churches to make use of the same form. Although the Synod of Dordrecht, 1618-19, approved certain revisions of the existing baptism form, those revisions were never published and therefore never incorporated into the liturgy. Our present form reflects the work of the well-known Dutch Reformed theologians Dr. F.L. Rutgers, Dr. H. Bavinck, and Dr. A. Kuyper. They cooperated in a revision of the existing form, taking into account the changes that had been approved by the Synod of Dordrecht. Their revision was published in 1897. It was an English translation of this form, with

a few corrections and changes, that was approved by the Synod of the Christian Reformed Church in 1912 and remains the form used today in our Protestant Reformed Churches.

The part of the form which deals with the baptism of adults also can be traced to the Synod of Dordrecht, 1618-19. At that time at least two forms were being used in the churches on the occasion of adult baptism. Dordt approved a single form and urged its use upon the churches. It is really this form that has become the second part of our form, "To Adult Persons."

There is good reason for the use of the "Form for Baptism" at the time of the administration of the sacrament. As with our other forms, so this form arises out of the conviction of the Reformed churches that the sacraments are a means of grace to believers only, in connection with the preaching of the Word. Hence, there must be an understanding of the meaning of the sacrament on the part of the members of the church. This is the purpose served by the form. It explains the Reformed conception of baptism, defends the practice of infant baptism, and from

Rev. Cammenga is pastor of Southwest Protestant Reformed Church in Grandville, Michigan.

the Scriptures binds upon those presenting their children for baptism, as well as those who are baptized, their calling before God. It is a very beautiful and fitting form that our churches ought to continue to treasure.

When in the worship service should the form be read? This is not prescribed by the *Church Order* but is left to the discretion of the individual consistory. In some congregations the form is read at the conclusion of the service, after the preaching of the Word. In most of our congregations the form is read prior to the sermon, with the concluding prayer of the form used as the lead-in to the congregational prayer.

Adult baptism

Article 59 teaches that through baptism adults are received as members of the church and are therefore obliged to partake of the Lord's Supper.

Adult baptisms are rare in our churches. This is not surprising. In the sphere of the covenant, infant baptism is the rule. Adult baptisms are also infrequent because in our nominally Christian country it is common practice, even for parents who do not take their professed Christianity seriously, to have their children baptized. Rarely is it the case that those who join our churches from outside have not been baptized. Nevertheless, occasionally our congregations are privileged to witness an adult baptism. Such an event, I have found, leaves a very deep impression on the congregation. What is rare in our established congregations is more frequent in the foreign mission work in which the Lord has privileged us to be involved in the last several years.

By "church" in Article 59 is meant "local congregation." Baptism is the means by which one becomes a member of the instituted church, whether baptized as an infant or as an adult. This

stands on the foreground in Article 59. The original Dutch of the article speaks not of "kerk" (that is, "church") but of "gemeente," which is "congregation."

By virtue of their membership in the congregation as adults, those who receive adult baptism are entitled to all of the privileges and responsibilities of adult members.

Adult baptism involves confession of faith. It is not the case that after one has been baptized as an adult he must also make confession of faith, the "Form for Public Confession of Faith" also being read. Only the "Form for Baptism" is read, which form itself makes plain that adult baptism is confession of faith.

Therefore it is not lawful now to baptize any other adult person, than such as have been taught the mysteries of holy baptism, by the preaching of the gospel, and are able to give an account of their faith by the confession of the mouth ("Form for the Administration of Baptism, To Adult Persons").

Since adult baptism is confession of faith, it is required of those who receive adult baptism that they partake of the Lord's Supper. The "Form for Baptism" specifies this. The fourth promise that is made by those who are baptized as adults is:

Dost thou assent to all the articles of the Christian religion, as they are taught here, in this Christian Church, according to the Word of God; and purpose steadfastly to continue in the same doctrine to the end of thy life; and also dost thou reject all heresies and schisms, repugnant to this doctrine, and promise to persevere in the communion of the Christian Church, not only in the hearing of the Word, *but also in the use of the Lord's Supper?* ("Form for the Administration of Baptism, To Adult Persons").

Article 59 of the *Church Order*

was really the answer of the Synod of Dordrecht, 1618-19, to a controversy that was being carried on in the churches at that time. The debate concerned whether or not those who made public confession of faith should be required to partake of the Lord's Supper. There were those who took the position that this requirement should not be made, so that one might very well make confession of faith but for a number of years refrain from partaking of the Lord's Supper. Article 59 makes clear which view prevailed at the Synod.

The fact that those who receive adult baptism are required to partake of the Lord's Supper means that only those who are competent to celebrate the Lord's Supper may be baptized as adults. There has been much discussion regarding the cut-off between infant baptism and adult baptism. At what age is it no longer possible to baptize someone as an infant? How young can one be to receive adult baptism? Early synods faced questions regarding the baptism of adolescents of 13-15 years of age. Although it would be a mistake to set a definite age, and although each case must be judged individually, the general principle that must be remembered is that those who are baptized as adults must be able responsibly to approach the Lord's Table.

Baptismal records

Article 60 enjoins upon consistories the keeping of accurate records of births and baptisms. All our consistories maintain a membership file or record book. Besides date of birth and baptism, a record is also kept of date of confession of faith and marriage.

When Article 60 was written, the government relied upon the churches for the keeping of accurate records on its behalf. No longer is this the situation. Nevertheless, decency and good order within the church require the keep-

ing of good records. Even in our day the civil government honors ecclesiastical records of births and baptisms.

If the keeping of accurate membership records is important, it follows that when members transfer from one congregation to another their membership records should also be transferred. The record of the date of birth, baptism, confession of faith, and marriage should follow the member wherever his membership goes. This is not always done when membership transfer papers are filled out. The clerks of our consistories should routinely see that this is done.

Those joining our churches from outside should also produce membership records. Usually this presents no difficulty. Occasionally, however, such records have been lost or destroyed. It has happened that one seeking to join a church is unable to produce proof of having been baptized as an infant. In this case, a consistory should be satisfied with an attestation concerning baptism by the parents, relatives, or former

church officers.

Since Article 60 speaks of registering the names of those who are baptized, the question arises concerning the names that Reformed believers give to their children.

Certainly the naming of their children is the prerogative of the parents. This liberty ought not to be infringed upon. Nevertheless, the Reformed church of the past took seriously this matter of naming covenant children, and exhorted parents to take this calling seriously. The following question was put to the National Synod of Middelburg, 1581:

Whether children who are to be baptized may be given all sorts of names? Answer: It is optional, but diligent care should be taken that such names are not taken which belong to God or Christ, such as Emmanuel or Savior, also of certain offices, such as Baptist, Angel, or those which are pagan.

Certainly parents ought not to use the names of notoriously wicked men and women mentioned in the Bible: Cain, Judas, Jezebel, or

Sapphira. Divine names must be avoided. Pagan names ought also to be avoided, although we know from the New Testament that there were converts who retained their pagan names even after conversion, such as Apollos, Hermes, and Fortunatus. Parents ought also to avoid naming their children after ungodly movie stars, entertainers, or sports figures. This does not mean that only biblical names ought to be given to our children, although this properly remains common among us. But it does mean that parents ought to be spiritually sensitive in the naming of their sons and daughters.

It is customary that at the time of baptism the minister uses only the personal name and not the surname of the child being baptized. Certainly this dates to a time when there were no surnames. But the continuance of this practice is to be recommended. By mentioning only the given name, the personal significance of baptism stands on the foreground. By virtue of baptism this individual is now received as a member of the church. □

Book Review

The Last Things, Hope For This World and the Next, by Herman Bavinck. Ed. John Bolt, tr. John Vriend. Grand Rapids, MI.: Baker Book House Company, 1996. 205 pp. \$14.95 (paper). [Reviewed by Pastor Arie den Hartog.]

This book is the first production of a recently organized society of business people, professionals, pastors, and seminary professors which is sponsoring the translation into English and publication of classic Reformed theological and religious literature first published in the Dutch language. The first project of this society is to translate and publish the complete

four-volume work of Herman Bavinck entitled *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek (Reformed Dogmatics)*. The above mentioned book is the first volume of this work.

The reviewer of this book has deep appreciation for the writings of Herman Bavinck, having read a number of them in the Dutch language. I am therefore very excited about the publication of this volume and want to encourage the Dutch Reformed Translation Society to continue their work with all haste. The works of Bavinck are truly a treasure worthy of being made more widely available to the English speaking world.

The Last Things is of course Bavinck's work on the doctrines of

eschatology. There are few subjects that are more exciting to the Christian than the doctrine of the last things. This is as it should be. We live in the last days when the blessed and glorious day of our Lord is approaching nearer and nearer. Reading this book is truly an inspiration. As is the case with all of Bavinck's works on dogmatics, so also in this book we find that it is replete with scriptural citations and quotations. This is the work of a truly Reformed dogmatist. His duty is to demonstrate from the whole of the Scriptures the right understanding of the great doctrines of the Word of God. He does not set forth his own ideas, as so many teachers in the

church always try to do. He does not find one text here and one text there in Scripture to "hang his own ideas on." He is under solemn obligation to present the current teaching of God's Word found throughout the Scriptures as the only basis for the faith and confession of the church. This is the great strength of the true theologian, and this is the strength of Herman Bavinck in his writings.

Bavinck does an excellent job in setting forth the truth of Scripture concerning the many doctrines of the last things. I could quote many sections from this book to demonstrate this. The author clearly refutes the many errors regarding these doctrines that have over the years arisen in the church. He deals extensively with the errors of the Roman church regarding purgatory and the state of the departed saints and their many other false teachings. These parts of the book are extremely valuable for the controversy that the truly Reformed church must continue to carry on even today with the church of Rome, for the love of God and His church and for the defense of the truth. What is particularly interesting about this also, however, is that the very same errors continue to arise in the church today that were present at the time of the Reformation. There are today more errors than ever in the church with respect to the doctrines of eschatology. These errors often go unopposed in Protestant churches. Many systems of false doctrine promote these errors, Premillennialism, Postmillennialism, Theonomy, Reconstructionism, New Age thinking, to name just a few. Bavinck's biblical answers to the false teachings of the Roman Church and of others regarding purgatory, the worship of saints, communication with spirits in the other world, the idea of a second chance for men after death, conditional immortality, the denial of eternal punishments, the wrong understanding of the mil-

lennium, and the carnal nature of the kingdom of Christ are very relevant today. They need to be read to help equip the church to defend the truth of God.

One of the major debates involving eschatology has for years been the question of the correct understanding of the "millennium." This debate has been stirred up again by the post-millennial teachings of theonomy and reconstructionism. Bavinck's book is one of the best defenses of the amillennial position in print. Bavinck's book demonstrates clearly biblical Reformed hermeneutics in the interpretation of Old Testament prophecy and its application to the church of the New Testament and the final realization of the kingdom of Christ.

The Last Things contains an excellent refutation of the commonly promoted dispensationalist teaching that the whole New Testament era is an "interim age."

Therefore the New Testament is not an intermezzo or interlude, neither a detour nor a departure from the line of the Old Covenant, but the long aimed for goal, the direct continuation of the long-aimed for goal, the direct continuation and genuine fulfillment of the Old Testament. Chiliasm, judging otherwise, comes in conflict with Christianity itself. In principle it is one with Judaism and must get to where it attributes a temporary, passing value to Christianity, the historical person of Christ and His suffering and death, and only first expects salvation from Christ's second coming, His appearance in glory. Like Judaism, it subordinates the spiritual to the material, the ethical to the physical, confirms the Jews in their carnal mindedness, excuses their rejection of the Messiah, and reinforces the veil that lies over their mind when they hear the reading of the Old Testament, and promotes the illusion that the physical descendants of Abraham will as such still enjoy an advantage in the kingdom of heaven (p. 98).

We challenge all dispensational premillennialists to read Bavinck's book and try to refute his mighty defense of the teaching of the Scriptures. Included in this book is some excellent exegesis of difficult passages that are often debated and misinterpreted in the discussion of the question of the millennium, such as Romans 11, Revelation 20, and a number of others.

This reviewer particularly appreciated Bavinck's clear demonstration of the truth of Scripture concerning the spiritual and heavenly nature of the coming kingdom of Christ. This is one of the major issues of our day in the debate with theonomists. Both Premils and Postmils are looking for a carnal and earthly kingdom of Christ. They are both guilty of seriously misguiding the church in this. Read what Bavinck has to say about this delusionary expectation:

The chiliast expectation that a converted nation of Israel, restored to the land of Palestine, under Christ will rule over the nations is without biblical foundation. Whatever the political future of Israel as a nation, the real *ekklesia*, the people of God, transcends ethnic boundaries. The kingdom of God in the teaching of Jesus is not a political reality but a religious-ethical dominion born of water and of Spirit. The salvation rejected by Israel is shared by the Gentiles, and the community of Christ-believers has in all respects replaced national Israel. New Testament passages such as Romans 11, which initially seem to teach the contrary, in fact confirm the teaching that God's promises are fulfilled in a spiritual offspring of Abraham, even though they may be only a remnant. Furthermore, the New Testament nowhere suggests that the church of Christ will ever achieve earthly power and dominion such as that of Old Testament Israel. Instead, like its master, the pilgrim church can expect a cross of persecution and suffering. The New Testament does not recom-

mend virtues that lead believers to conquer the world but rather patiently to endure its enmity. John's apocalypse assures the suffering church of all times that it shares the certainty of Christ's victory even in the face of terrible anti-Christian apostasy, lawlessness, and persecution. Revelation 20, in analogy with the rest of Scripture, confirms this conclusion rather than lending support to chiliast dreams of world rule (as well as those of theonomists, AdH). Also, Revelation 20 does not teach the chiliast doctrine of a twofold resurrection; the "first" resurrection simply refers to those faithful who die and immediately live and reign with Christ in heaven. When human apostasy and wickedness reach the apex of power and the world is ripe for judgment, Christ the king will suddenly appear to bring about the end of world history. Jesus' disciples are to be watchful of the signs but they are also forbidden to calculate. All believers ought at all times to live as though the coming of Christ is at hand (p. 99).

One more excellent quote which is a powerful refutation of

errors promoted today even in Reformed and Presbyterian churches:

The whole New Testament, which was written from the viewpoint of the "church under the cross," speaks the same language. Believers, not many of whom are wise, powerful or of noble birth (1 Cor. 1:26), should not expect anything on earth other than suffering and oppression (Rom. 8:36; Phil. 1:29). They are sojourners and foreigners (Heb. 11:13); their citizenship is in the heavens (Phil. 3:20); they do not look at the things that can be seen (2 Cor. 4:18), but mind the things that are above (Col. 3:2). Here they have no lasting city but are looking for the city that is to come (Heb. 13:14). They are saved by hope (Rom. 8:24) and know that if they suffer with Christ they will also be glorified with Him (Rom. 6:8; 17; Col. 3:4). Therefore, along with the entire groaning creation, they wait with eager longing for the future of Christ and for the revelation of the glory of the children of God (Rom. 8:19; 1 Cor. 15:48), a glory with which the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing (Rom. 8:18; 2 Cor. 4:17). Nowhere in the New

Testament is there a ray of hope that the church of Christ will again come to power and dominion on the earth. The most it may look for is that, under the kings and all who are in high positions, it may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and dignity (Romans 13:1; 1 Tim. 2:2). Therefore, the New Testament does not first of all recommend the virtues that enable the believer to conquer the world, but while it bids them avoid all false asceticism (Rom. 14:14; 1 Tim. 4:4,5; Titus 1:15), lists as fruits of the Spirit the virtues of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Gal. 5:22; Eph. 4:32; 1 Thess. 5:14f.; 1 Peter 3:8f.; 2 Peter 1:5-7; 1 John 2:15, etc.) (pp. 109-110).

The theonomist will sneer at Bavinck's eschatology as being "pessimistic and defeatist." Bavinck clearly shows that it is biblical, spiritual, heavenly, Christ-centered, and truly triumphant and victorious.

This is an excellent book. Get it as soon as possible and read it for much clear, sound, biblical teaching on eschatology. □

Report of Classis East

Faith Protestant Reformed Church
September 11, 1996

Classis East met in regular session on Wednesday, September 11, 1996 at the Faith Protestant Reformed Church. Each church was represented by two delegates; Seminarians Laning and VanderWal were also present as part of their internship assignments. Rev. J. Slopesma chaired this session of classis.

Prominent in this meeting was the discussion of classis regarding the status of Covenant PRC, Wyckoff, New Jersey. The May,

1996 classis had posed nine questions regarding their viability as a congregation. Their response was given at this meeting of classis. Classis East decided at this meeting that, for the present, Covenant should be considered as a congregation, but several concerns were addressed to her concerning her viability. These concerns were then referred to the special committee appointed by the January, 1996 classis to assist them in resolving their difficulties.

Requests for classical appointments were received from Hope PRC, Holland PRC, and Covenant PRC. A schedule was drawn and

approved for September, 1996-February, 1997.

Initial emeritation stipends for 1996 and 1997 were approved for Rev. B. Woudenberg and forwarded to the Emeritus Committee. A letter of appreciation was sent by classis to Rev. Woudenberg for his 40 years of faithful ministry in our churches.

The expenses of classis amounted to \$1,531.48. Classis will meet next on Wednesday, January 8, 1997 at the First PRC, Grand Rapids.

Respectfully submitted,
Jon J. Huiskens, Stated Clerk

Mission Activities

Rev. A. denHartog declined the call to serve as our churches' missionary in Ghana. Pray for our Hull, IA PRC as that church must now form a new trio.

In connection with this call to Ghana, our churches' Foreign Mission Committee has also asked that the councils of our churches inquire in their congregations whether there be individuals, couples, or families that are interested in spending a minimum of six months on the field in Ghana to be a help and to assist the missionary to Ghana when God calls a missionary to that field.

Evangelism Activities

The Reformed Witness Committee, part of the evangelism efforts of the Edgerton, MN; Hull, IA; and Doon, IA PRCs is once again sponsoring a Bible Discussion at Dordt College. Their first meeting was held on September 16.

The Evangelism Committee of the Grace PRC in Standale, MI is also sponsoring a Bible Study this year at Grand Valley State University in Allendale, MI. For your information, GVSU is located about five miles from Grace and has an enrollment of around 14,500 students. Many of the college-age young adults in our west Michigan churches also attend there.

The Evangelism Committee of the South Holland, IL PRC is sponsoring a community Reformed Doctrine class this fall. This is intended to be a series of six classes, taught by Rev. C. Terpstra, pastor at South Holland, and Seminarian D. Kleyn, serving his internship at South Holland, and will run alter-

nate Thursdays until December 5. The first class, held September 19, was entitled, "The Origin and History of the Reformed Faith."

Denominational Activities

The Mr. and Mrs., Adult, and Junior Societies' annual Fall League Meeting for the churches in Michigan was held on September 17 at the Byron Center, MI PRC. Rev. R. VanOverloop gave a very well-received speech entitled, "Reformed Admonition: True Love of the Brother," based on Matthew 18.

A recent letter of thanks to the congregation of the South Holland, IL PRC from Prof. D. Engelsma on behalf of the Seminary, thanking them for a recent offering for its building expansion reminds me to report that about \$30,000.00 is still needed to pay off the expansion project just completed last year. We echo Prof. Engelsma when he asked South Holland to remember the Seminary in giving and prayers.

The Hope Heralds, an all-male choir from the churches in and around Grand Rapids, MI, presented their annual end-of-the-season concert on September 8 at the Hope PRC in Walker, MI.

Minister Activities

The First PRC of Holland, MI extended a call to Rev. C. Terpstra, elected from a trio which included also Revs. A. denHartog and S. Key.

School Activities

An Open House Celebration for the newly relocated and expanded Adams Christian School was held on Saturday, September 21. Supporters of Adams were invited to come and enjoy complimentary refreshments and special numbers.

The Junior High students from

the Covenant Christian School in Lynden, WA enjoyed a two-day outing in mid-September at Warm Beach Camp. Marine biology and forest ecology were studied. Besides that, some other, really "fun" outdoor activities (sorry, biology teachers) such as swimming and canoeing were also planned.

Congregational Activities

At the beginning of Seminarian VanderWal's internship at the First PRC in Holland, MI, the diaconate asked the members of that congregation to bring groceries for the VanderWals as a show of welcome.

Pastor-elect Richard Smit sustained his oral examination at Classis West in Randolph, WI in early September, giving a good account of himself. He was ordained on September 9 as the twelfth pastor of the Doon, IA PRC. Prof. R. Decker preached the ordination sermon, and Rev. R. Moore read the form for ordination. Doon officially welcomed the Smits on the following Friday, with fellowship and a ball game before supper and a short program following. The next Lord's Day, September 15, Rev. Smit preached in the morning from the Heidelberg Catechism and in the afternoon from II Corinthians 4:7, entitling his inaugural sermon, "This Treasure in Earthen Vessels." May the Lord bless Rev. Smit and his wife Tricia in Doon and enrich that congregation and our denomination through his labors.

The blueprints of the new parsonage of the Peace PRC in Lynwood, IL were recently on display for their congregation, and construction is now well on the way towards completion.

The Edgerton, MN PRC Marriage Conference Committee sponsored an Old Fashioned Picnic with a "picnic basket social" for

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

Labor Day, September 2. Plans called for a volley ball tournament, ball games, and activities for all ages. Proceeds were designated

for the marriage conference scheduled for early next year.

Food for Thought

"For wolves to devour the sheep is no wonder; but for sheep to devour each other, is monstrous and astonishing."

— Unknown □

ANNOUNCEMENTS

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Men's Society of Hope PRC extends its sympathy to the family of

THOMAS REITSMA,

who was taken to glory unexpectedly. May our covenant God comfort them by His Word, "For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth" (Job 19:25).

Mr. Pete Petroelje, Pres.
Mr. Rod Brunsting, Sec'y.

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Southwest PRC Young Adults' Bible Study Society express their Christian sympathy to Ed and Jill Reitsma in the death of his father,

MR. TOM REITSMA.

May they find joy and comfort from Revelation 21:7, "He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son."

Rev. R. Cammenga, Pres.
Lisa Langerak, Sec'y.

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Council of the Southwest PRC of Grandville, MI expresses its heartfelt sympathy to its fellow officebearer, Mr. Peter Feenstra, in the death of his father-in-law,

MR. CASE VELDMAN.

"But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children" (Psalm 103:17).

Rev. R. Cammenga, Pres.
Mr. Clare Kuiper, Clerk

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On November 11, 1996, the Lord willing, our parents and grandparents,

MR. and MRS. HARVEY HOLSTEGE,

will celebrate their 30th wedding anniversary. We give thanks to God for the Christian parents that He has given us who have faithfully dedicated their lives to guide and instruct us in the fear of the Lord as taught in Proverbs 22:6, "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it."

We pray that God will continue to bless them in the years to come. "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Joshua 24:15).

- ❖ Greg Holstege and special friend Rhonda Gritters
- ❖ Mark and Brenda Zandstra
Christina, Ryan, Chad
- ❖ Heidi Holstege
- ❖ Mike Holstege
- ❖ Jeff Holstege
- ❖ Joel Holstege

Grandville, MI

NOTICE!!!

In October, 1996, our pastor, **REV. GISE VAN BAREN,** completed 40 years in the ministry in the Protestant Reformed Churches. For this, we praise and thank our covenant God.

"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!" (Romans 10:15).

Robert Brands, Clerk
Loveland PRC

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On October 26, 1996, our parents and grandparents,

MR. and MRS. HARRY KAISER, celebrated their 40th wedding anniversary.

We are thankful to our heavenly Father for their God-centered marriage and our covenant upbringing. We pray that God may continue to guide and keep them in the years ahead.

"Lord, thou hast been our dwellingplace in all generations" (Psalm 90:1).

- ❖ Bern and Linda Zandstra
Benjamin, Meri Beth
- ❖ Dan and Julie Kaiser
Ross, Alex
- ❖ Doug and Julie Kaiser
- ❖ Tim and Joan Kaiser
Matthew, Joel, Jonathan

Grand Rapids, Michigan

NOTICE OF BIBLE STUDY AT DORDT COLLEGE!!!

A group of over 30 students, dedicated to the historic Reformed faith, meets together Monday evenings at 7:00 in the classroom building, room C111, for a Bible study. The meetings are sponsored by the Protestant Reformed churches in the area. We are studying the book of Acts this year. The study is in no way limited to Protestant Reformed students; those outside the PRC are most welcome. If you know students at Dordt who may be interested, please encourage them to attend. Any questions you have may be directed to Mr. Chester Hunter, Jr. (712) 726-3381.