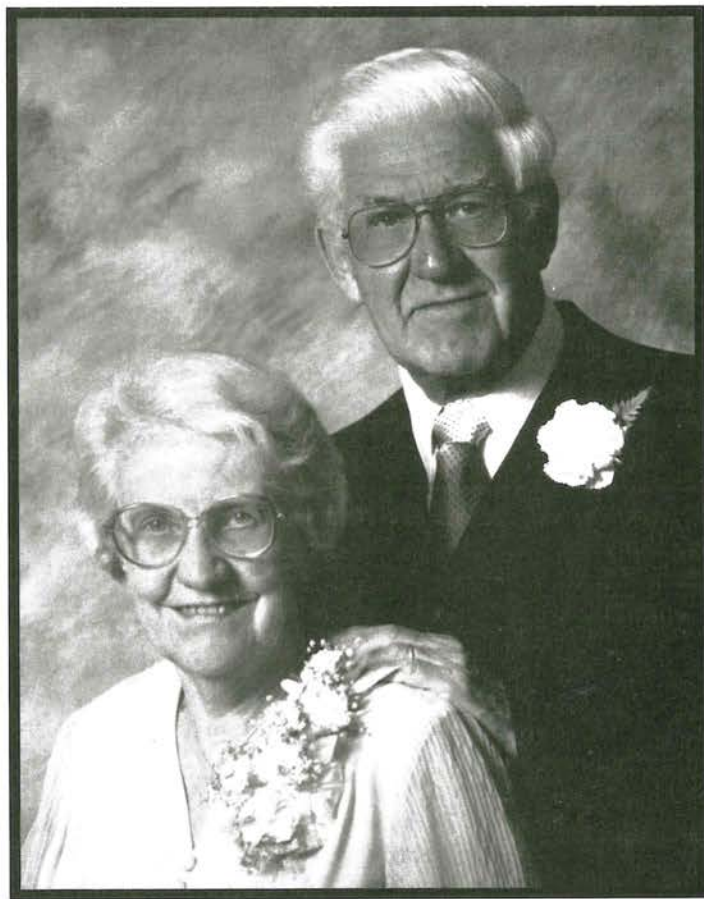




# ***The Standard Bearer***

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



**Rev. and Mrs. Herman Veldman**

See "In Memoriam" — p. 250

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**In This Issue ...**

Cheah Fook Meng, recent graduate of the Protestant Reformed Seminary and member of the First Evangelical Reformed Church of Singapore, informs us of the open doors that God is giving the Evangelical Reformed Churches of Singapore (ERCS) in foreign missions. He mentions Malaysia, India, Myanmar, and China. Singapore itself, "strategic island country," is a field white unto harvest: "Thousands and millions of people cross our path."

The Protestant Reformed Churches (PRC) are privileged to be involved in the work by minister-on-loan Rev. Jay Kortering. Is there more that we can do to help our sister churches in their great work in that part of the world? Read, discuss, and pray about Fook Meng's report, "Evangelical Reformed Churches of Singapore (ERCS)."

Benjamin Wigger's "News from Our Churches" column shows that the Byron Center, MI and Loveland, CO churches have already responded to a need in Singapore that is also mentioned in the report of Cheah Fook Meng.

Although the "Constitution of the Committee for Contact with Other Churches" does not mention it, surely cooperation in missions is an important aspect of living sister-church relations.

May we hear more in the *Standard Bearer* from our sister churches in Singapore about their work of missions, and how the PRC might help.

At our request, Rev. Cornelius Hanko remembers the ministry of his younger colleague, Herman Veldman, who died in January at 88. See "In Commemoration of What God Wrought Through Rev. Herman Veldman."

In addition to his other duties as a minister, Rev. Veldman wrote for the *Standard Bearer* for many years. The staff of the *SB* express our sympathy to the widow, the children, the grandchildren, and the other family.

— DJE



# The Mutual Delight of Sinners

**W**ho knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.

Romans 1:32

## Introduction

According to the general impression and opinion, the fire of the hotel in Lansing a few days ago was an awful tragedy.\* Undoubtedly it was. We can only imagine a little of the horror of men and women trapped in a fiery furnace, to be burned alive, or to find death in the icy waters of the Grand River. We cannot imagine the horror of it. We can also perhaps understand that the horror changed to righteous indignation when it was told the next day that the fire was probably caused by the rowdiness of a drunken party.

Let us try to carry that awful picture just a little further. Suppose that that fire was actually due to the rowdiness of drunken men. Suppose that the majority of these drunken men had escaped the fire.

Suppose that sometime later these same men, now sober, at another party are still enjoying that night. They talk about the party they had, laugh about the things that took place at that party, and still rejoice in the drunken revelry of that party, even though it was the cause of the awful death of many.

You say, that would be the depth of degradation. Yet this is the picture that the text gives of natural man. It is just exactly this that characterizes the natural man according to my text.

From this point of view, verse 32 is the climax of Romans 1. Paul does not hesitate to describe men who have been given over by the wrath of God to a reprobate mind as rejoicing to see men on their way to hell. This is the text. They know, the text says, that they who do such things are worthy of death. They know that this is the righteous judgment of God. They know, therefore, that they who do such things are on their way to hell. Although they know that they who do such things are on their way to hell, they not only do these things, but they also delight in them who do them. Our text, therefore, pictures to us the mutual delight of sinners.

## A Wicked Delight

This mutual delight of sinners is, first of all, a wicked delight. The apostle expresses this especially in the last part of the text. You understand that when the apostle says that they not only do

these things, the things, namely, which he has enumerated in the preceding verses, but also have a pleasure in them who do them, he characterizes their wickedness as being the depth of degradation.

That the text is very real, we can know from everyday life. The sinner seeks the sinner. Sinners delight in one another's corruption. This is evident not only from the text and in Paul's day. It is equally true in our modern world. All along the line you will find the reality of the text. You can start in the underworld. They not only have their robberies, their holdups, and their killings, but they also have their parties at which they tell about their robberies and the crimes they have committed, laugh about them, and rejoice in their wicked deeds. Anyone who does not rejoice with them has no place among them. This is true all along the line. Men come to the shop on Monday morning and tell all about how they spent Sunday. They tell how they spent the pay they had received on Saturday in drunken revelry and dirt and laugh about the things they have committed. They delight in each other's dirt.

It is evident in the business world. Businessmen come together and tell about how they cheated and about the crooked deals they pulled off, and they rejoice in it.

We find these two things: men do such things, and they also have pleasure in them who do them. When they come together, they

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Herman Hoeksema was the first editor of the *Standard Bearer*.

\* Preaching this sermon in the late 1930s, Hoeksema refers to a fire in Lansing, MI that captured the attention of the public. It is worthy of note that Hoeksema would press such an event into the service of the Word.  
— Ed.



agree together and laugh about each other's corruption.

What does this mean? Why is that delight which men have in each other's sin a worse sign of men's corruption than the deed itself?

The answer is evident. Sin may be committed because one looks for the fruit of that sin. Sin looks good to him, not because of the sin itself but because of what it brings him. A man may tell a lie because it seems to him that in telling that lie he will be benefited. A man may be a drunkard, not because of that sin as such but because he enjoys himself in the carnal lust of drunkenness.

But the apostle says that this is not all. Even if they do not do these things themselves, they have a delight in them who do them. Even if there is no personal gain in it, they have a delight in these things. They delight in such corruption. They will even try to make you commit these things. The drunkard likes to see you drunk. He will try to make you drunk. Men delight in one another's corruption and sin.

What does this mean? It means, in the first place, that the sinner loves sin for sin's sake. He has pleasure in corruption. He has pleasure in sin even if there is no personal gain in it. It is only in this light that we can understand the rest of the text. The sinner loves sin; he has pleasure in corruption. This is a very wicked delight.

In the second place, it means that the sinner who commits sin wants the darkness to prevail in general. If you ask, "Why does the sinner delight in them who commit sin?" the answer is that the sinner's great desire is that sin abound everywhere and in everyone.

Let us ask the opposite question: "Why does the sinner hate the righteous?" The sinner hates the righteous. This is why they hated and finally killed Jesus. The

sinner hates the righteous, and he will in principle kill him every time. Why does the sinner hate the righteous? Because the righteous man, in his testimony and work, is a manifestation of the truth. That manifestation of the truth, as it is in the righteous, condemns that sinner. He hates that righteous man because the sinner wants to hold the truth under in unrighteousness, in order to sin peacefully. The sinner wants to have company. He tries to kill the testimony of the righteous. This is natural man. Sinners have pleasure in one another's sin, although they know that they who do such things are worthy of death.

Let me use an illustration. There is a steep, slippery road that ends in a precipice. Men are sliding down that slippery road. The text means to say that, although they know that they are sliding down, they want to enjoy their slide. Although they know that at the end is the precipice, they want others to enjoy that slide with them, and they take them along.

### **A Cruel Delight**

This is why the text calls our attention, in the second place, to a cruel delight. We must notice that this is an everyday delight. The wicked take each other along to hell. This is true of the father with regard to his son, whom he does not want to walk in the way of righteousness. This is true of the mother with regard to her daughter. This is true of the whole world. Knowing the judgment of God that they which commit such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also have pleasure in them who do them.

Notice that the apostle says that they know that that way of sin ends in death. The question has been asked, what death does the apostle mean? Does he mean physical death? Then the apostle would mean to say: they know that they which commit this corruption will die the physical death.

But this would not make sense. Besides, when Scripture speaks of death without further designation it always means the final state of death; it means eternal desolation. Death is hell. Therefore, we may say that men who are on that slippery road know that the end is hell.

How do they know this? In the first place, because God has revealed it from the beginning. That death is the wages of sin, God has revealed from paradise. This revelation was not entirely lost, so that men outside of the church do not know that the wages of sin are death. This revelation was preserved. It has been declared throughout history that the wages of sin are death. I know, men hold this truth under in unrighteousness. But in his deepest heart he knows that the wages of sin are death.

In the second place, this is what general revelation clearly reveals. The apostle shows in this chapter how that by the power of the wrath of God man is drawn to everlasting desolation. This is simply the direction of sin. Everybody can see that the direction of natural debauchery is physical death. When a man lives a life of spiritual debauchery, the result is more spiritual debauchery, and this is death.

Finally, there is the testimony of the Spirit of God in the heart establishing this connection. The testimony of the Spirit in the heart of the wicked establishes this testimony: the end of sin is death. Knowing that they who do such things are worthy of death, they not only do them but have a delight in them who do them. The tender mercies of the wicked are cruel. They not only like to slide down themselves, but they want to take others along. They rejoice when others go along with them to hell. This is my text. This is awful. This is the movement of sin in the heart of all of us. This is why sin is so terrible. We may



try to cover up that sin as soon as it touches us personally. But we are by nature so corrupt that we not only commit these sins, but we also delight in them who do them.

### **An Inexcusable Delight**

This is inexcusable. For the apostle does not say merely that they do these things and that they know that the end is death. No, the apostle says two things. They know that it is the judgment of God. They know that they are worthy of it. They know that that judgment is righteous. "Knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death...." Therefore, they are without excuse. They cannot say, and they do not say: this is our lot; we cannot help it. No, what they say in their own consciousness is this: God judges me to be worthy of hell, and this judgment is correct.

How does he know it? How does man know the righteous judgment of God? God has revealed it. They know it, because

they know that God is. All men know that. Atheism is a philosophy. All men know that God is. All know that God is eternal in power and Godhead. All men know that this God must be glorified and thanked. This is the inevitable "Thou shalt" written in the heart of man. Knowing this truth of God, not wanting this God, and refusing to glorify and to thank Him, man knows that he runs into eternal destruction.

What shall we do? What shall we do, if this is the condition of the sinner? What shall we do, if man would rather go to hell than abandon sin? What shall we do? Shall we scare him into abandoning his way? Shall we preach hell and damnation to him? That will not help. The world tries that. When corruption gets a little too bad, they say we must tell men what will be the consequence of certain sins. But the text says that men have a delight in the sins of others. These measures are doomed to fail.

Sometimes they say it in the church. They say, let us preach

hell and damnation. It is alright to tell men about it; but if the purpose is to turn man from the way of sin, it is at the outset doomed to fail. Knowing that they who commit sin are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but have a delight in them that do them.

What shall we do? There is only one answer. The apostle gives that in verses 16, 17: "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ." This gospel preaches the righteousness of God which is by faith in Christ Jesus. This gospel is the vehicle of the righteousness that descends from heaven. This righteousness can be had in the only possible way in which righteousness can be had, namely, by faith.

Therefore the apostle calls this gospel "the power of God."

The end of it is: "the righteous shall live by faith." He puts away all his own righteousness, all that is of self. He puts all his trust in the righteousness of God, which is by faith in Christ Jesus. □

## **Editorials**

# **A Candid Confession of the Character of a Conditional Covenant**

**(5)**

**I**n defense of the doctrine of a conditional covenant with all the physical children of believers, Rev. Cecil Tuininga also appeals to II Peter 3:9. Although he offers no explanation of the text, it is plain that he understands the text to teach that the Lord desires the salvation of every human with-

out exception. Of course, the reason why the Lord would desire to save all must be that He loves all in Jesus Christ the Savior.

The appeal to this text by the defender of a conditional covenant is significant. There is, as the Protestant Reformed Churches have always insisted, a close relationship between the doctrine of a condi-

tional covenant and the teaching that God loves and desires to save every human without exception. If God loves and desires to save every physical child of believers, there can be no objection to the teaching that God loves and desires to save every human without exception. If the love of God for our children depends for its



saving effect upon their performance of the condition of faith, why should not the love of God for every human also depend upon his faith as the condition of salvation?

In connection with his appeal to II Peter 3:9, Rev. Tuininga advises me to read Calvin on the text. He also directs my attention to the Canons, III, IV/8, as though this article, like II Peter 3:9, expresses a desire of God to save everyone without exception.

If I should differ with Rev. Tuininga's universalistic interpretation of II Peter 3:9, I will be exposing myself as a "hyper-Calvinist": "Hyper-Calvinists, in applying logic to Scripture, come to exactly the opposite conclusion" (see the *Standard Bearer*, Jan. 1, 1997, p. 150).

## II Peter 3:9

II Peter 3:9 reads: "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."

Who they are about whom God is not willing that any of them should perish and whom God wills to come to repentance, the words, "longsuffering to us-ward," make clear. The Lord is not willing that any of *us* should perish, but that all of *us* should come to repentance. His will of salvation is an aspect of His longsuffering love, and His longsuffering love is directed to "us." These are the "beloved" of verse 1, all those, but those only, whom God elected in eternity (II Pet. 1:10).

In the longsuffering of the Lord, not one whom He wills not to perish will perish. Every person whom He wills to come to repentance will come to repentance, and he will come to repentance because the Lord will bring him to repentance. "The longsuffering of our Lord is salvation" (v. 15), not merely the possibility of salvation.

John Calvin is unclear, if not somewhat mistaken, in his commentary on the text, exactly because he overlooks the qualifying phrase, "longsuffering to us-ward." But his explanation of the text in his "A Defence of the Secret Providence of God" is clear. An enemy of divine sovereignty has appealed to II Peter 3:9 as though the text teaches that God wills, or desires, something that He does not bring to pass, namely, that no one should perish. Replies Calvin:

In as far as God "willeth that all should come unto repentance," in so far He willeth that no one should perish; but, in order that they may thus be received of God, they must "come." But the Scripture everywhere affirms, that in order that they may "come," they must be prevented of God; that is, God must come first to them to draw them; for until they are drawn of God, they will remain where they are, given up to the obstinacy of the flesh. Now if there were one single particle of right judgment in you (the man who appeals to II Pet. 3:9 as though it teaches that God wills to save persons whom He fails to save — DJE), you would, in a moment, acknowledge that there is a wide and wonderful difference between these two things — that the hearts of men are made of God "fleshly" out of "stony" hearts, and that it is thus that they are made to be displeased and dissatisfied with themselves, and are brought, as suppliants, to beg of God mercy and pardon; and that after they are thus changed, they are received into all grace. Now God declares that both these things are of His pure goodness and mercy; that He gives us hearts that we may repent, and then pardons us graciously upon our repentance and supplication (in *Calvin's Calvinism*, RFP, p. 276).

## Canons, III, IV/8

Nor does Canons, III, IV/8 teach that God desires the salvation of all men, as Rev. Tuininga

assumes. It does not *say* this. It does not *imply* this. For a Reformed man to read a universal love of God and a desire of God to save all men into this article is preposterous. Have not the Canons, in the first head, taught as plainly as language can express it, that God loves and desires to save some only and that He hates and wills the damnation of the others? Have not the Canons, in the second head, taught as plainly as language can express it, that by the will of God Jesus Christ died only for those whom God wills to save in the decree of election and that Jesus Christ did not die for the others, the reprobate? Will not the Canons, in what follows in the third and fourth heads, teach as plainly as language can express it, that by means of the gospel the Spirit of Christ effectually bestows the grace of faith only upon those whom God elected and for whom Christ died and that the Spirit withholds this grace from the others?

Are we then to suppose that, violently contradicting and overturning everything that they are concerned to teach, the Canons suddenly affirm universal saving love and a will of God to save the reprobate for whom Christ did not die, in an article that *does not so much as mention divine love or desire to save*?

The subject of Canons, III, IV/8 is not God's love and will to save. The subject is the call of the gospel, particularly the external aspect of the call of the gospel. The subject is the "command to repent and believe" (Canons, II/5) that God gives to every man, woman, and child without distinction who hear the gospel. This call is "unfeigned," or "serious." The explanation is not that God on His part loves all and desires to save all — the Canons have denied this, judging this doctrine as heretical! — but rather that God sets before everyone his solemn duty and in dead earnest requires him to do



his duty, namely, repent and believe. That the sinner lacks all ability to obey the command and that God has decreed that certain sinners will not repent and believe in no wise detract from the utter seriousness of the call.

When the Canons go on to say that it is pleasing to God that those who are called should come to Him, the meaning is not that God on His part desires that all those summoned by the external call of the gospel should come and be saved. The Canons have denied this very thing in their doctrine of predestination in the first head. But the meaning is that the good activity of coming to Christ in faith pleases God, whereas the wicked refusal to repent and believe in Christ displeases Him. Even though the unregenerated sinner in the audience *cannot* believe and even though God Himself has determined in the decree of reprobation that a particular sinner in the audience *will not* believe, and even though the Holy Spirit deliberately declines to give this unregenerate, reprobate sinner faith, this man's refusal to believe in Jesus Christ is displeasing to God — *terribly* displeasing — so that God will punish him more severely on account of his refusal to come to Christ.

The concluding line of the article, that God in the preaching "promises eternal life ... to as many as shall come to him, and believe on him," does not teach a general, conditional promise to all who hear the preaching, in manifestation of a general love of God for all hearers. The promise is "*to as many as shall come ... and believe.*" It is not to those who refuse to come. Since only the elect come, because God draws them (John 6:44), the promise is to the elect only. But the proclamation of this promise encourages those in whose hearts the Spirit works true sorrow over sin and the knowledge of Jesus as the Savior from their sin confidently to come to Him, expecting to be received by Him

and to receive of Him eternal life and rest.

Neither Canons, III, IV/8 nor II Peter 3:9 teaches that God "desire(s) the salvation of all men," as the defender of a conditional covenant supposes.

### Will Jesus Then Never Come?

Has Rev. Tuininga (and, to be fair, the multitude of other professing Calvinists who interpret the text as he does) ever considered the implications of his explanation of II Peter 3:9?

1) The will of the Lord that no human perish, but that all without exception be saved, is frustrated and defeated. For many perish. To all eternity He will be a sad and disappointed God.

2) The Lord God is hopelessly at odds with Himself; He lives in a state of confusion. On the one hand, He wills that only some — the elect — be saved; on the other hand, He wills that all be saved. On the one hand, He wills that no one perish; on the other hand, He designs that Christ not die for all, without which atonement they must perish. On the one hand, He wills that all come to repentance; on the other hand, He withholds from many the "evangelical grace" of repentance which they can only have if He gives it. What can one make of a confused and confusing god like this? What can a self-contradictory god like this make of himself?

3) Jesus Christ will never return. On the explanation of II Peter 3:9 of Rev. Tuininga (and, to be fair, that of a multitude of other professing Calvinists), Jesus will never come again. For Peter is explaining to us why the promise of Christ's coming is not yet fulfilled, why apparently it is delayed (v. 4). The explanation is that God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance and be saved. If now Jesus postpones His second coming until every last human repents and is saved, He will never come!

Already there are some who have died impenitent and lost. Jesus, therefore, will never return! Always there will be people born who are not repentant. Jesus, therefore, will never return! The universalistic interpretation of II Peter 3:9 destroys the comfort of the second coming that the apostle intends to give to the waiting church and plays into the hands of the scoffers of verse 4 who say, "all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation."

### Hyper-Calvinism!

Rev. Tuininga will dismiss my interpretation of II Peter 3:9 as the logic of hyper-Calvinism. Indeed, he has done so in advance ("hyper-Calvinists, in applying logic to Scripture ...").

He should be more careful.

The interpretation that I have given was also that of Abraham Kuyper. The great Dutch Reformed theologian gave this interpretation in his book, *Dat de Genade Particulier is* (Amsterdam: J.H. Kruyt, 1884; the English translation would be, *That Grace is Particular*). Kuyper noted that the advocates of universal grace in every age have three favorite texts: I John 2:2; I Timothy 2:4; and II Peter 3:9. But these "three main texts with which men commonly like to scare the confessor of particular grace ... prove *nothing* (emphasis, Kuyper's — DJE) for universal grace." Kuyper gave this interpretation of II Peter 3:9:

In II Peter 3:9, nothing else can be meant than this: Jesus cannot come before the number of the elect is full, and, inasmuch now as many elect have not yet been converted, He delays His coming, in His longsuffering, not willing that some would go lost through a premature return, but willing that they all first be converted.

The explanation of the text that holds that God desires to save all men, Kuyper called "the most ab-



surd reasoning imaginable and ... utterly senseless," inasmuch as it implies that Jesus will never return (pp. 56-69; the translation of the Dutch is mine).

Will the advocates of universal grace, whether in the sphere of the covenant or in the wide world,

who love to appeal to II Peter 3:9, now call Abraham Kuyper a hyper-Calvinist?

It is easy, and even popular in Reformed circles, to call the Protestant Reformed Churches hyper-Calvinists.

Dare they say this about Abraham Kuyper, from whose interpretation of II Peter 3:9 and doctrine of sovereign, particular, saving grace we do not differ?

Abraham Kuyper: hyper-Calvinist? ■

— DJE

## Yet Another Candid Confession about the Covenant

**T**his one by Dr. Jelle Faber, emeritus professor of theology in the Canadian Reformed Churches.

It appears in the recent book, *American Secession Theologians on Covenant and Baptism & Extra-Scriptural Binding — A New Danger* (Neerlandia, Alberta, Canada: Inheritance, 1996). I intend to review the book in a forthcoming issue of the *Standard Bearer*.

The confession is that the doctrine of the covenant held by the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands ("liberated") is essentially the same as the doctrine of the covenant taught by Christian Reformed theologian William Heyns.

This admission is of extraordinary importance to the Protestant Reformed Churches (PRC).

In the controversy over the doctrine of the covenant that convulsed the PRC in the early 1950s, the agreement of the "Liberated" doctrine with the doctrine of Heyns was vehemently denied both by the PR ministers who were trying to introduce the "Liberated" doctrine into the PRC and by leading "Liberated" theologian Klaas Schilder.

Now the Canadian Reformed dogmatician, himself an ardent champion of "Liberated" covenant theology, candidly acknowledges that there is fundamental agreement between Schilder and Heyns on the covenant of God with the

children of believers.

Faber speaks of Schilder's "kinship" with Heyns in the doctrine of the covenant (p. 52). He declares that "Hamilton" (Canadian Reformed seminary, teaching the "Liberated," conditional doctrine of the covenant) stands in the tradition, among others, of William Heyns (p. 53). Dr. Faber even criticizes Schilder for Schilder's condemnation of Heyns (pp. 47-52).

Faber is correct. As Herman Hoeksema always insisted, the covenant doctrines of Heyns and the Christian Reformed Church and of Schilder and the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands ("liberated") are the same.

Heyns taught that all baptized children receive "subjective grace," that is, a gracious operation of the Spirit of Christ *within themselves*, in their hearts or souls, so that they are able to repent and believe, if only they will use this "subjective grace" rightly (*American Secession Theologians*, pp. 38-41; also, H. Hoeksema, *Believers and Their Seed*, pp. 13-33).

The "Liberated" doctrine of a conditional covenant is that God establishes His covenant with every physical child of believers by promise, promising every child at baptism Christ and salvation on the condition that the child will one day believe.

These two doctrines are essentially the same. Both teach grace

for all the children, the one as "subjective grace," the other as a favorable attitude of God. Both teach that grace is resistible, the one in that "subjective grace" can be lost, the other in that the favorable attitude of God fails to save many children. Both teach that the actual salvation of a child depends upon the child, the one by basing salvation on the child's good use of "subjective grace," the other by making the promise dependent upon the child's performing the condition of faith.

Of both these views, the PRC judge that they are "Arminianism injected into the covenant."

Dr. Faber urges that those churches holding the doctrine of a conditional covenant of universal grace unite. Referring to the churches by the name of the city where their seminary is located, he calls on the Free Reformed Churches (Apeldoorn), the independent Christian Reformed Churches (Grand Rapids), and the Canadian Reformed Churches (Kampen, Hamilton) to manifest ecclesiastically their "confessional unity."

Again, he is right. One doctrine of the covenant, of grace, and of salvation certainly calls for one church organization.

And then, there is Grandville.

□

— DJE



## Wholly Appropriate

Permit me to express a word of encouragement and appreciation where the contributions to the *Standard Bearer* of Mrs. MaryBeth Lubbers are concerned.

When reading Matthew 5:28, it is worth remembering the use of "desire" in Luke 22:15. Apparently, not having grasped that the word is used of the Lord seems to lead some away from the God-breathed Word and into the realm

of Greek philosophy, where spirit is seen as good, while matter is perceived as *per se* evil. If Miss Reitsma's eyes "danced with mischief," would it not have been wholly within the framework of our Creator, Redeemer, and Saviour God?

Certainly, I found no offense in Mrs. Lubbers' appreciation of Miss Reitsma. Is it possible that the real departure from personal holiness lies in an outlook which may, possibly, smack of the sanctimonious? Would it not be fair

to say that it is this outlook which is infinitely more damaging to our young people?

Surely, far from "having gotten away from personal holiness," it gladdens one's heart to read contributions which invariably are written in accordance with the more thoroughly biblical concept of holiness expressed in Mrs. MaryBeth Lubbers' most helpful articles. □

(Rev.) A. Strike  
Gwent, U.K.

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## News from Seminary Hill

The faculty have recently licensed two more seminarians to speak a word of edification in the churches: Nathan Brummel and Garry Eriks. Mr. Brummel is an unmarried third-year student originally from the Edgerton, MN PRC. Mr. Eriks is a married second-year student originally from the South Holland, IL PRC. He and his wife Jennifer (Buys) have one child. The faculty are arranging an internship for Mr. Brummel later this year.

The four seniors are back for the second semester after completing their internships. Daniel Kleyn was in South Holland, IL PRC; James Laning, in Southwest PRC in Grandville, MI; Darren Thole, in the Covenant Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC) of Abilene, TX; and Martin VanderWal, in the First PRC of Holland, MI. Seminarians Kleyn, Laning, and VanderWal will be examined before the synod of the PRC in June of this year with a view to becoming candidates for the ministry in the PRC. Seminarian Thole will seek admission to the ministry in the OPC.

Several men from outside the PRC will be entering seminary in the fall. Not even one man from the PRC will be enrolling for the 1997/1998 year. The PRC have only one student in each of the first three years of the four-year program.

Through the overwhelming generosity of supporters both within and without the PRC, the debt remaining on the new addition to the seminary building is now under \$3,000. The total cost of the expansion and remodeling of almost \$500,000 was brought up within a few years entirely by gifts, apart from assessments. We are moved by this evidence of strong support for our work, and encouraged. We see this support as an expression of zeal on behalf of the gospel of salvation by God's glorious, sovereign grace alone.

There have also been visible expressions of support of the seminary consisting of the donations of original oil paintings. Some are lovely depictions of scenes in the Netherlands. One is a large, impressive portrait of Herman Hoeksema. The paintings add to the appearance of the new library. All are invited to stop by to see the addition and to view the paintings.

May Christ the King answer the prayers of His people and bless our work by giving able, faithful pastors and teachers to the churches.

Cordially in Christ,  
For the faculty,

*Prof. Daniel J. Engstrom*



## In Commemoration of What God Wrought Through Rev. Herman Veldman

Rev. Herman Veldman was a son of Jacob and Evelyn Veldman. The latter was a sister of the late Rev. Herman Hoeksema. Herman was born to them on April 22, 1908 on Chicago's west side. He was next to the youngest in a family of seven children, having five sisters and one brother, the late Rev. Richard Veldman. His father was co-owner of a blacksmith shop located on the corner of 14th and Paulina. His parents were members of the First Christian Reformed Church, where he was baptized and was a member until a few years after the split of 1924, when they became charter members of the Oaklawn Protestant Reformed Church, which Herman attended until 1929 when he entered our seminary.

For his elementary training, Herman attended the Ebenezer Christian School located on 15th Street, between Ashland and Paulina. The late Prof. Henry Stob recalls, in *Summing up Remembrances* (p. 21), that his family lived in the same Dutch community in which the Veldmans lived. He writes: "The worship services were held in the Dutch language. This is not remarkable, it is natural that the immigrants should want the gospel preached in their native tongue and to sing the songs they learned in the land of their

birth. Many of the older worshippers on Ashland Street had been in America for decades and though they spoke intelligible, if somewhat accented, English on the job and in the streets, most of them were opposed to the use of that language in the church" (p. 29). As in other Dutch communities, the people feared that the introduction of the American language in the services could only lead to a departure from Calvinism and an introduction of modernism. It was only in the late 1940s and early 1950s that the transition was complete.

The professor also mentions that the Veldman boys attended the same school as he did and adds that, "As we matured, we even debated common grace with the Veldman boys, who, being nephews of Herman Hoeksema, rejected the concept" (p. 38).

Herman had his high school training in Engelwood. In 1929, the year his brother Richard became candidate for the ministry in our churches, he entered our seminary and studied under Rev. Herman Hoeksema and Prof. George Ophoff for three years.

Thereupon he received and accepted a call from Pella, Iowa. On September 22, 1932, he married Flora Ezinga, the daughter of Peter Ezinga, who served for years as elder in First Church. Immediately after the wedding they left for his ordination in Pella as minister in our churches. They have four children and a number of grandchildren.

Rev. Veldman preached well-organized sermons with thorough doctrinal exposition. He was a staunch defender of the truth, especially making a strong defense of the truth as maintained by our PR Churches. Already in Pella he did not hesitate to emphasize that truth in his sermons, sometimes even in rather strong language.

This newly organized congregation had some members who opposed their minister because of some of the statements which he made from the pulpit that they considered far too strong. For example, the Reverend had said in a sermon, "The Lord gives the ungodly man enough rope that he can hang himself." He was also charged with saying: "No man can come to me, except the Father draw him." The reason why everyone in this church does not come to Jesus is because God does not draw him. That is gospel preaching." In fact, these opponents sent eight of these statements to a Christian Reformed minister, who was criticizing Rev. Hoeksema's teachings in the CR paper called *De Wachter*. This minister published these statements to support his contention that Rev. Hoeksema and his followers erred. To this Rev. Hoeksema responded in the *Standard Bearer* in a series of eight "sermons" under the title, "Zelfs in Dien Lompen Form" ("Even in That Inept Form"), vol. XVI, pp. 171, 268, 292, 364, 390, 438; vol. XVII, pp. 31, 50, 78) by granting that the statements as such were a bit in-

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Rev. Hanks, the writer of this "In Memoriam," is a minister emeritus in the Protestant Reformed Churches.



ept, but that in the proper context they nevertheless expressed the truth of the Scriptures. (It should be borne in mind that Rev. Veldman, as well as the rest of us younger men, was still struggling to learn the Dutch language.)

After five years in Pella, Rev. Veldman accepted a call to our Creston Church in Grand Rapids, where he served for four years. Thereupon he received a call from the small, struggling church in Kalamazoo, where he labored for nine years, from 1941 to 1950. When he came to Kalamazoo the congregation consisted of but eight families and had no church building of their own. Under the blessing of God 35 families were added, so that by the time he left they not only had 43 families but had also built a new church.

It was during these years that we were working among the immigrants from the Liberated churches who had settled in the Hamilton, Ontario area. They had been advised by Prof. Holwerda in the Netherlands to join with the Protestant Reformed Churches and exert their influence in them. As a result of the labors that the Protestant Reformed Churches were performing in that area, these new immigrants stated that they had erred in their covenant conception and that they were now convinced of the Reformed truth as taught in our churches. One of the immigrants who accompanied the undersigned when he visited newly arriving immigrants informed them that the earlier immigrants were shown that they had lost sight of the truth of God's predestination. They were no longer Liberated, but were now PR. Another immigrant informed me personally that if they were to return to the Netherlands they would be compelled to organize a PR church there as the true church. It was mainly on the basis of such testimony that a congregation was organized in Hamilton. (Later, when I was working among the immi-

grants in Chatham, I was told by one of them: "We do not intend to deceive you as they did in Hamilton.")

After various calls had been extended by their consistory to our ministers, a duo was made consisting of Rev. John Heys and Rev. Herman Veldman. From the remarks that were made among the various members one could only have concluded that Rev. Heys would receive that call. Yet, almost as if God had interfered with their plans, when the votes were counted, the majority of the votes were for Rev. Veldman.

Rev. Veldman, who would never shy away from a challenge, weighed this call very seriously. He even told the congregation at Hamilton that if he were to accept the call he would most emphatically condemn the Liberated view of the covenant and of infant baptism and would strongly defend the doctrine of the PR Churches. They had the opportunity to advise him to decline the call, but they consented to his coming even after this warning.

During his stay Mrs. Veldman brought all the immigrants who had no means of transportation to the church worship services. Their children attended the public school.

There was a group of 12 to 15 young people who were instructed by Rev. Veldman and came to the consistory to make public confession of their faith. When Rev. Veldman pointed out to them that they would be confessing loyalty to the truth as confessed by the Protestant Reformed Churches the consistory refused to accept their confession.

A year later it was very evident that things were not going well in Hamilton. The church visitors were informed of this. They wondered what they would find upon visiting this congregation. At the meeting with the church visitors Rev. Veldman asked the visitors to take over the entire

meeting, while he withdrew to the background. Soon one of the elders requested permission to read a paper in which he expressed his convictions concerning God's covenant and infant baptism. He made a strong defense of the teachings of the Liberated churches. When he had finished, the chairman asked him: "But did you not once say, in my presence, that as members of the Liberated Churches you had lost sight of the truth of predestination, and that, now that you were enlightened, you agreed with the PRC?" The elder immediately agreed. The next question: "When were you lying, then or now?" To which he responded: "Then, of course."

After that, another elder asked permission to present his views on the subject. He also read a long document in defense of the Liberated views. When he finished, the chairman asked him: "But did you not say, at one time, that if you were to return to the Netherlands you would be compelled to organize a PRC there, because we have the truth? Were you lying when you said that?" The response was: "Yes."

One more question was asked of the elders: "In how far is Rev. Veldman responsible for the trouble in this congregation?" The answer was that he was not responsible in any way. He had indeed given them "double barrel" in his preaching, but he had assured them in advance that he would do this. They had accepted him in spite of that.

Soon after that the consistory met privately without the minister and decided, totally disregarding the rules of the Church Order, to depose him. When elder Sam Reitsma objected to this, he also was illegally deposed from office. For a short time the Veldman family and the Sam Reitsma family held services in the living room of Rev. Veldman's residence.

Hamilton disbanded for two reasons. They were not at all in



agreement with the Declaration of Principles and would have left us sooner or later regardless of who had labored there. Moreover, they now felt strong enough, numerically and financially, to organize their own Liberated church.

Rev. Veldman returned to Michigan. He taught Bible in Adams Street School for a time, but his heart was still in the ministry. That was his calling and that was what he desired. Two years after returning to Grand Rapids he received and accepted a call to Edgerton, Minnesota.

He came to his new charge shortly after the congregation had gone through the split of 1953. Tensions were strong, especially because of the bitterness of those who left us. One day when Rev. Veldman was walking in the small town of Edgerton, one of the opposition loudly shouted: "You thief!" He could only wonder why he should be publicly accused of sinning against the eighth commandment, until he discovered that those who opposed us felt that the courts should not have given the church property to First Church. Yet Rev. Veldman had nothing to do with what happened in First Church.

As long as he was there, he never had the use of the church building or parsonage, since it was only later that, through an agreement, the property was retrieved by our congregation. Yet, in spite of all that, he enjoyed his labors there and was greatly appreciated.

The school in Edgerton also experienced the results of the split and found itself without a teacher for the upper grades. So Mrs. Veldman, who had formerly taught, took upon herself to teach, as well as to serve as administrator. This deprived her of much of her time with the family, yet she willingly gave herself for the sake of the school.

Redlands had been vacant for some time. When the call from this congregation was extended to Rev. Veldman, he felt obligated to take it. For four years he served there and was instrumental toward the strengthening of the congregation.

After being away from Michigan for ten years he received and accepted a call to our Hope church in Walker. He preached, taught, and did the pastoral work there for three years and then accepted a call to our Hudsonville congregation, where he labored from 1966 to 1971.

One little incident showed Rev. Veldman's unique makeup. He had a sense of humor all his own. One Sunday while he was preaching, a little girl was being taken out of church loudly crying: "I'll be good, I'll be good." The reverend paused a moment to remark, "It's too late now," and then continued with his sermon.

His last charge was in our Southwest congregation, where he served for seven years. During his ministry here the congregation grew spiritually and numerically.

They also built a new church on Ivanrest.

Those of us who knew him will remember him, not only for his forceful, expository sermons, but also for his warm greetings. He met an acquaintance with a firm handshake and a broad, pleasant smile. He enjoyed the fellowship of others, especially of those who were of a like mind.

In 1978 he retired from the active ministry. This did not mean that he retired from all his labors. For many years he enjoyed good health and continued to preach and to teach catechism in the various churches. He also served for some time in Hull during their vacancy and in Lynden while they were without a pastor.

At his funeral service, led by Rev. Cammenga, it was very fittingly stated that Rev. Veldman could say with the apostle Paul, "I have kept the faith." In doing so he had "fought the good fight" and he had "finished his course." He now rejoices with the saints in heaven, where Christ awaited him to give him the crown of righteousness already prepared for him.

We give most hearty thanks to our covenant God for the gifts entrusted to that faithful servant, for his many years of zealous, diligent labor, and for all that the Lord accomplished through him in our churches. May He continue to bless his widow, who was a great support to Rev. Veldman, and their family in the years to come.

Rev. Cornelius Hanko □

## All Around Us

## Rev. Gise Van Baren

### ■ "Trendy Sermons, Vacant Pews"

A reader from Lynden, Washington sends in an interesting book review found in the *Wall Street Journal*, January 3, 1997. The author reviews a book called: *The Empty Church: The Suicide of Liberal Christianity* by Thomas C. Reeves.

The author of the book and its reviewer seem to agree concerning the problem of the churches today. It is of interest that a paper such as the *Wall Street Journal* and its reviewer should make the kind of comments found in the article. There is not only a recognition of the sad state of the churches today, but also a recog-

nition of the problem and its solution. The review states in part:

Mr. Reeves lays out the facts with clarity and obvious passion. Since the 1960s and '70s, the mainline denominations have bled between a fifth and a third of their congregants. The liberals in charge of the denominational bureaucracies think they know why.



In our "post-Christian" era, they maintain, old-fashioned Christianity repels potential churchgoers. The solution is to follow the descending path of modern culture to whatever depths it leads. As one Episcopal priest explains: "Every time that we ordain someone who is not a heterosexual white male, we gain hundreds of new members."

Except that it doesn't work that way. The more heterodox — multicultural, multi-doctrinal — the churches become, the more congregants they lose, and yet they keep at it....

... As early as 1982, at a United Methodist Women conference, the Greek earth goddess Gaia was called upon for a blessing. A 1993 conference funded by the Presbyterian, Methodist, Lutheran and American Baptist churches "featured a veneration of 'Sophia, Creator God' ... and rites from other religions such as the American Indian tobacco ritual."

... What ordinary churchgoers perceive is that their leaders have ceased to accept the authority of Scripture. "Biblical criticism" — the deconstruction of holy texts for the purpose of discrediting their status as revealed truth — has been in vogue among main-line clergy for decades and in recent years has been joined by a campaign to cleanse the Gospels and liturgies of anything that might offend a professor of multicultural studies.

Alas, the Bible as it comes to us from God and His prophets is a profoundly strange book. Once it and other holy documents have been stripped of their "necessary offense," as the theologian Bernard M.G. Reardon has put it, any religion based upon those texts is reduced to a mere adjunct of the surrounding culture rather than a challenge to it. The typical congregant at a liberal church or temple finds it increasingly hard to see why he should spend his Sunday morning or Friday night in a place where secular views are simply echoed.

"Weigh the benefits," writes Mr. Reeves: "Sunday with the family at the beach or in church listening to a sermon on AIDS;

working for overtime wages or enduring pious generalities about 'dialoguing,' 'inclusiveness,' and 'sharing and caring'; studying for exams or hearing that the consolations and promise of the Bible are not 'really' or 'literally' true." As he admirably summarizes the problem, "Liberal Protestantism ... has succeeded in making itself dispensable."

... (A)n orthodox awakening in the pews would have to get past those mainline leaders who, as Mr. Reeves knows, suffer from a "lack of commitment to the authentic faith." In the meantime, serious Christians can take refuge in serious churches, as they already do, swelling the country's nondenominational, evangelical Protestant groupings....

One can only exclaim, "From the mouth of the *Wall Street Journal*!!!!" If only some of the "religious" periodicals of our day were as forthright!

### ■ Madalyn Murray O'Hair

Most have heard of the woman in the title above. She is the country's best-known atheist. An atheist who denies the existence of God would consequently also have no standard of morality except what he invents for himself. One is reminded of that when reading the following report which appeared in *Christianity Today*, February 3, 1997:

Two atheist organizations, formerly controlled by Madalyn Murray O'Hair, have reported in Internal Revenue Service documents that \$627,500 disappeared about the same time O'Hair, her son Jon Garth Murray, and daughter Robin Murray-O'Hair vanished in August 1995.

Some speculate that the trio may be hiding in New Zealand....

O'Hair, 78, became the nation's best-known atheist in 1962 by filing a lawsuit that led to the U.S. Supreme Court's prohibition on public-school prayer. She filed suit in behalf of her then 16-year-old son Bill Murray, now a Chris-

tian evangelist. He filed a "request to find" order after his mother's disappearance. Police say they have no evidence of foul play. In January, Bill Murray filed a petition to become guardian of the estates of his mother, brother, and sister. United Secularists of America, reports that \$612,000 in missing assets is "believed to be in the possession of Jon Murray, former secretary." American Atheists reported that he is suspected of taking \$15,500.

### ■ The Same Roman Catholic Church

I have recently received in the mail some information sent by a Roman Catholic organization. Though the Roman Catholic Church has lately been portrayed as a changed church which recognizes that there is salvation outside of its walls, this material clearly shows otherwise. There is, according to this article, no salvation possible outside of the Roman Catholic church. In a "Dogma of Faith" the following is emphasized:

"There is only one universal Church of the faithful, outside of which no one at all can be saved." (Pope Innocent III, Fourth Lateran Council, 1215).

"... The Holy Roman Church firmly believes, professes, and teaches, that none of those who are not within the Catholic Church, not only pagans, but Jews, heretics and schismatic, can ever be partakers of eternal life, but are to go into the eternal fire 'prepared for the devil, and his angels' (Mt. 25:41), unless before the close of their lives they shall have entered into that Church; also that the unity of the ecclesiastical body is such that the Church's sacraments avail only to those abiding in that Church, and that fasts, almsdeeds, and other works of piety which play their part in the Christian combat are in her alone productive of eternal rewards; moreover, that no one, no matter what alms he may have given, not even if he were to shed



his blood for Christ's sake, can be saved unless he abide in the bosom and unity of the Catholic Church." (Mansi, Concilia, xxxi, 1739; Pope Eugene IV, in the bull, Cantate domino, 1441).

*The implications of these pronouncements, taken together, are as follows:*

1. All ... of these statements are *ex cathedra* definitions of the Church and of the Pontiffs who made them. ("Ex cathedra") means that these are infallible teachings of the Church which all persons must believe in order to be saved. These teachings are not subject to change as the popes in making these declarations of faith were guided by the Holy Ghost, Who is unchangeable.

...4. Such a dogmatic statement is not to be colored, or reduced, or altered, by reference to the Sacred Scriptures. On the contrary, it is in terms of such a statement that all the Scriptures are to be read and understood.

...7. This dogma rules out the possibility of simple invincible ignorance concerning the matter of salvation; those who die in ignorance of the Church as the only course of salvific grace must be adjudged to have been culpably so. In a word, they did not know because they did not want to know.

*Quoted below are three worthy statements in support of this Dogma of Faith:*

"It is a sin to believe that there

is salvation outside the Catholic Church." — Venerable Pope Pius IX.

"There is no salvation outside the Catholic Church. Anyone who resists this truth perishes." — St. Louis Maria de Montfort.

"We must believe that the Roman Catholic Church is the only true church; hence they who are out of our Church or they who are separated from it, cannot be saved." — St. Alphonsus Maria Liguori, Bishop and Doctor of the church.

Who can claim truly that the Roman Catholic church has changed? And if this is its official position, what common ground can be found to cooperate with them?

### ■ What Did the Pope Say?

In our last article we quoted what was claimed to be a statement of the Pope concerning evolution. It now appears that he did not quite say what the press quoted him as saying. In an article by religion editor Cal Thomas, that writer points out that he "was critical of the Pope's 'remarks' and suggested that he was moving in the direction of a materialistic worldview that is at the heart of communism...."

Now he points out that "the

problem was that the initial English translation of the Pope's remarks was incorrect."

Thomas goes on to state:

The correct translation is a long way, indeed, from *U.S. News & World Report's* statement that "the Pope declared that evolution is 'more than just a theory,'" and said, "new knowledge leads us to recognize that the theory of evolution is more than a hypothesis."

... While secularists may have been initially thrilled by the Pope's apparent move toward the thinking of the "kingdom of this world," they and the Pope are back to where they started. John Paul II seemed to be saying that science can explain how some things came to be, again, sometimes having to correct itself. But science cannot explain who made what is and, in most cases, cannot explain how it came to be. As God said to Job, "Where were you when I laid the foundations of the universe?"

It is the ultimate question, and the Pope did not budge from the source of the ultimate answer. It was the translator, not the Pope, who proved fallible on this one....

So it appears that the Pope did not give the ringing endorsement of evolution as presented in the world's press — but, then, neither did he rule out the possibility of evolution. □

*Ministering to the Saints*

*Prof. Robert Decker*

## Called to Rule

The elders of the church are called by God to take oversight of the congregation. This, as is apparent from Holy Scripture and the Reformed con-

fessions, is a very serious matter. Oversight involves church discipline, and church discipline is one of the three marks of the true church which easily distinguish her from the false church.

Church discipline may be understood in two senses. In the broader sense it refers to the spiritual care and rule of the congrega-

tion by the elders. This would include the visiting of the families of the congregation, caring for the sick, comforting the sorrowing, bringing the Word of God to those who experience trials of one sort or another, and taking oversight of the other officebearers as regards both their office in the church and their lives. In the nar-

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rower sense, church discipline refers to the various admonitions from the Word of God which the elders must bring to those who walk in certain sins. If these remain impenitent, the "extreme remedy," excommunication from the church and kingdom of heaven, must be applied. In this series we shall consider church discipline in both senses, beginning with the broader.

The Belgic Confession teaches that "the marks, by which the true Church is known, are these: if the pure doctrine of the gospel is preached therein; if she maintains the pure administration of the sacraments as instituted by Christ; *if church discipline is exercised in punishing of sin*: in short, if all things are managed according to the pure Word of God, all things contrary thereto rejected, and Jesus Christ acknowledged as the only Head of the Church. Hereby the true Church may certainly be known, from which no man has a right to separate himself ..." (Art. 29). The Confession stipulates that there must be ministers to preach the Word and administer the sacraments, and elders and deacons, "...that by these means the true religion may be preserved, and the true doctrine everywhere propagated, likewise transgressors punished and restrained by spiritual means ..." (Art. 30). The Heidelberg Catechism teaches that by the preaching of the gospel and Christian discipline the kingdom of heaven is opened to believers and shut to unbelievers. The church order likewise requires the elders to exercise church discipline and to see to it that everything is done decently and in good order (Arts. 16 and 23, 71-80; cf. also the Questions for Church Visitation).

The confessions reflect the truth of Scripture which exhorts believers to remember and obey "them that have the rule" over them (Heb. 13:7, 17). The Greek word translated in these verses, "them that have the rule over,"

means "to go before, to be a leader," and thus "to have authority." Elders have the authority of Christ to rule in the church. They are the spiritual leaders of the people of God. God's people must obey them and submit themselves to them because the elders watch for their souls (v. 17). Believers must remember the elders and follow their faith because they speak to them the word of God (v. 7). God's people are commanded to know them which labor among them and are over them and admonish them. The people of God must esteem these very highly in love for their work's sake (I Thess. 5:12-13).

Scripture exhorts the elders to feed (literally, this means "shepherd") the flock of God. Elders are to shepherd the flock by taking oversight of them. The elders must not do this "by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being examples to the flock." Elders who faithfully shepherd the flock are promised a crown of glory at the appearance of the chief shepherd (I Pet. 5:1-4). The apostle Paul admonishes the elders of the church at Ephesus to take heed to themselves and to the flock over which the Holy Spirit had made them overseers. The elders must do this by shepherding the church of God which "he hath purchased with his own blood" (Acts 20:28).

According to Scripture, therefore, the elders are shepherds of the flock of God. They are called to represent the chief shepherd, our Lord Jesus Christ, among God's people. Everything which a shepherd does with the sheep, the elders must do with the people of God. They must protect them, feed and nourish them, lead and guide them, seek and find them when they go astray. In sum the elders must provide for all the need of God's people.

If elders are to be faithful representatives of Jesus, the chief

shepherd of God's flock, they must care for the congregation *by means of the Word of God*. When God's people are sick, they need the Word. When they mourn, their comfort is found only in the Word. When they go astray, only the Word can reconcile them with God and their fellow saints. When the elders visit them on the annual family visitation, they must not make this a mere social call, but they must come with the Word of God. The children and youth need to be instructed in the Word. All of God's people must continually be growing in the grace of God by means of growing in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ (II Pet. 3:17-18).

The elders, therefore, need to be men of God who are mighty in the Scriptures. They need to study and meditate upon the Word of God. They ought to have a number of good books in their personal libraries and use them! Good devotional books are needed, as well as good, solid commentaries upon the sacred Scriptures. Books on Reformed doctrine are helpful and needed, as are good commentaries on the Reformed confessions and church order. All these and more will be good helps for the elder as he himself seeks to grow in the knowledge of God's Word so as to be able to bring it to bear upon the needs of God's people.

The elders as well need to be men of prayer. Daily they must bring the needs of the people of God to the throne of grace. When they visit the people of God in their various trials or when they are called upon to admonish the wayward, they must never forget to pray! If all of God's people are exhorted to "pray without ceasing" (I Thess. 5:17), how much more is not this necessary for their spiritual leaders. Prayer is necessary, we confess, because it is the chief part of thankfulness, and because "God will give his grace and Holy Spirit to those only, who with sincere desires continually ask



them of him, and are thankful for them" (Heidelberg Catechism, Q. 116).

In all this work of ruling the congregation, the faithful elders will be motivated by the love of God. Because God first loved them they will love God. And because they love God they will strive faithfully to govern God's precious flock. They will rule the people of God because they love God. Faithful elders will in God's love always seek the eternal good and welfare of the people of God. They will never be harsh tyrants who "lord it over God's heritage." Gently, but firmly, they will lead the people of God by means of His Word.

In all their work as elders, these men will take great care to be worthy examples to the people of God. They will be exemplary husbands and fathers, honest workers, and good citizens. They will prayerfully take heed to themselves that they grow in sanctification. The elders will be able to say to God's people what the apostle said to the saints in Philippi, "Brethren, be followers together of me ..." (Phil. 3:17).

Faithful elders will be clothed with humility. Again, all of God's children are called to be humble, but this virtue must certainly char-

acterize the elders of the church. Faithful elders will never seek the praise of men. They will always acknowledge that they labor only by the grace of God. They will acknowledge always that in all their shepherding of the people of God it is God who gives the fruit.

Samuel Miller, the great Presbyterian and Princeton theologian, put it well when he wrote,

But I need not say to those who take their views of the Christian Church, and its real prosperity, from the Bible, and from the best experience, that enlightened, and faithful discipline is, not only *important*, but absolutely *essential* to the purity and edification of the body of Christ. It ought to be regarded as one of the most precious means of grace, by which offenders are humbled, softened, and brought to repentance; the Church purged of unworthy members; offenses removed; the honor of Christ promoted; real Christians stimulated and improved in their spiritual course, faithful testimony borne against error and crime; and the professing family of Christ made to appear holy and beautiful in the view of the world. Without wholesome discipline, for removing offenses, and excluding the corrupt and profane, there may be an *assembly*, but there cannot

be a *Church*. The truth is, the exercise of a faithful watch and care over the purity of each other in doctrine, worship, and life, is one of the principal purposes for which the Christian Church was established, and on account of which it is highly prized by every enlightened believer. And, I have no doubt, it may be safely affirmed, that a large part of all that is holy in the Church, at the present day, either in faith or practice, may be ascribed, under God, as much to sound ecclesiastical discipline, as to the faithful preaching of the gospel.

And if the maintenance of discipline be all important to the interests of true religion, it is a matter of no less importance that it be conducted with mildness, prudence, and wisdom. Rashness, precipitancy, undue severity, malice, partiality, popular fury, and attempting to enforce rules which Christ never gave, are among the many evils which have too often marked the dispensation of authority in the Church, and not unfrequently defeated the great purpose of discipline. To conduct it aright, is, undoubtedly, one of the most delicate and arduous parts of ecclesiastical administration; requiring all the piety, judgment, patience, gentleness, maturity of counsel, and prayerfulness which can be brought to bear upon the subject (*The Ruling Elder*, pp. 174-175). □

*When Thou Sittest in Thine House*

*Mrs. MaryBeth Lubbers*

## The Reformed Family: Two Women

**W**hen ye do the office of a midwife to the Hebrew women ... if it be a son, then ye shall kill him....

Exodus 1:16

Mrs. Lubbers is a wife and mother in the Protestant Reformed Church of South Holland, Illinois.

Two women.

Two women who, through God's gracious guidance, forever changed the course of human history.

Two women, distinguished by names! The first Hebrew names mentioned since the death of Joseph some 300 years earlier.

Shiphrah and Puah.

Shiphrah and Puah were two relatively obscure midwives living in the land of Goshen in Egypt under the cruel and tyrannical Pharaoh who knew not Joseph. "And the Egyptians made the children of Israel to serve with rigor: And they made their lives bitter with



hard bondage, in mortar, and in brick, and in all manner of service in the field..." (Ex. 1:13, 14).

Treated inhumanely, the Hebrews, and other foreigners in Egypt, were conscripted into the work force of Rameses, coerced with the whip, unpaid, and condemned to the brickmaking and the stone quarries. "And the children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage, and they cried..." (Ex. 2:23).

John Calvin writes that although the two treasure cities which the Israelites were required to build, Pithom and Raamses, could be interpreted as granaries or storage for weapons, it is probably more likely that they were fortresses; so that, in effect, the Hebrews were building their own prisons which, in turn, would necessarily prevent their escape from Egypt.

Nevertheless, Pharaoh's first plan to diminish the disproportionate growth of the Hebrews by rigorous labor produced the opposite result: the birth rate of the Hebrew children continued in an increased ratio, so that the Egyptians "were grieved because of the children of Israel" (Ex. 1:12).

Thus, Pharaoh resorted to Phase II of his program: the barbaric slaughter of the newly-born male children. Such a murderous program during times of peace had not been known before. The two Hebrew midwives were to implement his edict. But Shiphrah and Puah, probably the head of the "guild" of midwives — and certainly not the only midwives in Goshen — made sure that Pharaoh's extermination policy was not executed. These two courageous women saw to it that Pharaoh's plan to extinguish the Hebrew race by killing all males, the females then being absorbed by marriage into the Egyptian families, would never occur. It is possible that the midwives never told the Hebrew people of the king's command.

Shiphrah and Puah understood that God's covenant is continued through the healthy and fruitful birth of children. Many children. Shiphrah and Puah would not have been daunted by the anthropologist's dire prediction of over-population leading to diminished food sources and planet pollution. Shiphrah and Puah would not have bought into a sensible and sophisticated birth-control plan for Hebrew women because of adverse circumstances. Shiphrah and Puah would have objected to the late Margaret Sanger's Planned Parenthood Federation. Shiphrah and Puah would have been stunned by the decision of a Supreme Court of a highly civilized nation to kill promiscuously the unborn. Quoting from *Newsweek* (Feb. 3, 1997) in an article by columnist George F. Will: "In a partial-birth abortion, the (if pro-abortion people will forgive the expression) baby is maneuvered by the abortionist so that it enters the birth canal feet first and is almost entirely delivered, with only a few inches of the skull still in the (here comes another presumably problematic word) mother. Then the abortionist makes a hole in the rear of the exposed portion of the baby's skull, inserts a vacuum hose and sucks out the baby's brains." Shiphrah and Puah would be righteously indignant to discover that children born under the best of conditions in the most prosperous of nations are considered to be somewhat of a hindrance to one's lifestyle or a drain on one's time, career, and finances.

It has been Satan's strategy since the beginning of time to prevent the birth and flourishing of covenant children. Cain killed Abel. Esau plotted to kill Jacob. Saul attempted to slay David. Athaliah conspired to destroy the seed royal. Herod rids Bethlehem of all its children in his quest for The Child. The dragon lies in wait to devour The Child. This is the

antithesis. The lines have been drawn since Genesis 3:15. Those lines of demarcation must not be blurred today. Satan hates Christ. His minions throughout history seek to destroy the covenant seed. Limit the family. Delay parenthood. Prevent the birth of covenant children.

Following hard on the heels of the bold decision of Shiphrah and Puah comes the decision of Moses' parents, Jochebed and Amram. Phase III of Pharaoh's devilish plan was in effect. What a perfect excuse not to bring forth any more children was theirs! The times were desperately evil; the king had issued a command to drown the infants; the family was threatened. These were not good years to be having children. But had there been no Moses — the lawgiver — so there would be no Christ — the lawfullifer. That is how serious their decision was. "By faith Moses' parents were not afraid of the king's commandment" (Heb. 11:23).

With all our excuses, real or imagined, for refusing to bring forth children, God is not mocked. Our motive to have or not to have children will be judged before His perfect tribunal. No extra money, no house of our own, no savings account, no room to put another child, we can hardly care for the children we have, we haven't taken a vacation in years, children are so time-consuming and expensive — all these will be weighed by Him. I try to imagine giving birth to a precious infant if I knew that the government officials waited outside the door, listening for the child's first feeble cry, only to take him roughly and drown him. Would I have had the faith of a Jochebed, or a Shiphrah and Puah?

And, yes, there is example and inspiration here for doctors, nurses, and all others committed to the care of fellow human beings. Yours is not to terminate life, nor to shorten it, nor to assist in



preventing life, nor to play God over the petri dish. Life and death belong to Him.

I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvelous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well. My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being imperfect; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them (Ps. 139).

There is great reward in obeying God rather than man, even though that man be most cruel and powerful as was Pharaoh who terminated life at his caprice. Exodus 1 tells us that the families of Israel were wonderfully rewarded through the pious, heroic deeds of Shiphrah and Puah. Not because the midwives deceived Pharaoh, which they certainly did, but because they feared God. God dealt well with the midwives, those keepers of life, because they had respect unto his ordinances. And God prospered the Israelites (made them houses); He gave them fami-

lies and many descendants. Israel multiplied and waxed very mighty because of these two women.

Many godly women everywhere display the spirit, the love for God's covenant children, and the courage of these two women. May we live out of the faith, whether in the best of times or the worst of times, that God extends His covenant through us. We are saved in childbearing (I Tim. 1:15).

Shiphrah and Puah. Models for godly women in every age.

Two women who feared God, not Pharaoh.

Two women. □

*Go Ye Into All the World*

*Cheah Fook Meng*

## Evangelical Reformed Churches of Singapore (ERCS)

When the ERCS first started as a new denomination with only one church 14 years ago, the congregation was very new to the Reformed faith. The leaders had just emerged from a crash course in the Reformed faith under Pastor den Hartog. And even after the ERCS was instituted, leaders and people were still spending hours trying to understand the Reformed faith from the creeds and the Scriptures.

The pioneers of the ERCS, who had once been busy with street and school evangelism, now concentrated their efforts in studying doctrines.

Someone once said that the intellectual content of Calvinism can easily quench the evangelistic fervor of a new Calvinistic convert. This, they say, is true for both an individual and a church. While the danger is always there, this is not true of the ERCS, and should not be true of anyone or any church. The new Reformed faith and life in the ERCS did not extinguish the evangelistic zeal of its people. Instead, the Reformed faith gave the people a new confidence in evangelism. It assures us that God will gather His people, and that He Himself will indeed give the increase in the work. If there is any decline in Reformed evangelism, it must surely be attributed to the

lethargy of the leaders and the complacency of the people. The Reformed faith is not antagonistic to evangelism and missions. Rather, it promotes it. It stresses the love of God for His lost sheep and emphasizes powerfully the ability and willingness of God to save.

With this new found insight, this newly formed band of Reformed people in Singapore went knocking at doors with a powerful confidence, "God will surely gather His people."

In the early days of our history, not only did our people continue the evangelism spirit we had from our school days, but as a church we now were able to carry the message of the gospel to other places outside of Singapore.

The first foreign work God opened for us to do was in Malaysia. Malaysia is immediately north

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*Cheah Fook Meng has recently graduated from the Protestant Reformed Seminary. He is a member of the First Evangelical Reformed Church of Singapore.*



of Singapore and has a large population of Malays. Being an Islamic state, it is not easy for Christians to carry out evangelistic work in the country. Once, our Reformed Baptist friend, Pastor Poh Boon Sing, was put into prison for more than a year for having Bible studies with a few Muslim neighbors. Angered at his efforts in bringing the gospel to these few Malays, the community reported the work to the authorities. One night two security officers knocked at his door, and arrested him for what was supposed to be just a night of interrogation. But a night became days, and days became months, and the months became a year. Everyone trying to do gospel work in Malaysia must be cautious.

Our most recent efforts to have a Reformed church in Malaysia was several years ago, in a place called Penang. Penang is a place that is predominantly Chinese, and is famous for its hot and spicy food and for its snake temple. The place is steeped in idolatry and the city boasts of its huge Chinese temples.

The contact to work in Penang came when a group of Malaysian Chinese students returned from their studies in Scotland. While at Scotland, they came into contact with the Free Church of Scotland. There in the Free Church they became acquainted with Psalm singing and the basic tenets of Calvinism. When they returned to Penang, they met in the home of an Australian military officer who is a member of a conservative Presbyterian denomination in Australia. The group, about 10 in number, soon decided it was ready to be formed into a church. And when they heard about the ERCS, they contacted our mission committee, and we acted immediately on that call. Both Pastor Mahtani and I were there for about four days. During this time, we were able to hold worship services for them, and Pastor Mahtani preached twice to them. The preaching was well received, and

the group was eager to have further contact with us.

However, when we returned to Singapore and were about to make a second visit, news came to us that the group had decided to turn to the Reformed Baptists in the capital city for help. What transpired during that time, we take it to be under the providence of God. The leader of the group, the Australian officer, had returned to Australia. Some others in the group were baptistic in their view of things. And they felt also that they should ally with the Reformed Baptist group in their own country for a united testimony to the Calvinistic faith. Thus the group now is a Reformed Baptist church. Although we were disappointed at the outcome, we still maintain our good relations with them, and fellowship with each other in a Reformed Minister Conference each year in Malaysia.

Malaysia is our nearest neighbor. Hundreds of Malaysians mount their motorbicycles and hop on the buses each day to come to Singapore to work. They are attracted to the good money and good life in Singapore. And because evangelistic activities in Malaysia are restricted, I believe that the Singapore churches ought to seize the opportunity to reach out to the hundreds and thousands of Malaysians that come to work in the country daily.

At present, the ERCS is of course busy with the work in India and Myanmar. The work in India started when a call was extended by an Indian pastor to Pastor Mahtani for our pastor to speak in a discipleship conference in India. The opening gave our pastor opportunity to address the issue from a Reformed perspective. When in India, Pastor Mahtani spoke also to several individuals about the Reformed faith. Soon after he returned to Singapore, letters came pouring in from the India saints for more instruction in the Reformed faith. In response

to this enthusiasm, a second trip to India was made to investigate the work before declaring it as a mission field. Everything seemed good and positive. But we had only one problem. We do not have enough men for the work. At best now, we can continue the work only by means of correspondence. Now and then tapes, books, and materials are sent to those people in India who have shown keenness in the Reformed faith.

The work that is foremost in everyone's mind now in the ERCS is the work in Myanmar. The genesis of the work was rather unusual. It all started with two Burmese Bible students being expelled from a local Bible college. Without a school to attend, they came to us and asked if we were able to provide them the training in the Reformed faith. At the same time when this happened, their own church in Myanmar was going through a church crisis. A larger group of people under a certain Moses left the denomination. The issues involved in the crisis were both theological and financial. I was told by the two Burmese students that one of the crucial theological issue concerns the doctrine of limited atonement. In any case, the interesting fact about this group is that they wanted to form a new church under the Three Forms of Unity. This is quite remarkable, for these are people who are not very conversant in the English language. Little would one expect that continental Reformed confessions like the Three Forms would be known to them.

Through the two expelled Burmese students who approached the ERCS Theological Training Committee, our churches came into contact with their seceded churches in Myanmar. After much prayer and discussion, the Mission Committee of the Churches decided to send Pastor Lau with a delegate to investigate the field. The problem we had was that Myanmar forbids the entry of all



Christian pastors and missionaries. When Pastor Lau in his visa application indicated that his occupation was a pastor, the application was immediately turned down. Here we faced a dilemma. I suppose, in a situation like this, one has to use his "sanctified wisdom." We felt that having our pastor enter the country as a tourist, without specifying the occupation, does not at all breach the law at work in our conscience. So with this, our two pastors were able to make two visits to the country. During these visits, conferences were held to teach the people the fundamental teachings of the Reformed faith.

People who think that the Reformed man lacks power today ought to make a visit to these village people in Myanmar. They hunger for the truth every time. They sit for hours under the preaching. They travel far just to be able to hear the truth proclaimed. They are eager to spread their new love for the Reformed gospel.

The result of these visits, contacts, and correspondence was the emergence of a new Reformed witness in Myanmar, the United Reformed Church of Myanmar. The denomination has three churches, and has a membership of about 1200 people. With their active zeal in local evangelism, the church could grow bigger than its present size. The ERCS at present is committed to holding two conferences every year in the country to help the growing saints. Besides this, we are also considering having several of their pastors to be trained in Singapore for a short duration of six months.

The work in Myanmar convinces us that the Reformed faith is alive in Asia. Everywhere in Asia, from Japan to Korea, in Malaysia, in Singapore, pockets of people are coming to know the doctrines of sovereign grace. One reason for this awareness is the increasing abundance of Reformed literature in these countries. In

countries like Singapore and Malaysia, where people are able to read and write English quite comfortably, the spread of Christian literature is very important. It is a sad fact that Reformed churches are not always very active in missions. And for this reason most of the people in the third world countries come to know the Reformed faith through reading. That was the case with the ERCS, and it is also the case with the Reformed churches in Myanmar. Speaking to a key Burmese Reformed leader last year, I learned that what converted him from his dispensational Baptist background was the reading of A.W. Pink's *Sovereignty of God*. It was hard and slow reading for him, but through it he was led to see the beauty of sovereign grace.

This is where I am sure our friends in the Protestant Reformed Churches can help us. You do not have a lack of good Reformed literature. Friends in Grand Rapids especially have easy access to good solid Reformed books, both rare and recent. But Reformed Christians in India and Myanmar do not have that access to good books. Even if a copy is available, it is not cheap. A school teacher's pay in Myanmar can buy only a bag of rice for month.

Even in Singapore, where Reformed books are more available, not many are keen on reading them. Efforts must be made to promote good reading. And for this, several members in our churches are working on a first Christian public library in Singapore, called the Evangelical Library of Singapore, TELOS. The purpose of the ministry is to make Reformed books available to the Christian public. For this book ministry to serve well we need Reformed books.

What about the future for ERCS? Will there be more mission opportunities in the future? The answer is a definite yes. From every point of view, there is gos-

pel work for us to do in Singapore. Geographically, Singapore is a strategic island country. Thousands and millions of people cross our path. Many of these people have not heard the gospel. Besides, we are surrounded by many unbelieving neighbors who need Jesus Christ. Economically, we are able to send medical and financial aid to poorer countries. With the wealth that the people enjoy from the prosperity of the country, we are able to visit our neighboring Christians to meet their needs. With our advanced telecommunication system, we are able to send out the Reformed gospel through the internet and such. Socially, we are able to communicate both in English and Mandarin, two important languages if one is to engage in missions in Asia.

But I have in mind right now possible mission work in China. Why China? The reasons are not hard to find. In the first place, China is opening its door. While communism is still the main diet of the people, free trade is encouraged. Private enterprise is mushrooming in the big cities. Foreign investments are increasing. Even McDonalds and TCBY can be seen in the streets of Shanghai. Secondly, accompanying this open door policy, people are also becoming more open in their thinking. Independent thinking has been stifled for many years because of the communism and the cultural revolution. But young people in the recent years are becoming more daring in their thinking, and are exploring questions about freedom and life. Unlike the older generation, a growing number of people today are willing to listen to the claims of the Christian faith. Thirdly, what is especially intriguing to us is that the Chinese government is looking to Singapore as a model to develop its social and economic plans. Joint ventures have already been undertaken to develop four industrial cities in China. Models of



Singapore's transportation and telecommunications are being implemented in the Chinese cities. Singapore's business investments in China are growing at a rapid pace. With cities in China that are inhabited by Singaporean nationals, it would not be impossible at all to start a Christian nucleus in that country for our own people with the aim to reach out gradually to the other Chinese people. While we admit that this work is hard, yet it is not impossible.

Fourthly, one important reason why as Chinese Reformed Christians we should consider working in China is because the outspoken leader of the underground Chinese churches is Dr. Jonathan Chao, a Chinese Reformed theologian. This man has a burden for China, and he has the desire to train the Chinese leaders in the proper theological truths. If we in the ERCS are able to help actively and contribute to this work started by Charles and Jonathan Chao, we would be doing a great favor for the Chinese people. For years the Chinese underground Christians have been running away from the authorities and were unable to learn and develop theology. But with Dr. Jonathan Chao and his China ministries, the Christians in China are given, for the first time

after the cultural revolution, clear theological guidance. And what is important is that it is not the heresy of Scofield that is now promoted in China by this new generation of theologians (though it still exists in large proportions), but it is the gospel of Calvinism.

One last reason why we in Singapore ought to consider the suffering saints in China is that the government recently passed a new bill concerning the house churches in China. There are two types of churches in China. There is the Three Self Churches, which are run by the government. There are, secondly, the underground house churches. The former are really under the complete control of the government. The latter meet secretly in homes, and even openly in makeshift church buildings, unfraid of government harassments.

The government last year ordered that all the house churches must be registered. In this way the authorities would be able to monitor the whereabouts and the activities of these house churches. Those that failed to comply would be closed down immediately. When the house churches responded immediately to this new bill with a mass registration, the government rejected the offer. The government insisted that each house church must be registered

as a single unit. The purpose of this is obvious. The government wants control over each movement.

With this new bill the Chinese churches enter a new chapter in their history. What will become of the house churches is hard to say at this moment. But with increasing control it means also restricted activities. If the Chinese churches outside of China do not double their help to the suffering saints, the opportunity may not come again.

How then can we help in the ERCS? China today still does not permit full-time missionaries in the country. At best, we can only make short visits to bring them Bibles, literature, and encouragement. To teach in the underground churches may even invite heavy persecutions to the saints in the area. What they need is Bibles and more Bibles. This we can and must do. We in Singapore have always wanted to do it, but we were slow in acting on this urgent need. Now that we have access to the addresses of these suffering saints through a friend of mine in Hong Kong, the duty is surely for us to bring them the gospel while it is still day, for the night comes when no one shall be able to work.

China for the ERCS? Yes! □

## Report of Classis East

January 8, 1997

First (GR) Protestant Reformed Church

Classis East met in regular session on Wednesday, January 8, 1997 at the First Protestant Reformed Church in Grand Rapids. Rev. A. Spriensma chaired this session of classis. Each church was represented by two delegates. Special welcome was given to Rev. Charles Terpstra, who was attending Classis East for the first time, to Rev. Sungho Lee of the Koshin

Presbyterian Church of South Korea, and to the church history class of Covenant Christian High School.

The burden of this classis was to consider the future of Covenant PRC in Wyckoff, NJ. After hearing Covenant's response to the concerns raised by the September, 1996 classis and hearing the reports of the special committee to

assist Covenant, Classis East decided to adopt the advice of its committee of pre-advice, namely, "to urge Covenant PRC to disband and report their decision to the May, 1997 meeting of classis." The grounds given for this decision are as follows: "1) There is no present possibility for addition to or rotation of elders. 2) The congregation experiences great financial



strain which also affects our denomination. 3) After 23 years, the Lord has not given growth to the congregation. 4) There is a continued loss of membership over several years. 5) The congregation, because of its size, lacks, and has lacked for some time, the experience of a full-orbed congregational life. This has proved itself unhealthy for the congregation." The prayers of classis went with the delegates of Covenant as they returned home with this decision.

An overture to synod from Southwest PRC concerning the funding of the Emeritus Fund was also considered. The overture consisted of two parts: 1) a proposal that synod urge each consistory whose pastors are not enrolled in social security to contribute to the Emeritus Fund an amount equal to FICA taxes that would be incurred. 2) a proposal to appoint a committee to study the advisability of investing a portion of the Emeritus Fund in mutual funds. Classis decided to forward the first

part of this overture to synod with its disapproval on the grounds that the overture only "urges" and does not require payment and that the overture lacks specificity. Classis forwarded the second part to synod with its approval on the ground that this would show good stewardship of these resources.

The report of the church visitors was received. The report noted that generally things are going well in the churches under the blessing of God. Reports were also received from the delegates *ad examina* and the Classical Committee.

Classical appointments were granted to Hope PRC and Covenant PRC. A schedule of appointments was sent to all the churches.

The following delegates to Synod 1997 were chosen: MINISTERS: *Primi* — R. Cammenga, B. Gritters, K. Koole, J. Slopsema, R. VanOverloop; *Secundi* — W. Bruinsma, M. Dick, Dale Kuiper, A. Spriensma, C. Terpstra; ELDERS: *Primi* — C. Jonker, L.

Meulenbergh, D. Ondersma, A. Rau, K. Schipper; *Secundi* — J. DeVries, D. Harbach, D. Lotterman, D. Moelker, J. Kalsbeek, Jr. In other voting, Rev. Spriensma was elected to a three-year term on the Classical Committee; Revs. Dale Kuiper and J. Slopsema were chosen as church visitors, with Rev. VanOverloop as alternate; Rev. Gritters was elected to a three-year term as *primus* delegate *ad examina* and Rev. Bruinsma to a three-year *secundus* delegate *ad examina* term.

Subsidy requests from Kalamazoo for \$19,000 for 1998 and from Covenant for \$10,000 for 1998 (without a pastor) were approved. Covenant also requested that its subsidy for 1997 be reduced from \$43,500 to \$22,500. Kalamazoo was granted an additional \$4,500 subsidy for 1997.

Expenses of classis amounted to \$1,466.74. Classis will meet next at the Hope PRC (Walker) on May 14, 1997.

Respectfully submitted,  
Jon J. Huiskens, Stated Clerk

## News From Our Churches

## Mr. Benjamin Wigger

### Denominational Activities

You may remember that our February 1st installment of the "News" included an item concerning the conference held in mid-January between our churches and the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Australia. This conference, held in Australia, was attended by Prof. H. Hanko and Rev. R. VanOverloop, two members of our denomination's Committee for Contact. Eight lectures were given on four main issues: The Regulative Principle of Worship, The Relation between Church and State,

Divorce and Remarriage, and Eternal Justification. Prof. Hanko and Rev. VanOverloop each presented two lectures, and four of the EPC ministers lectured on their view of these issues. The open discussion which followed was deemed profitable by all. The delegates believe that, as a result of these discussions, a more fruitful relationship can be established between the EPC and the PRC. Let us all remember this cause in our prayers.

On Wednesday, January 22, Rev. Herman Veldman, at the age of 88, was taken by his Lord out of his earthly pilgrimage to his eternal reward. He served in nine of our congregations during his 46 years of active ministry. In the last weeks he had been in a nursing home due to failing health. Those of us who knew him know

of his love for the PR churches and his zeal for the precious, distinctive Reformed faith God has given us. We remember him as a warrior for the truth of the gospel. May God give us all such zeal. We remember Mrs. Veldman and her family to Him who alone is able to comfort us in our time of need.

### Congregational Activities

From our Byron Center, MI PRC we find that the collections taken this past year during their Sunday School season enabled them to send 100 Bibles to Cheah Fook Meng for use in Singapore.

The consistory of the Loveland, CO PRC decided that catechism collections taken this year will be given to the Books for Needy Servants fund administered by Rev. J. Kortering in Singapore.

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



You may remember that this fund purchases and distributes books to needy pastors in India and Myanmar. Also under consideration is the translating of various Reformed materials into the native language.

On Friday evening, January 31, and Saturday morning, February 1, members of the Georgetown PRC in Hudsonville, MI took part in their second annual Winter Worship Conference. This year's event was held at Camp Geneva, on the shore of Lake Michigan, just a few miles north of Holland. Everyone high school age and above was invited to attend, and 117 did come out on Friday night to hear Prof. R. Dykstra speak on the topic, "The Communion of the Saints."

Of those 117 members, 60 hearty souls stayed at the camp overnight, while the rest returned home and came out again the next morning. Prof. R. Dykstra spoke to the group again that morning. Not only was the group able to hear two lectures by Prof. Dykstra, but, between those lectures, they were able to separate into smaller groups for discussion.

The committee in charge of this year's Retreat put together packets of information on the topic, some of it taken from articles from past issues of this magazine,

and some added by Rev. R. VanOverloop from his own sources.

Way back in September of last year, the consistory of the Hope PRC in Redlands, CA was happy to report to their congregation that the last payments for outstanding notes on their church building were made in August. This means that their building is now free of all debt. We bring this up now because, soon after that announcement, the consistory of Hope brought a proposal to their congregation to expand the social hall of their church. It was an ambitious plan, one that included a proposed additional women's restroom, additional classrooms for Sunday School and other church functions, a large soundproof meeting room for societies, and an enlarged capacity for social functions such as banquets and wedding receptions.

Essentially, because Hope was now debt-free, the consistory felt the time was right to address these needs. This proposal was then brought to the annual congregational meeting in December for approval. However, for various reasons Hope's congregation turned this proposal down. So, for the present anyway, Hope remains debt-free.

The consistory of the Grace PRC in Standale, MI decided that

when parents come the first time and make a request to have their children baptized, the pamphlet, "The Covenant of God and the Children of Believers," and the book, *Reformed Education*, be given to the parent.

### School Activities

In the February issue of a "Closer Look," the newsletter of the Hudsonville, MI PRC, Rev. B. Gritters asks his congregation the question, "Who Will Teach the Children?" And he uses that question to address a situation that perhaps you have noticed as well. Our church bulletins these days are full of requests for teachers. By Rev. Gritters' count, "there are at least nine teachers that are needed to fill vacancies in our schools in the coming year. Who will teach them? How many college students are graduating this year ready to take these positions? What about you, young people? Does the Lord call you to this important calling?"

### Food For Thought

"A school teacher plants and raises young trees and saplings in the garden. Oh, they have a precious office and work and are the finest jewels of the church; they preserve the church."

— Martin Luther □

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### ATTENTION TEACHERS!

Hope Christian School of Redlands, California, is in need of an administrator/teacher or teacher for the 1997-1998 school year. Grade assignments are negotiable. For more information, interested persons should contact the school principal, Mr. Ed Karsemeyer, at the school at (909) 793-4584, or Doug Pastoor at (909) 792-9392, or Glenn Feenstra at (909) 794-5859.

### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Council of Grandville PR Church expresses its Christian sympathy to fellow elder Jack VanDyke, and former elder Jon Huisken and their families in the death of their father-in-law,

#### REV. HERMAN VELDMAN.

"Truly my soul waiteth upon God: from him cometh my salvation. He only is my rock and my salvation: he is my defense; I shall not be greatly moved" (Psalm 62:1, 2).

Rev. A. Spriensma, Pres.  
Mr. Cornelius Jonker, Clerk

### TEACHER NEEDED!

Adams Christian School is seeking a teacher for the elementary grades beginning with the 1997-1998 school year. If you are interested or would like more information, please contact our school principal, Mr. Pete Hoekstra, at the school (616) 531-0748, or at home (616) 896-9279, or Mr. Bob Faber at home (616) 942-7038.



#### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Council of the Southwest PRC of Grandville, MI wishes to express its sincere sympathy to our dear sister, Mrs. Flora Veldman, in the passing to glory of her husband and our fellow officebearer and beloved Pastor Emeritus,

##### REV. HERMAN VELDMAN,

whom the Lord took unto Himself on January 22, 1997. May she and all of God's saints who remain to continue their earthly pilgrimage find comfort in the sure word of our Savior, "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die" (John 11:25b, 26a).

Council of SW PRC

Rev. Ronald Cammenga, Pres.

Ken Schipper, Clerk

#### CHANGE OF ADDRESS

Bulletin Clerk for Byron Center PRC:

Mrs. Jill Elzinga

7815 Ronson

Jenison, MI 49428

(616) 457-5260

E-mail (internet) change: rjelz@juno.com

#### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The consistory and congregation of the Loveland PRC express their sympathy to Mrs. Florence Schwarz and her husband, Arthur, in the death of Mrs. Schwarz' sister,

##### LEONA OVERTURF.

May they experience that God, who has promised to provide grace in time of need, comforts and guides them now in their time of sorrow.

"Be still, and know that I am God.... The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge" (Psalm 46:10, 11).

Rev. G. VanBaren, Pres.

Mr. Robert Brands, Clerk

#### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Council and the congregation of the Grace PRC express their Christian sympathy and condolences to Jeremy and Heidi Meulenberg; to Deacon Jim Kaptein and family; and to Elder Larry Meulenberg and family in the stillborn death of their son and grandson,

##### DAVID JAMES.

May they be comforted in His Word and be sustained by God's grace. "The Lord will give strength unto his people; the Lord will bless his people with peace" (Psalm 29:11).

Rev. Mitchell Dick, Pres.

Don Lotterman, Clerk

#### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Council and the congregation of Grace PRC express their heartfelt sympathy to Deacon Jim Kaptein and his family in the loss of their mother and grandmother,

##### MRS. FLORENCE KAPTEIN,

on January 19, 1997.

May they be comforted by the word of the psalmist in Psalm 121:1, 2, "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth."

Rev. Mitchell Dick, Pres.

Don Lotterman, Clerk

#### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Sr. Mr. and Mrs. Society of Faith PRC express their heartfelt sympathy to Mark and Lynda Scholten in the death of Lynda's mother,

##### MRS. FLORENCE KAPTEIN.

May they find comfort in the knowledge that "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints" (Psalm 116:15).

Pete VanDerSchaaf, Pres.

Mary Brummel, Sec'y.

#### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Faith Sr. Mr. and Mrs. Society express their sincere sympathy to Jon and Barb Bol in the death of Jon's father,

##### MR. GERRIT BOL.

May they and their family be comforted by the words of I Corinthians 4:17, "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

Pete VanDerSchaaf, Pres.

Mary Brummel, Sec'y.

#### NOTICE!!

All standing and special committees of Synod, as well as individuals who wish to address Synod 1997, are hereby notified that all material for the 1997 Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches should be in the hands of the Stated Clerk no later than April 1. Please send material to the Stated Clerk:

Don Doezeema

4949 Ivanrest Ave.

Grandville, MI 49418

#### NOTICE!!

All students enrolled in the Protestant Reformed Seminary who will be in need of financial assistance for the coming school year are asked to contact the Student Aid Committee Secretary, Mr. Larry Meulenberg (Phone: 616 453-8466). This contact should be made before the next scheduled meeting, March 4, 1997, D.V.

Student Aid Committee  
Larry Meulenberg, Secretary

#### TEACHER NEEDED!

The Protestant Reformed Christian School of South Holland, IL will need a teacher for the 1997-1998 school year. Inquiries or applications should be made to Lamm Lubbers, Principal, 16511 South Park Ave., South Holland, IL 60473 (708) 333-9197 or (708) 339-6586.