



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

The Standard Bearer

How then shall the true church glorify God and live under this pressure in these days of world-conformity?

By bold, uncompromising preaching of Holy Scripture by her preachers; by ready, firm discipline by her elders; by tough, biblical, confessional decisions by her assemblies; and by unashamed, defiant confession by her members!

See "The Pressure is On" — p. 366

**Vol. 73, No. 16
May 15, 1997**

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In This Issue ...

Three articles deal with Protestant Reformed missions. Home missionary Thomas Miersma writes on "Current Home Mission Theory and Practice." Rev. Allen Brummel, secretary of the Foreign Mission Committee, informs our readers of the activities of this synodical committee (see "Foreign Mission Committee News"). The secretary of the Domestic Mission Committee, Mr. Don Doezema, reports on the work of this committee. In his report, Mr. Doezema informs us that the Domestic Mission Committee is recommending to the 1997 synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches that a second home missionary be called. His "base" would be Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania (see "The Day of Small Things").

The contribution by Orthodox Presbyterian minister John Pedersen is a powerful piece. Writing, obviously, out of his own experience, Pedersen explains why one who preaches or confesses the gospel of salvation by grace alone, with its attendant condemnation of every form of the lie of salvation by man himself, is always hated and reviled. Rev. Pedersen calls on others to "join me as one of the hated, intolerant ones, by God's grace" (see "Confessions of a Harsh, Intolerant, Judgmental One").

Addressing the family-life of the Reformed saints, Rev. Wilbur Bruinsma begins a series on "The Covenant of Marriage." This first installment concerns the "mystery" (see the rubric, "When Thou Sittest in Thine House").

As the reports by the secretaries of the denominational mission committees indicate, the stated, annual meeting of the synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches is at hand. In the next issue of the *SB*, I will inform our readers of the matters that will be coming up at synod.

— DJE



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The Gentiles a Law Unto Themselves

For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves:

Which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another.

Romans 2:14, 15

The thought in the immediate context is that God shall judge every man according to his works. The revelation of the righteous judgment of God in the day of Christ — this is the theme of the immediate context. This judgment shall be conducted according to our works. That is, our works shall be the evidence in this judgment. According to our works, our moral, ethical value will be shown. Our value will be shown, not to God but to us. It will be shown in order that He may be justified when He judges and that we may be found to be liars.

The apostle explains that the verdict will be such that they who sought for glory, honor, and immortality, in the way of patient continuance in well-doing, will be rewarded with eternal life. On the

other hand, he who lived from the principle of partisanship, that is, he who used his position, place, and relation to God for himself, for his own advancement, and, therefore, disobeyed the truth, will receive indignation and wrath. In the following verses the apostle elaborates upon this verdict of God. Tribulations and anguish will be upon every soul of man who does evil. But glory, honor, and peace will be to every man who worketh good. This is the revelation of the righteous judgment of God.

The apostle is addressing man. It is plain that he does not exclude the Gentiles. He is speaking to man in general, but yet to the individual. He is speaking to man, not excluding the Jew, and having in mind to apply it presently to the Jew in particular. For this reason the apostle emphasizes that the Jew shall be first in that judgment. The Jew shall be first, as always. But also the Gentile shall be in that judgment: the Jew first, but also the Gentiles. For there is no acceptance of persons with God. There is only one thing to be judged. This is whether man is ethically worthy of eternal life.

But now a possible question arises in the mind of the apostle. Some might say, "But we have the law." So the Jew reasoned. "God gave me the law, and that God gave me the law is proof that I am righteous." The apostle takes this excuse away and says: "Not the hearers of the law are just before

God, but the doers of the law shall be justified."

But the question arises, how then with respect to the Gentiles? They have no law. How can they know what is right or wrong? By the law is the knowledge of sin. But if the Gentiles have no law, how can they know? The apostle has already said that as many as sin without law shall also perish without law; and as many as sin in the law shall be judged by the law. In other words, it is possible to sin without law. For, and this is the connection, the Gentiles which have not the law, have the work of the law written in their hearts.

The apostle explains this, in the first place, by saying, that the Gentiles do the things of the law. They do not do "the things contained in the law," as our English translation has it. This is not a translation but a commentary. The Gentiles do not do "the things contained in the law." But they do "the things of the law."

In the second place, because they do the things of the law, they are a law unto themselves.

In the third place, that they are a law unto themselves is evident from two facts. First, even in the Gentile world the conscience witnesses. Second, public opinion sets its seal upon the fact that they are a law unto themselves.

What This Means

The Gentiles are a law unto themselves, the apostle says. The

Herman Hoeksema was the first editor of the Standard Bearer.

question has been asked: what law does the apostle have in mind? The question has been asked whether the apostle has in mind merely the moral law, the law of the ten commandments, or whether he has in mind the entire law of the Jews, the moral, ceremonial, and civil laws.

This question is entirely out of place. This question should not be asked. The apostle does not have in mind any specific law. What the apostle says is that the life of the Gentiles, in the external sense, is characterized by this, that they have no law. This is the difference between the Jews and the Gentiles.

By law here is meant the external code, the written law, not the spiritual essence of the law. The apostle does not mean to say that the Gentiles are not under the law of God. This is just what he emphasizes. But he means to say that the Gentiles have no written law, no external code of precepts. They have no written law telling them what is the will of God. There is no such revelation to the Gentiles, as there was to the Jews. God spoke to the Jews in decalogue, in the law of the ten commandments. These ten commandments were real; they were written in stone. In that code, God came from without to the Jews and said: thou shalt, and thou shalt not. The entire way, step by step, was externally mapped out for the Jew. He could walk that way blindfolded. Israel was bound, all along the way, by the external law. God said to the Jew, from without: thou shalt, and, thou shalt not. This, the Gentiles did not have. The Gentiles are without law, in this sense.

These Gentiles are a law unto themselves. They are their own law, in a certain sense. That the Gentiles are their own law does not mean that they have the authority to declare what is right and wrong. This is not the meaning. Rather, there is in them a principle, a light, by which, to a certain extent, they are able to declare unto themselves

what is right and what is wrong. When they declare what is the will of God concerning right and wrong, they show that they have sufficient light to know that law which they do not possess.

If you ask how that is, the apostle explains that they have the work of the law written in their hearts. Do not mistake this phrase. That the Gentiles have the work of the law written in their hearts is by no means the same as having the law written in the heart. Scripture speaks of having the law written in the heart. Scripture emphasizes that God's people have the spiritual principle of the law of God, which is love, written in the heart, so that they have no more need of an external code. The heart is the center of man's life, from a spiritual point of view. If God implants the spiritual essence of the law in the heart, this heart does what the law requires. But this is not the meaning here.

The work of the law does not mean the work which the law requires. Many interpret it this way. Some say that although the Gentiles have not the law, they are in a position to do what the law requires and be saved. Others say that there is a general grace by which God has written the work of the law upon the hearts of the Gentiles, so that they do the things contained in the law. But this is not the meaning.

I call your attention to the fact that the text is an answer to the question, "Can the Gentiles be marked as sinners and perish?" Therefore, the apostle means that the work which the law would otherwise do, this work the Gentiles have written in their hearts.

What is the work of the law? The work of the law is, in the first place, to express what is the will of God and to distinguish between good and evil. In the second place, the work of the law is to promise life to them that keep it. In the third place, the work of the law is to curse them who do not abide in

all that is written in it. This is the work of the law. This is written in the hearts of the Gentiles.

They did not need the law to distinguish between good and evil. Why? They had the work of the law written in their hearts. Therefore, they had no need of an external law. There is a threefold work of the law written in the heart of every man.

The Effect in the Gentile World

You might ask, how is the work of the law written in the hearts of the Gentiles? The answer is, by God Himself. God has written it in their hearts, externally by His revelation in nature and internally by the testimony of His Spirit in their hearts. This testimony of the law was not only in the hearts of the Gentiles, but also in the hearts of the Jews. This was not the distinction between the Jews and the Gentiles. The distinction was that the Jews had the written law, besides having the work of the law in their hearts, while the Gentiles had only the work of the law written in their hearts.

What is the result? The result is that the Gentiles do by nature the things of the law. They do not do "the things contained in the law," as our English version would lead us to believe. This is a commentary, not a translation of the original. The things contained in the law are to love God above all and the neighbor as ourselves. The things contained in the law are not to have any other gods; not to have any graven images; not to use the name of God in vain; to keep the sabbath; to honor your father and mother; not to kill; not to commit adultery; not to steal; not to bear false witness; not to covet. If the apostle had said that the Gentiles do the things contained in the law, he would have said that the Gentiles keep all of the ten commandments. But the apostle says in the context that the Gentiles *perish* without the law. Therefore, we must understand that the things of

the law are the things which the law did for Israel.

What did the law do for Israel? It divided all of life into several departments. It gave Israel precepts and clearly marked out what Israel had to do: thou shalt have no other gods; thou shalt keep the sabbath; thou shalt not kill; thou shalt not covet. All the time, the law drew lines before the consciousness of the people of Israel. This, the Gentiles did for themselves. Otherwise they could not have made laws.

The Manifestation in the Life of the Gentiles

How did they do it? They had the law not to kill, not to steal. How did they do it? They had the work of the law in their hearts. That this is true is plain from the conscience, the apostle says.

What is the conscience? The word is a translation from the Greek. The first part, "con," means "with." The second part, "science," means "knowledge." Therefore, the word "conscience" is derived from a word which means "to know with." It means "to know something with another."

Let me illustrate. Someone commits a crime. Another is witness to that crime. He who commits the crime has knowledge of it. The witness also has conscience of it. That is, he has knowledge of it, with the one who committed the crime.

In the second place, the word "conscience" means "to have knowledge with ourselves." It means that we have knowledge with ourselves of the thing we have done, after we have done it.

Let me illustrate once more. A man does something wrong. Before he does it, he knows that it is wrong. But after he has done it, his own judgment condemns what he has done. This is his conscience.

It is sometimes said that we must not do anything against the conscience. But strictly speaking we *cannot* do anything against the conscience. The reason is that the

conscience speaks *after the thing is done*. For this reason the conscience is sometimes called "the voice of God." The conscience always speaks after the thing is done. It condemns the wrong and approves of the good that is done.

It is true that the conscience can become very sinful. Sometimes man succeeds, to a certain extent, to silence the conscience. A man can tell the conscience to keep still. If he says it often enough, he will put the conscience to silence. But the conscience never stops speaking. In the judgment day the conscience will bear witness with the law. This is what the Gentile does. His conscience bears witness. Because his conscience bears witness, it is a plain manifestation that there is the work of the law written in his heart.

In the second place, the work of the law becomes manifest in public opinion. There is a public opinion. You find it in your daily papers. What you find in your daily papers is not a mere recitation. What you find there is the judgment of men concerning the things that are done. How do men judge one another? They find lines between what is good and evil. Thus, there was a public opinion among the Gentiles. There was a public opinion by which they accused or else excused one another.

What does this mean? It does

not mean that the Gentiles have grace. The fact that man can distinguish between good and evil, that he condemns the murderer and the thief, does not mean that he does not steal. But it shows that no man is excusable.

This is the theme of the apostle in this chapter. "Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest" (v. 1). Law or no law, man is inexcusable. You say that you have the law? It makes no difference, you shall be judged according to your works. You say that you have no law? It makes no difference, you have the work of the law in your heart. God judges man according to his works. Every soul that is not righteous will receive indignation and wrath.

What then? Is there no hope? There is no hope in religion, in going to church, in being baptized, in partaking of the Lord's Supper. There is but one hope. This is the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus which comes to them who have sought glory, honor, and immortality, in the way of patient continuance in well-doing. The righteous shall live by faith. Therefore, as far as we are concerned in the matter, we must learn to write hell and damnation upon all that is of us. Having come naked before the Judge, we must learn to look at Him who is our righteousness and our redemption. □

The Portrait

(before Luke 11:13)

Paint for me a picture,
Brush each stroke with care.
Paint of me a likeness,
Rivalling what's there.

I will paint a portrait,
Accurate and true.
It will be most telling,
All will know it's you.

What is this, dear Artist?
Black is all there is
On this awful canvas —
Chasm-dark abyss!

Aye, this is a painting
Of one who is not whole.
Without the Spirit's touch this is
A picture of your soul.

— *Connie L. Meyer*

The Pressure is On

The pressure that I have in mind is the force of the ungodly world upon the instituted church. The purpose of this pressure is that the church conform her thinking, her message, and her life to the thinking, the message, and the life of the world. At present, in the West at any rate, the forms of the pressure are education; the mass media, especially television; public opinion; and the example of the world's life. Before long, there will be the oppression of overt persecution.

The fact is not new.

Scripture warns that conforming to the world's rebellious thinking and filthy life is the great temptation for the church in every age. Israel was always learning the ways of the heathen. The New Testament church is urgently called to come out of Babylon the great "that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues" (Rev. 18:4).

But the pressure increases in the last days. Churches are succumbing to the pressure. Churches that once were faithful to Christ are succumbing to the pressure. Not the liberal churches, which long ago deserted their rightful Lord for the embrace of antichrist, but evangelical, Reformed, and Presbyterian churches yield now to the world's pressure. They yield blatantly. There is nothing subtle or doubtful about their accommodation of themselves to the world, although, being churches, they still must try, vainly, to put a good face on their surrender.

The pressure is on.

The pressure is on, that the churches conform their *thinking* to the world.

Evangelical and Reformed churches give up the biblical doctrine of creation for the world's theory of evolution. Or they tolerate the theory of evolution in the churches and in the Christian schools with the inevitable result that in time it drives biblical creation out.

This accommodation of the church's thinking on the fundamental matter of origins betrays another concession by the church to the world: the authority governing the churches' beliefs is no longer Scripture, but science.

Nominally evangelical and purportedly Reformed churches tolerate, if they do not authorize, the teaching that God loves all humans without exception with a love that desires their salvation in the gospel of Jesus Christ. Some permit, if they do not approve, the doctrine that finally every person will be saved. In any case, there will be no everlasting hell. Thus, these churches cave in to the world's avowed universalism and to the world's determined repudiation of the justice of the God revealed in Scripture.

So powerful today is the world's pressure that it becomes a serious theological issue to be debated, whether Jesus Christ is the only Savior. This is a problem for Reformed churches. They cannot say that all outside the covenant with believers and their children

who die in unbelief perish everlastingly. Where there is still opposition to the rejection of Jesus as the only name given under heaven by which we must be saved, the appearance of this rejection is not met by quick, decisive discipline. Rather, the churches negotiate with the heretic and attempt an amicable separation.

The explanation of this denial of the uniqueness of Jesus and His work, particularly the cross, is the pressure upon the churches of the world's intense hatred of discrimination and fervent love of equality and sameness in the human race.

The pressure is on, that the churches conform their *behavior* to the world.

Adopting the world's agenda, that every position held by men shall also be open to women, evangelical and Reformed churches have lately approved the opening of offices in the church to women. With this decision, the churches have necessarily rejected the headship of the husband in marriage and family. Although these churches scour the Bible for a text or two, Scripture was not the cause of their decision. The world was.

The pressure was on.

These same churches now acknowledge the legitimacy before God of homosexual nature and activity. Or they permit the advocacy of homosexuality, which must result in ecclesiastical approval of homosexual nature and deed as godly.

Homosexuality!

*The
pressure
of the world
is on,
and the
churches
cannot
withstand
it.*

Women changing the natural use into that which is against nature! Men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burning in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly! (Rom. 1:26, 27)

Debated, then tolerated, and finally officially approved by evangelical and Reformed churches!

Why?

What heart-shrinking reality explains this?

The pressure is on.

Even abortion finds defenders in evangelical and Reformed churches. Recently, a noted evangelical theologian in one of the most prestigious and popular evangelical seminaries in the world published his sanction of the murder of millions of unborn in the earlier months of pregnancy. Recently, a Reformed college professor published his refusal to condemn all abortions that are not done to save the life of the mother. If the churches involved have not approved these lethal pronouncements, neither have they disciplined those who made them. They are open to the approval of abortion.

Not a whit less serious is the churches' acceptance of divorce and remarriage. Indeed, from the point of view both of the havoc wreaked upon nation and church and of the violence done to the revelation of the covenant of grace in the gospel, the acceptance of divorce and remarriage is the most serious of all the ethical accommodations to the world by the churches.

Churches that once held the biblical position that divorce is permitted only for fornication now allow divorce, and a subsequent remarriage, for many, if not all, reasons.

Churches that once restricted the right of remarriage to the "innocent party," that is, the husband or wife whose mate committed fornication, now allow the *guilty* party to remarry.

In this area—this fundamental area—of the Christian life, some churches and theologians are crafty. Before the reading, Christian public, they argue for divorce and remarriage on the ground of adultery. Perhaps they add the ground of desertion, with obviously erroneous appeal to I Corinthians 7:15. The actual life of the congregations, however, tolerates and approves the divorce and remarriage of the *guilty* party, the man who himself committed adultery, or who himself deserted his wife.

The doors to divorce and remarriage now open widely in the conservative churches. They open as widely in the conservative churches as they open in the godless world. Virtually every book and article on the subject have as their purpose to *defend*, and thus to *promote*, divorce and remarriage among those who profess allegiance to the Christ who is truth and faithfulness.

For one reason.

The Western world in which we live is a world of sexual promiscuity, rampant divorce, and abounding remarriage. Sexual pleasure is god.

The pressure of the world is on, and the churches cannot withstand it.

Such is the pressure that Scripture itself is deliberately and systematically re-worded to force the Word of God into the mold of the world's thinking. In its issues of March 29 and April 19, 1997, *World* magazine reported that those in charge of publishing the New International Version (NIV) of Scripture plan soon to publish the NIV in a gender-inclusive edition. Feminist aversion to masculine pronouns will dictate to the inspiring Holy Ghost. The NIV is the Bible of choice in most evangelical and Reformed churches.

This publishing event will only

highlight what is, in fact, happening all along the line of the evangelical and Reformed surrender to the world. The Word of the sovereign God is compelled to give way before the words of autonomous man.

The churches are guilty. But the people do not escape responsibility. Many would have it so. The world's thinking is preferable. The world's ways are easier and more pleasant. Others put up with what ought to be intolerable.

How then shall the true church glorify God and live under this pressure in these days of world-conformity?

By bold, uncompromising preaching of Holy Scripture by her preachers; by ready, firm discipline by her elders; by tough, biblical, confessional decisions by her assemblies; and by unashamed, defiant confession by her members!

Basic is the truth of the warfare between the church and the world, rooted in God's eternal election and reprobation. The church's thinking, message, and behavior, drawn as they are from Scripture alone, are holy and wise, whereas the world's thinking, message, and behavior, arising as they do from totally corrupt human nature, are profane and foolish. The church's thinking, message, and behavior end in life, whereas the world's thinking, message, and behavior end in death.

This warfare, our preachers must teach.

This warfare, our people must believe.

The pressure is on.

Against it will stand only those who know and live the antithesis.

□

— DJE

The Covenant of Marriage:

1) Its Mystery

How can a believer put into words the intimate love and communion he shares with his God? He cannot! Yet, though it may be difficult for us to express this relationship, nevertheless God gives us to experience it in this life in a real and concrete way. God has entered into a covenant of friendship by which He binds believers to Himself. As a result, God's people experience in their joys as well as in their sorrows the presence and favor of their God. Likewise, there is nothing that grieves the child of God more than when, because of his sin, God withholds from him the conscious assurance of His favor and love. The psalmist expresses his personal relationship with God with these words in Psalm 73:25, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee!" What joy there is to be found in the covert of God's wings (Ps. 61:4)!

But how weak is our flesh!

Oftentimes we like sheep wander away from the fold of God's care and fellowship. In the weakness of our sin, others deceive us, or we deceive ourselves, into thinking that joy and happiness can be found apart from God. It is for that reason that God has given us means to strengthen us in our desire to fellowship with Him. These

means are earthly, tangible means which serve to direct our faith toward Him and the sacrifice of Christ on the cross for us. From a negative point of view, God sends us many trials and difficulties in this life. These serve as means to remind us how weak we are and frail, how dependent we are upon God and Jesus Christ in this life to find any joy and peace. From a positive point of view, God provides His church with the official means of grace: the sacraments and the preaching. When we use these means in spirit and in truth, we enter into the very presence of God and experience in His house blessed fellowship with God.

There is another positive means that God uses in the lives of many of His children by which they are given a taste of that blessed fellowship with God. It is not an official means to be used in the church as a sacrament. But it is a means that we find in an earthly relationship to another. That means is the relationship into which a believing man enters when he marries a believing woman.

Marriage is a symbol of God's intimate union with His church in Christ. But it is more than a symbol. It is a God-ordained relationship by which two believers are able to experience in an earthly, concrete way the blessed intimacy they share with God and Christ! This is not to say that a person who is single is not able to experience to the same degree as a married person fellowship with God. He surely is able! We will address this in a future article. Nevertheless,

marriage is an intimate bond which closely reflects a believer's relationship with God (Eph. 5:31, 32). If a husband and wife in their marriage consciously live in the knowledge of God's grace, faithfulness, forgiveness, and love, they will be given by God in their relationship a foretaste of the joy and fulfillment that is found in the presence of God. To understand this we must examine the mystery of marriage.

The creation account in Genesis 2:18ff. clearly reveals to us that marriage was given to believers as a means to experience and express their intimate fellowship with God. This is inherent in the very creation of man and woman itself. On the sixth day of the creation week God created man, male and female. However, they were separate creations. God created the man first. Later, on that sixth day, He created the female. She had a special creation. God created man directly out of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life. The woman, on the other hand, was created out of the rib of the man. The reason for her special creation, we learn, was to reveal that she was created a "help meet" (vv. 18-20) for the man.

The term translated "meet" in the King James Version teaches us that the man and woman were created in such a way that they were perfect complements of one another. The woman was "meet," i.e., perfectly adapted for a life of blessed communion with the man. Though the woman was *homo sapiens*, she was created different from

Rev. Bruinsma is pastor of Kalamazoo Protestant Reformed Church in Kalamazoo, Michigan.

the man, someone to be placed opposite of him, and yet one who, when joined together with the man, formed a perfect counterpart to him. In other words, the *woman* was specially created by God to fill out, to enlarge, to enhance, to supplement the life of the man. No other creature could enter into the life of a man to fulfill that function. The woman was created by God in a way that, when she and the man were joined together, they could become two parts of a whole.

This was true first of all from a sexual point of view. A woman was created physiologically different from the man. Her human anatomy was the man's opposite. Yet the woman was perfectly adapted by God to fit the needs and desires of the man. We understand well that it takes a man and a woman to produce offspring. There is no changing that fact, though wicked man attempts to. A woman was also created psychologically different from a man, yet in such a way that her emotions, her desires, and her thinking could perfectly complement the man's.

Unbelievers today attempt to defy this clear demarcation which God has created between the genders, but to no avail. The differences remain. Neither ought we to forget why there are these differences: *God created the woman capable of entering into the most intimate relationship of communion and love with a man.* This was the very purpose of God in creating the woman as He did!

Having created the woman in this way, God then brought her to the man (Gen. 2:22) and the two of them became one flesh. By this act of God marriage was instituted. Again, in the account of the creation of the woman we find an amazing truth. God not only created man and woman capable of fellowship with each other, but God brings to every man the particular woman with whom that man is to be bound for life. Up to the point of marriage the man and

woman were two separate individuals. By means of marriage, however, the two of them enter into an unbreakable union of love and friendship by which they become one flesh.

The very character of marriage itself, that which lies at the heart of every marriage, is a bond of fellowship. That is the essence of marriage! When a man takes to himself a wife, he enters with her into a covenant by which he leaves father and mother and cleaves to his wife. The man leaves the intimate relationship of love that exists between parent and child, and replaces that relationship with one that is of a permanent nature: marriage. By means of marriage he "cleaves" to his wife.

The term "cleave" used in Genesis 2:24 and repeated by Jesus in Matthew 19:5 explains just how close the covenant of marriage is. Literally it means "to cling to" or "to be attached to." It is used in Isaiah 41:7 to describe the act of soldering: "So the carpenter encouraged the goldsmith, and he that smootheth with the hammer him that smote the anvil, saying, It is ready for the soldering: and he fastened it with nails, that it should not be moved." The term "cleave" is also used in Deuteronomy 10:20 in reference to the relationship one must have with God: "Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God; him shalt thou serve, and to him thou shalt cleave, and swear by his name" (see also Deut. 11:22, 23).

The analogy is clear: a man must cling to his wife just as a believer cleaves to his God. This term allows for no doubt that the covenant of marriage is so intimate, so close, that by it a man and woman become permanently attached to one another!

This is emphasized as well when Christ declares concerning marriage in Matthew 19:6, "Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder." When a man and

woman enter into marriage, God joins them together. They do not join themselves together, but God joins them. Just as a pair of oxen are placed under one yoke by their master, so also God yokes together a man and wife in marriage. What God yokes together into one unit, Jesus says, let not man divide again. When the apostle Paul uses the term "joined" in Ephesians 5:31, he means by that term "glued together." So close is the bond, so intimate is that covenant of marriage, that two are yoked together by God into one. They are glued, stuck to each other.

They, in a very real and miraculous way, become *one flesh* with each other! When a man and woman enter into the covenant of marriage with each other, immediately God takes two distinct individuals and makes them into one. They do not do this to themselves. God makes two into one. This is the one, fundamental fact of marriage: man and wife, when they speak their vows, become physically, psychologically, and spiritually one flesh with each other! They are *able* to become one on the basis of their creation, but they are actually formed by God into one flesh when they enter into marriage.

Do you understand how intimate the bond of marriage really is? Does a married couple truly comprehend what happened to them when they spoke their vows? Do young men and women understand what they are entering into when they seek to marry? Marriage is a covenant bond of fellowship!

It is really rather silly then, is it not, to raise such a fuss about divorce and remarriage? Theologians have searched through different passages in an attempt to justify divorce and remarriage. There is wrangling over this passage and that passage. How foolish! Do we really wish to deny the blessed union God has created between a husband and his wife? Do

we really want to ignore the essence of marriage, that which makes marriage marriage? Do not men see that by destroying the unbreakable bond of marriage they are in fact destroying a true understanding of God's covenant with His people in Christ? By undoing the intimate ties of the marriage relationship, one loosens as well his personal, experiential bond with God in Christ.

This is true because marriage is a mystery by which God sym-

bolizes His own marriage through Christ to His church! In Ephesians 5:32 Paul writes this about our earthly marriages: "This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church." Although everything we wrote so far applies to every marriage, nevertheless from this passage here in Ephesians 5 it becomes obvious that only the believer is going to grasp and therefore experience the true design of marriage. In the relationship which they share as heirs together of the grace of life, a hus-

band and wife will in a concrete, earthly way be given a taste of the blessed relationship they share with God and Jesus Christ!

To explain this further will require another article. But surely at this point already it is plain to see that the very creation of the man and woman, as well as the institution of marriage, were intended by God to bring a man and woman into the most intimate and permanent of earthly relationships. This is the covenant of marriage. □

All Around Us

Rev. Gise VanBaren

■ Salvation Through Christ Alone? (Try Again!)

We reported in the last article that the Reformed Church in America defeated at its classical level the proposal to ask annually of every consistory and minister the question: whether "the doctrines of the gospel [are] preached in your church in their purity in conformity with...the truth that divine redemption from sin is only by grace through faith in the perfect work of the Lord Jesus Christ alone, the only mediator between God and humankind." There were 23 classes that approved and 23 that voted the proposal down. Final approval required a 2/3 vote. Some claimed that this vote indicates the growing liberalism in the Reformed Church in America in that it allows for a teaching that there are other ways of salvation than through the cross of Christ and living faith in Him. Others insist that probably the proposal was

defeated because many were convinced that the present questions asked consistories and ministers essentially already incorporate this idea. The proposed question would simply duplicate what already existed.

But now another opportunity will be given to the classes to vote on the proposal. It appears that there was a typographical error in the proposal as presented. Two words were inadvertently omitted: "by grace." URNS (Darrell Todd Maurina) reports:

(April 14, 1997) URNS — Based on the omission of two words, the Reformed Church in America's General Synod Council is recommending that the denomination's regional classes get a second chance to vote on a controversial church order amendment that would have required all ministers and churches to annually reaffirm that Jesus Christ is the only means of salvation.

The amendment, prompted by the views of Rev. Richard Rhem, pastor of Christ Community Church of Spring Lake, Michigan, required a two-thirds majority of the 46 classes in the 313,000-member denomination but was decisively defeated, having received 23 affirmative and 23 negative votes in voting that ended April 8. Thirty-one affirmative votes

would have been necessary to pass the amendment.

However, overture author Rev. Patrick Shetler of First Reformed Church in Grant discovered an error in the paperwork sent to the classes.

"The way it came about was, talking to [Rev.] Howard Moths of the South Grand Rapids Classis; he mentioned that some of the delegates at his classis did not want to vote for it because salvation is by grace," said Shetler. "That immediately rang a bell with me because I remembered those words were in."

When Shetler and General Synod Operations Secretary Rev. David Schreuder compared notes, they discovered that the RCA offices had mailed out an erroneous text that would require RCA ministers and churches to agree that "divine redemption from sin is only through faith in the perfect work of the Lord Jesus Christ alone, the only mediator between God and humankind" rather than "by grace through faith." The difference is that the erroneous version implies that salvation is man's work of faith rather than an act of God's grace, and was serious enough that the General Synod Council's April 8-10 meeting in New Jersey voted to recommend that General Synod 1997, meeting this June in Milwaukee, resubmit the amendment to the classes.

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

Now we must wait to see what the Synod will decide—and then await another round of votes in the classes. That could prove interesting indeed.

■ The NIV is Going "Gender Neutral"

Last summer several of those who attended the British Reformed Fellowship conference visited also the offices of the Trinitarian Bible Society (strong supporters of the KJV) in London. They were informed that the publishers of the NIV were planning to put out a new edition of the NIV that would be "gender neutral." But this likely would not be done in the States until after the year 2,000—because the majority of the churches using the NIV would not be ready for that yet.

That report is confirmed by the *Christian News*, April 7, 1997. This paper reports on an article appearing in *World* of March 29, 1997:

"Femme fatale," the cover story of the March 29 *World* reports: "The feminist seduction of the evangelical church: The New International Version of the Bible — the best-selling English version in the world — is quietly going 'gender neutral.' "

...Susan Olasky writes ... "Say goodbye to the generic *he, man, brothers, or mankind*. Make way for *people, person, brother and sister, and humankind*. By the year 2000 or 2001, if the 15-member Committee for Biblical Translation (CBT) — the NIV's controlling body — has its way, the 35 percent of American Bible buyers who prefer the NIV will not be able to buy a new copy of the version they trust.

That may not happen — publisher Zondervan may still choose to put out two separate versions....

How have we arrived at this point?

Twenty-five years ago, mainline churches were debating whether women should be pastors and

whether language should reflect differences between the sexes, but evangelicals weren't worried about it. As Larry Walker, one of the 15 members of the CBT, who has been involved with the NIV for 25 years, remembers, "Way back yonder when it first came up, no one was for [unisex language]. Now at the present time, almost everyone is for it," he says a little wistfully. "The language is shifting underneath our feet."

One ought not to be very surprised. With the rule of "dynamic equivalence," it was perhaps inevitable that the gender distinctions in Scripture would also soon be taken out. But then, what happens to divine inspiration? Was God mistaken in presenting gender as He did in Scripture. Now the wise men of the CBT know better than God and adjust His Word to conform to the feminist movement? What next? Would they change the wording also of Scripture to allow for the idea of other ways of salvation than through the cross of Jesus Christ? That would, perhaps, satisfy the Rev. Rhem of Muskegon, MI.

■ Baptist Church ... Wants Women to Stay at Home

Christian News, April 14, 1997, presents another interesting and unique report from RNS:

A Baptist church in northwest Arkansas has closed its day care center because the church board believes God wants women to stay at home.

The decision has left 27 parents without day care and state officials are rapidly licensing another facility to take the place of the one at First Baptist Church of Berryville, the Associated Press reported.

"This is not 'Happy Days' and we are not living in the 1950s," said Katrena Alexander, 44, who operates a manufacturing company with her husband.

Alexander's daughter Keanna

had attended the day care for a year before it shut its doors March 14.

"I don't know of too many people here who can survive on one person's salary, especially if that salary is minimum wage," Alexander said.... "This is just something that shouldn't have happened in this decade."

Board members of the church's Corner Stone Day Care sent a letter February 14 to parents announcing the church would close the center in the spring.

The church said in a later letter it was sensitive to the challenges of single parents but could not keep the center open because it was encouraging mothers to be employed outside the home. Families could get by on one salary if they gave up "Big TVs, a microwave, new clothes, eating out and nice vacations," the letter added.

"God intended for the home to be the center of a mother's world," the church stated. "In Titus 2:5, women are instructed to be 'discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good and obedient to their own husbands....'"

That is a church which has proper understanding of "family values." It must surely be difficult to "buck the trend" of our day. Yet Scripture is clear on this score.

■ The Reader's Digest Report

Have you noticed the report in *Reader's Digest*, April 1997, listing the top fifty places in the United States which were considered the best places to raise a family? Did you note that Ft. Collins—Loveland was third from the top of the list? And since this was the only one of the fifty that has a Protestant Reformed Church and Christian School, its ranking might be considered to be even higher than third place for Protestant Reformed people! □

Current Home Mission Theory and Practice

One of our principle concerns, as churches, over the past few years, though a happy concern, has been our mission work. This has dominated our synods and is reflected in our budgets for both foreign and domestic missions. This has been reflected also in past *Standard Bearer* articles on such topics as a home missionary-at-large. As the mission work of our churches will probably dominate this year's Synod also, it may be profitable to reflect upon our current approach to mission work, specifically home mission work.

Moreover, we have to some extent taken a new approach to home mission work in the past few years. This change arises in part out of the "New Mission Policy" adopted by our churches in 1965, but which had never been implemented. While this policy in some respects is dated (it predates the development of cassette tapes, video tapes, and computer technology), it is still our official synodical policy and well worth reading. Involved in this new policy is a change in concept and approach to mission work and its evaluation. It may also be called a return to a certain approach to mission work which was at one time more characteristic of how our churches labored. This may best be illustrated by comparing our more recent past and its approach and the current one.

In the more recent past we have called missionaries to labor on a certain "field." Usually this involved a core group we were working with. Our work with that core group came to the point that we felt a missionary was warranted. We would then designate this group and its location as a "field" of labor. In calling a missionary we would call him specifically to work that "field."

This presented certain problems. In the first place, if that labor should prove unfruitful we would be compelled to close the "field." But since the missionary was called to that specific "field" he could not be simply moved to another location. The effect of this was to focus the missionary's labors upon one place with one group. Evaluating our home mission work consisted of the question whether there was progress toward a church and growth on that "field." Involved in this was the idea also that we would work for a limited period of time in one location depending upon progress. Each year the "field" had to be evaluated as to whether it warranted continued work or whether it should be closed. This had the effect of holding over the mission field the constant possibility that in any given year we might withdraw and close the "field." It also tended to produce a time-oriented approach to our mission work, namely, so many years (two, three, five years) on a "field" and then close it and move on. This approach also tended to focus the missionary's attention almost ex-

clusively on the local work he was doing, since his time in that place was limited.

This is not intended as a criticism of the work that has been done in the past nor of the dedicated men who have labored as our missionaries. The Lord has blessed and enriched us by this work and also gathered His church. The point to be noted, however, is that our mission work in the past had a certain concept underlying it. This concept of a "field" involved a certain principle of evaluation and shaped the labors of the missionary. While this approach had certain advantages, in concentration on a specific mission project, it also lacked flexibility in its approach. It was difficult to move the missionary. Moreover, it constantly raised the question whether we would continue the work or close a "field." This was not always helpful in leading families to commit themselves by leaving their existing church fellowship to join a developing work since that work could soon be taken from them.

While our present approach does not completely discard that which was done in the past, certain elements make it different in conception and approach. These elements change both how we conceive of and evaluate what we are doing. In the first place, while the home missionary has a "base" from which he works and a group which gives a local concentration to his labors, we do not have a "field" in the former sense of the word. The home missionary's "field" is properly a geographic region. With one

Rev. Miersma is home missionary of the Protestant Reformed Churches.

home missionary at present, that "field" in the broadest sense is, properly speaking, North America. This includes everything from Vancouver, British Columbia to Newfoundland; Alaska to Florida; and the Northwest Territories to Texas. Moreover, the work of the home missionary also includes Europe, Australia, and New Zealand. This is the "field" of labor. We are no longer designating one place as a "field" and calling a missionary to work that specific "field" in the former sense of the word.

Secondly, the home missionary is "based" in a certain location, which gives to his labors a local and geographic focus, though it does not limit his work to one place. A "base" is not the same thing as a "field." The idea of a "base" from which the home missionary works is that it is a starting point from which the missionary works outward in a certain region. While it is desirable that there be a local core group with which to work at this "base" of operations, and this is our present practice, theoretically this is not necessary to the conception. The purpose of the "base" as a starting point is that it be located in such a way as to facilitate working out from it in harmony with the various demands of our mission work.

One may conceive of it as a series of concentric circles with the local work at the "base" as the center, the immediate geographic region around it, and finally the broader area of North America. This involves a regional conception of our mission work.

To illustrate from my present work as home missionary, my "base" is the San Luis Valley in southern Colorado. This is the specific area where we are working to form a church and is the area of local concentration. Working from that base we are also working in southwestern Colorado and northern New Mexico as a region. Because of its location in the west, a yet broader area includes the west-

ern part of the USA and Canada. Finally the work includes also new field work in the whole of North America, which is why I have also been working in the Pittsburgh-Cincinnati area.

This approach has a number of advantages and elements to it. First of all, it eliminates the problem of a missionary called to a specific "field" should it become necessary to move the missionary. This is the rather obvious benefit, but there is more to it than that. It means that the missionary's labors are directed by the work itself to where the Lord opens the doors for work and where contacts develop. It means too that we do not try to decide beforehand where we will establish a church but let the Lord direct the work, also locally in the region as contacts develop. It could well happen that a church is formed but not at the original starting point nor necessarily at the base which initially was the focus of the labors. There is in this a flexibility which the conception of a "field" did not have in the same way. Depending upon the current state of the work in the area of local concentration, it allows for the missionary to be busy with broader contacts and new field work. With careful balancing of priorities it allows for the development of more than one core group at a time.

To draw a scriptural parallel we may say that this approach follows somewhat the pattern of Paul's preaching in Corinth and working outward from there throughout the whole region of Achaia. It can also take the form of Paul's preaching in the region of Macedonia, which was not limited to one place such as Philippi, but included also preaching and labor in Berea and Thessalonica. Moreover, this approach does not exclude the possibility, particularly where there is much fruit, of concentrating almost exclusively in one place, much like we did in the past, when there is reason to do so, as Paul also did in Ephesus.

In practical terms this means that when there are contacts and work locally at the "base" which must be worked, these labors assume priority and become the concentrated focus of the home missionary. However, when that local work is stable or slow in developing for a time, he is free to pursue also other contacts in an area and field work for the churches. This was not wholly lacking in our earlier approach, but our present one gives this aspect more emphasis. The nature of the home missionary's work can under these circumstances take on the character of being somewhat of a circuit rider.

This approach requires careful and thorough supervision by both the calling church and the Mission Committee to make sure these various activities are balanced according to the needs of the work. It is obviously possible to be busy at many things and yet accomplish nothing well, so that the work becomes fragmented. It is also possible that work develop to the point where an additional home missionary may be considered necessary.

Where there is more than one home missionary, this approach would allow for an additional flexibility in having men based in different regions, east and west, north or south, yet in such a way that there could also be coordinated work in a shared area of labor. It means also, with one or more missionaries, that when there are contacts which could be profitably worked, they are not simply put on hold or left to wither until a "field" is closed and a missionary moved.

This current approach requires on the part of those involved, missionary, calling church, Mission Committee, and the people with whom we work, a somewhat different conception as to the nature of the work being done and as to how it is conducted. It requires the group with whom we work locally or at a distance to take more

responsibility for their own development, since the missionary may not be present every Lord's Day as a pastor would be in a local congregation. It requires in this same connection a greater use of reading sermons, cassette tapes, and video tapes of services. It allows us at the same time as churches to care for more mission needs with fewer men and minimizes or reduces pulling pastors out of their own congregations for pulpit supply on the mission field. Moreover, with careful planning it is possible to do such labor without disrupting catechism classes and Bible study on the mission field. The catechism classes, both in number of classes and size, are usually smaller on the mission field and therefore more flexible as to when they meet during the week than would be the case in a large congregation.

This method of doing mission work requires also a different approach to evaluating our mission work. For one thing, this broader approach to our mission work with varying absences from home base means that some of our mission work will progress more slowly than it might otherwise. We may well be engaged in more than one labor at a time in varying degrees

of development. The question is no longer simply one of whether we have worked a certain number of years in such and such a "field" and "Is there fruit?" There is, properly speaking, no "field" in this former sense to consider or to close. A decision respecting the moving of a missionary's "base" would undoubtedly take into consideration what fruit and development there is and has been locally. But it is more than that. It involves an examination of the number and nature of the missionary's absences from that "base" and their effect locally. It includes also a clear need to move because the press of work elsewhere requires it. It includes too a removal to a new "base" which, in the light of the development and nature of the current work, is best suited to this purpose as a "base." This requires that the demands of the work itself, the press of contacts in the area or region, the potential work involved be such, to some degree, as to compel such a relocation. It means that the new "base" is sufficiently central to form a new starting point to work outward in an area, while also being able to support any other ongoing work.

The criteria for determining a "base" involve questions of geo-

graphical location, population to be worked with in the region, and broader concerns than simply whether there is an interested core group. If we may conceive of the present approach as somewhat along the lines of a circuit rider, an older form of a missionary-at-large, then the criteria for a home "base" take on a very different character than the approach of opening and closing "fields." Much of this depends on the nature of the work we are doing generally, whether we have several groups we are working with, all of which could be a "base," or only a limited number of scattered individuals with maybe one predominate group which would form a viable "base."

As we have only begun in the past few years to implement this somewhat different approach, there are many questions which we have yet to answer as we develop our present approach to mission work.

One of the blessings the Lord has given us as churches at present is that we have much work to do in missions, both foreign and domestic. The field is indeed white for harvest and the laborers few. □

"The Day of Small Things"

Mr. Don Doezema

"Yes! Send us a missionary!"

Those words constituted the headline of a June 1996 "BRF News Alert" which gave the results of a survey conducted to de-

termine interest in "a second missionary from the Protestant Reformed Churches of the USA, in the light of the successful labors of that denomination in Northern Ireland." The Committee of the British Reformed Fellowship reported a decidedly positive reception of the idea among the readers of their journal.

In a recent letter to the BRF

there was this related advice: "As I see it their vigorous defense of the Reformed faith in this apostate age makes the PRC the best churches to be in communion with."

Can you imagine anything more gratifying — to the Mission Committee, to Hudsonville (the calling church), and to the missionary?

Mr. Doezema is secretary of the Domestic Mission Committee.

In a day of televangelism, megachurches, and giant crusades for Christ, the labors of a little denomination through an eighteen member Council and a ten-member Mission Committee, and by a single missionary among a handful of believers, when measured by the standard of men, amounts to nothing. But the Lord has crowned that effort with the organization of a truly Reformed congregation in Northern Ireland, and has led others in the UK to covet the same preaching and teaching for themselves — attracted not by number, not by prestigious connections in the ecclesiastical world, not by hope of financial gain, but only by a love of the truth.

A work of the Lord that is! Profs. Engelsma and Hanks no doubt delivered stirring lectures at the biannual family conferences sponsored by the British Reformed Fellowship in various places in the UK, as has also Rev. Ron Hanks at the half-day conferences held periodically throughout the year. But it isn't eloquence that decides reception of the proclamation of the truth. Nor, for that matter, is it intellectual or spiritual superiority which accounts for the preservation of the truth in the PRC in "this apostate age." A work of God it is, from beginning to end, and one for which we can only be humbly thankful.

Thankful we are especially, as Mission Committee, for the opportunities which we have been given to proclaim the truth among those who find it is no longer sounded forth from the pulpits in churches around them. And we're not thinking only of places in the British Isles. The apostasy lamented in the above letter to the BRF characterizes the churches of our own land as well. We labor, says home missionary Rev. Miersma, "with a remnant, and seeking to call out a remnant, in a post-Christian society." That's the nature of our missionaries' labors, here and abroad.

And it's reflected in numbers.

Numerical growth of the San Luis Valley Mission, where Rev. Miersma is currently concentrating his labors, is slow in coming. And his work in the eastern part of our country which arose out of contacts developed by South Holland involves again a small group of believers. Just a few families. Enough, however, to have warranted our making arrangements for several of our ministers, besides Rev. Miersma, to spend a few days in Pittsburgh, preaching and teaching for a group of families which, in the words of one of our ministers who was there, "loves the truth"; "loves the Protestant Reformed truth"; "has grown in the truth"; shows "commitment to the cause of a PR work in the area ... also by their financial giving"; and is "very willing to hear our advice on any matter." At the end of a six-month trial period, therefore, the Mission Committee decided to extend the supply of preaching (by Rev. Miersma and, again, other of our ministers) for another six months — one Sunday per month.

Meanwhile, there is other work which beckons, as far as our home missionary is concerned. There are contacts with individuals or little groups in North Carolina in the East, and in southwestern Colorado, eastern Washington, Alberta CN, and Texas in the West. All of which has led our home missionary and the Domestic Mission Committee to conclude that there's more work at home than one man can do.

That's even more evident, perhaps, when one considers what "at home" means with respect to the labors of Rev. Miersma. It's a pretty big area. Terms, here, may be a bit confusing. There are two missionaries which report regularly to the "Domestic" Mission Committee. Under the division of labors as it stands in our churches today, Rev. Hanks' "field" is within the domain of domestic missions. He is not, however, a "home" missionary in the same

sense that Rev. Miersma is. Rev. Hanks was called to be our missionary to Northern Ireland, with the understanding that he be located in the Larne/Ballymena area, but with the added responsibility of "pursu(ing) other contacts in the British Isles" (Acts 1990, Art. 46). That's the scope of his work — the British Isles. If correspondence, therefore, would arise from someone in, say, Malta, we would not direct that to Rev. Hanks' attention.

Rev. Miersma was called to labor in the San Luis Valley. But not only there. The idea here is that, "with the missionary not limited to one small area but available to work elsewhere for longer or shorter periods of time, the Mission Committee can best cultivate and develop many contacts in different areas of home missions" (Synod 1990, Art. 15). The scope of Rev. Miersma's responsibility, then, is as broad as "domestic" missions.

That's not just the U.S. ... or the U.S. and Canada. It includes other "foreign" countries as well. The truth is that the distinction between "foreign" and "domestic" missions, in our churches, has never been a matter of simple *geography*. It was based more on the *nature of the work* required. Work among those who in their generations belonged to the covenant would be *different* from work among those in heathen cultures. The former was designated as "domestic missions" and the latter as "foreign." Applying that distinction to a work in Northern Ireland was easy, of course — it would be "domestic missions." In other instances, however, the lines were blurred. Synod 1993 therefore adopted an overture from the Foreign Mission Committee that would assign various regions of the world to the FMC and other regions to the DMC. In an attempt to maintain the essence of the existing distinction between the two domains (i.e., whether or not the

peoples of the various countries belonged in their generations to the covenant), Synod 1993 assigned to the DMC the U.S. and Canada, Australia and New Zealand, and Europe, including Russia. It's in keeping with that division of labors that the DMC recently turned over to Rev. Miersma some correspondence received from a leader of a church in ... Malta.

That's an exception, of course. Almost all of our home missionary's work outside the SanLuis Valley involves contacts in the U.S. and Canada. But the point is that, given the fact that Rev. Miersma is not tied to a particular "field" (see his article in this issue), he is responsible for exploring opportunities as they arise elsewhere — and that "elsewhere" includes a whole lot of territory.

Of possible "open doors" with which we are faced at this time, Rev. Miersma is convinced that the Pittsburgh area holds the most potential. So much do a couple of the families in that small group want the truth as it is proclaimed by the PRC that, if necessary, they have expressed a willingness to move in order to get it for themselves and for their children. But they believe they have a responsibility yet with respect to others in their area. One of them writes, "We don't know the Lord's will in our lives as of yet, but I try to keep in mind that it is His will that is best. He has certainly given us a strong desire for a church here in the Pittsburgh area."

So ... what to do — that is the question, also for us. For the DMC the question is made even more difficult because of the fact that both of our missionaries, in their energetic pursuing of other leads, have concluded that there is a need for more manpower. The work in the SanLuis Valley, while not bearing fruit in significant numerical growth, requires more work on our part. And Rev. Miersma can hardly do justice to the work in the Valley and at the same time pro-

vide the kind of effort in a new field which the developing contacts in Pittsburgh seem to require. Rev. Hanko is missionary pastor of the newly-organized Covenant Protestant Reformed Church in Northern Ireland, and is trying at the same time to develop contacts in other places in the British Isles. And both he and the BRF have concluded that one man cannot do justice to both aspects of that labor.

That is, one man cannot do justice to both tasks when a second location develops beyond the investigative stage. Once it becomes apparent that another area demands more serious attention, we cannot content ourselves with sending letters or tapes, and making periodic visits. That's not serious mission work. The DMC is convinced that both opportunities (working with the BRF in the UK, and preaching the gospel in the Pittsburgh area) deserve serious attention from us.

Are we able to give it that? It's gratifying to us that, at a time when the Lord is opening doors to us in marvelous ways, we also as a denomination have sufficient resources to be able to respond. With respect to manpower, we have but two vacant churches, plus a call for a missionary to Ghana, and we will, D.V., have four men eligible for a call soon after Synod 1997. And with respect to finances, it's clear that, though there are indeed families who struggle to make ends meet, as a denomination we could not declare before the face of God in 1997 that we lack the financial resources to do more in missions than what we are already doing.

The DMC plans therefore to propose to Synod 1997 that we do something in response to both opportunities.

The work in the UK is at this time scattered — that is, there is no concentration of contacts in any one area which could serve as a base of operations (a virtual necessity for any minister with a family). We plan therefore to make a

determined effort to develop the contacts we already have in the UK, with a view to establishing such a base, which, if it materialized, could be sufficient reason to call a second missionary to the UK in 1998.

With respect to the contacts in Pittsburgh, we believe that this work already warrants the calling of a second home missionary. There is in place a group of families with which work can begin. Pittsburgh itself is a large metropolitan area in which to work. And the city is geographically situated such that it can serve as a base for broader work in the east — that is, to follow up on contacts which we already have in Ohio, North Carolina, Virginia, Kentucky, and elsewhere in Pennsylvania.

Sometimes work on denominational committees can be almost a burden — especially for men who have other obligations which press constantly on their time. That's true of the DMC too. But these are exciting times. We are being given much to do, and the means with which to do it.

The work we've done, and our vision for the future, would in a large denomination warrant probably little more than a footnote. The families in the CPRC NI can be counted on the fingers of two hands. And it's only little groups that are scattered throughout the UK. The SLV Mission grew in one year by one family. And the group in Pittsburgh can fit in a large living room. And yet, as we reflect on it all, we see out there a genuine love for the Lord and for His truth, which can only be Spirit-wrought. May the Lord grant that we never need the admonition of Zechariah 4:10 — "For who hath despised the day of small things?" The work is, after all, His. We toil not in vain when, in our faithful use of His resources, He gives the increase. □

Foreign Mission Committee News

Rev. Allen Brummel

Ghana, West Africa

This past year has been a significant year for the Foreign Mission Committee (FMC). We have been busy implementing the decision of Synod 1996 regarding the establishment of a mission field in Accra, Ghana, West Africa. This has involved working closely with the council of Hull Protestant Reformed Church (HPRC), the calling church for this field.

It has been almost 18 years since we last occupied ourselves with calling a missionary to a foreign field. In August of 1979 Doon Protestant Reformed Church called Rev. Arie denHartog, who accepted the call to labor as missionary in Singapore. God blessed that labor, the fruit of it being the establishment of the Evangelical Reformed Churches of Singapore, which currently consist of two congregations, with extensive mission work in Myanmar.

Already in 1979, at the time we called the missionary to Singapore, seeds were being sown through correspondence for a work in Ghana, West Africa. Our fervent prayer is that God will provide a blessing similar to that of Singapore upon the field in Ghana, West Africa by giving us a faithful missionary to labor with His saints.

In accordance with our constitution (VI, B) the FMC presented HPRC with a "list of suitable candidates from which a nomination might be made and a missionary called." Four men have felt moved by God to decline our call: the Revs. Arie denHartog, Wayne

Bekkering, Ron VanOverloop, and Tom Miersma. By the time of this publication another missionary will have been called from the trio of Revs. Ken Koole, Jai Mahtani, and Audred Spriensma.

The FMC and HPRC believe that we must be faithful to our calling as churches to minister to the needs of God's people wherever the Lord leads us, and specifically we believe that we have the opportunity to labor with God's people in Ghana. If it is God's will to begin this work in Ghana, He will in His good pleasure direct us to send the call to the man He wills to labor there. In this faith the calling church continues to make trios and send forth calls. Among those men who have been called, there has been a conviction that we do need to work this field; however, there were various reasons for which they believed God was calling them to remain in their present charges.

In related labors, the FMC worked in conjunction with the consistory of HPRC to draft a letter of calling which contains the financial provisions made by synod, a statement of duties expected in the field of labor, and provisions for vacations or leaves (see the FMC constitution VI, C). The FMC has also obtained a list of willing, qualified volunteers who are currently available. When we obtain a missionary we will set up a schedule for an individual(s) or family to assist the missionary, each for six months or longer at a time. Much legal and practical information concerning our work in Ghana has been obtained in order to answer questions which the ministers who consider our call and the volunteers might raise.

Correspondence with our pre-

vious contacts continues. We were informed this past year that Mr. Gabriel Anyigba, a long-time contact, successfully passed his examinations and was ordained as a minister in the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ghana. Correspondence with Rev. Banahene has led to his offer to obtain some song books in the Twi and English languages for us. We hope to find several versifications of the Psalms in these hymnals so that we can begin to put together some Ewe, Twi, and English Psalms for use in our worship services in Ghana.

The Philippines

Steady correspondence has continued with a growing number of Filipino pastors. Contacts include Allan Bautista and Pastors Val Tanierla, Romegio Lapiz, Ronald Jacutin, Leonardo Miguel, Bowie Simbajon, Albert Montero, Ebenezer Nombre, and Baltzar Niangar. Many of the pastors are from Baptist backgrounds and are coming to know and appreciate the Reformed truths of predestination and the covenant. Pamphlets, books, and instruction are being given to these men through correspondence. Although some appeals are made for physical needs, overall these men desire solid biblical instruction as well as our presence.

Rev. and Mrs. Kortering offered to stop by the Philippines on their way back from Singapore to the United States for furlough. Rev. Kortering desired to visit with some of the men in order to see if they would be qualified and able to be sponsored to study in Singapore at the Evangelical Reformed Bible School. Due to the interest of the Foreign Mission

Rev. Brummel is pastor of the Protestant Reformed Church in Edgerton, Minnesota and secretary of the Foreign Mission Committee.

Committee in this field, we approved their offer, and asked them to visit three of our main contacts: Pastor Val Tanierla, Pastor Romegio Lapiz, and Elder Ronald Jacutin, in order to help the FMC make determinations as to the possibility of future work. Rev. and Mrs. Kortering plan to visit in Davao City with Elder Jacutin and his family and co-workers for two days; next they intend to visit in Cayagan de Oro City with Pastor Lapiz and his family for about three days; and finally they will travel to the Bicol area to visit with Pastor Tanierla and family and to preach in Pastor Tanierla's congregation on Sunday. Speaking engagements are being planned by the local pastors in each of the locations. The pastors in the Philippines are overjoyed at this opportunity to meet one of our ministers, and we are eagerly anticipating the report of Rev. Kortering.

The trip is being planned for April 28 through May 5.

New Fields

We would like to encourage evangelism committees, local congregations, and individuals who have ongoing contacts in a certain country to contact the FMC. We would very much like to work with you in helping to evaluate the contacts and establishing a more permanent work if God wills. We are grateful for the evangelism committees who are presently working with us.

Due to the length of time necessary to develop foreign fields, the FMC is constantly trying to cultivate contacts in other areas and countries. We find that there are many in the world who desire the spiritual help of our churches. We have learned from past experience how difficult it is to maintain and cultivate contact without the pos-

sibility of visiting the saints. For the past couple of years no funds have been allocated to the FMC for the investigation of new fields. This has been due in part to synodical budget constraints. The FMC desires that this year's synod will designate some funds for this important aspect of our work.

We covet the prayers of our people that the Lord of His church may be pleased to direct us to the man of His choosing to labor in Ghana. We also pray that the Lord of the church will continue to provide laborers for the work of foreign missions. It is our desire that He might raise up men in our churches who have a heart for and are willing to sacrifice their lives for this important work. The fields are ripe and ready for harvest. Where are the laborers? May God give us wisdom and grace to labor rightly and to determine His will for our churches. □

Guest Article

Rev. John Pedersen

Confessions of a Harsh, Intolerant, Judgmental One

For many in the tolerant, cultured world of evangelical religion, there is no scum more vile than a harsh, judgmental, pontificating buffoon who goes about judging whether others are "true Christians."

Such a one is seen as patently bad, and leaves a sour taste and a sick stomach in his preachy wake, cutting a smelly swath through

people who have learned not to put God in the kind of box that can be shaken, opened, and checked.

The question is, why are such lumps a part of the landscape? What keeps them going? Since no one likes them and they have the cuddliness of a sore porcupine, who feeds them?

As I am such a "judgmental" one, so called by more gentle, tolerant "Christians" than I can count ("See — he puts 'Christians' in quotation marks!"), I would like to venture an answer, warning the reader first to make sure he or she is sitting down, with some smelling salts handy.

What keeps me going, harsh,

intolerant pill that I am, is this: I am afraid of being judgmental — toward God.

Faced with the prospect of being judgmental toward a man's words and being judgmental toward the Word of God, I choose the former, and run from the latter, although I would have many, many more friends if I did not do this.

Perhaps I would even have you, dear reader, for a friend. As it is, your initial reaction to the title of this essay may have been to take it and read it so as to recognize better and avoid people like me, as if we were not easy enough to spot already. But you just can't be

The Rev. John Pedersen is a minister of the gospel in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. He lives in Gettysburg, PA. This copyrighted article is printed here by permission.

too careful when it comes to knowing the *modus operandi* of a religious psychopath, so you read on.

Let me explain. Suppose a clean living, sincere, Bible reading, church going, choir singing, enthusiastic person indicated he was a Christian, having believed and “accepted Jesus Christ as my personal Savior.”

Now let us further suppose that this Scripture quoting, “Amen!” shouting, fervent praying individual also indicated that he was not concerned with “who chose whom” where salvation is concerned, so long as one sincerely believes “the Bible, the blood, and the blessed hope.”

Let us also say this person professed to believe in “free will,” and said that biblical teaching of predestination and election belonged to the *non-essential* doctrines of Scripture that theologians have debated for centuries, indicating he has no desire to “quibble about the finer points,” as there are souls to be won for Christ, and “no one ever did great things for God by trying to see how many angels could dance on the head of a pin.”

Most people would not question whether such a person was a true Christian, on his way to heaven, and very properly concerned about winning souls at that, even if he could use a book or two to help him get polished up on the deeper things.

They would not hesitate to *judge* that such a person knew God’s grace, and while possessed of a practical disposition that made him perhaps a bit shallow on fodder for *deep theological discussion*, such a person was most certainly a genuine, biblical saint.

But not I. I, knit-picky, gnat-straining, Procrustean pithecanthropine that I am, would be more inclined to think that such a person is *not* a true biblical Christian.

Bet you knew I would say that.

And so I would attract, properly, you might say, the charge that I am being “judgmental, harsh, and

overly critical” toward such persons.

May I explain myself?

No one is looking. Go ahead. Read on.

The reason is simple. The Bible teaches that salvation and forgiveness come from God. As the prophet Jonah cried from the belly of the great fish, “Salvation is of the LORD!” (Jonah 2:9).

It further says that this is because people, in and of themselves, cannot possibly be the reason for their salvation. Without God’s work of salvation all people are hopelessly dead in their sins (Ezek. 37:1ff., Eph. 2:1ff.).

So, if I believe I am a sinner in the way the Bible talks about sin, I can never account for my salvation from sin by pointing a finger to myself as the ultimate reason for it.

The “free will” understanding of salvation teaches that man is the ultimate reason for his forgiveness. According to the “free will” understanding of Christianity, God has done all that is necessary for everyone who ever lived to be saved. God loves everybody, and Jesus has died for everybody, according to the “free will” version. In addition, the “free will” understanding of salvation acknowledges that not all will be saved. Why, then, are some saved, and others not?

Because some choose Jesus Christ, and others refuse Him. In other words, because of something we do. Contrast this with the following statement from the Bible:

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith — and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God — not by works, so that no one can boast” (Eph. 2:8).

No one who believes that he is a Christian because of something that came from him is a Christian in the biblical sense. He may acknowledge the Bible to be true. He may say that he sincerely believes. If he grounds his faith in himself, he denies sin the way the Bible

speaks of sin — as the breaking of God’s perfect law, rendering us spiritually dead and justly under the sentence of God’s eternal wrath — and so denies grace and the forgiveness of sin in the way the Bible speaks about forgiveness as wholly a work of God in which He raises spiritually dead, helpless sinners to life.

Allow me to give you some examples of viewpoints of salvation that ground salvation in something we do, and actually deny sin in the way the Bible speaks of sin, thus believing that man is the ultimate source of his salvation. Since you have read this far, what do you have to lose but a little more time?

1. The viewpoint that teaches that man is not totally depraved in his sin and unable to save himself. This viewpoint teaches that there is still some good in man, and some versions of this viewpoint speak of this goodness as the divine gift of “prevenient grace.” (Prevenient grace means grace that is given in a non-discriminating way to all people, enabling all to choose freely between good and evil, and thereby allowing them to exercise free will in the choosing or rejecting of Christ.)

Since man is not totally depraved, this view reasons, he can still be meaningfully responsible for his rejection of Christ should he do so, because he has the God-given ability to choose Christ and be saved. In other words, the ultimate source of salvation lies in man, not God, because if it were not for man choosing God by his own free will, God could do nothing. Like the famous picture of Christ in the Garden knocking on the door — He cannot come into your life unless you open the door, because the handle to the door is on the inside. Contrast this with the following statement from the Bible:

As it is written: There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one

who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one (Rom. 3:10-12).

2. The viewpoint that teaches that election in the Bible is conditional upon the foreseen faith of the one elected. In other words, this viewpoint teaches that God looks ahead in time to find out who will choose Him. Then, on the basis of that foreseen choice, God determines to choose man. Thus, the ultimate choice is man's, and God's choice of man depends on something good in man, i.e., his desire to choose God. So this viewpoint teaches that some work of man is responsible for God's election of man, and man is the ultimate source of salvation, not God. The Bible, however, teaches something entirely different:

He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy (Tit. 3:5).

3. The viewpoint that teaches that Christ died for everybody who ever lived, and that He paid the price for the sins of all men in the statistical universal, as opposed to the categorical universal, sense. This viewpoint teaches that when Jesus died on the cross, He did not actually save a single person. Rather He made salvation a possibility for everybody who ever lived, providing all men with the chance to make their salvation real by accepting it through an act of their own free will, making the death of Christ ineffective, null, and void without their "acceptance," and thus teaching that salvation depends on something in man, not God. By contrast, consider the following:

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but

to save the world through him (John 3:16, 17).

4. The viewpoint that teaches that God's grace of salvation can be resisted, that man can refuse the grace of God that brings life to dead sinners. This viewpoint denies the teaching of the Bible that man is unable to "cooperate" with his own rescue, and the teaching of the Bible that people are really spiritually dead apart from this grace.

If a sinner can resist the grace of God that brings salvation and frustrate God's purpose for him, his will to resist is more powerful than God's will to save, making him more powerful than God at the most crucial point of salvation. This viewpoint teaches that man's non-resisting "cooperation" with grace is the practical, real reason why a person experiences grace. So this viewpoint teaches that salvation depends on something in man, not God. Consider the opposite point made by Jesus:

All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away. For I have come down from heaven not to do my will, but to do the will of him who sent me. And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all that he has given me, but raise them up at the last day.... No one can come to me unless the Father who has sent me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day (John 6:37-39, 44).

5. The viewpoint that teaches that man can fall away from true faith and be lost, after having truly been saved. According to this understanding, if man chooses not to continue to believe, the condition of his salvation is nullified, and he becomes a non-Christian. This view assumes that man is kept in salvation by a choice and a faith that comes from man. God's faithfulness can be nullified by man's refusal to believe, and God's salvation can be lost by man's deci-

sion to reject it. This view teaches that God cannot keep a person in the estate of salvation, of the Christian life, without man's ongoing "permission" to allow Him to do such, thus revealing the conviction that salvation depends on something in man, not God. The Bible, by contrast, says:

They went out from us, but they did not really belong to us. For if they had belonged to us, they would no doubt have remained with us; but their going showed that none of them belonged to us (1 John 2:19).

Dear reader, let me ask you: Is it being judgmental to hold from saying that persons with any of the viewpoints above, which are the opposite of the Bible, are true Christians?

Consider for a moment what it means to judge that such people *are* true Christians. It is a judgment on God. Let me explain.

All language, all speech, is judgmental. Meaning depends on discrimination, and discrimination implies judgment. For example, to convey a certain meaning with my words, like the words of this essay, I have to choose certain words and leave other words out. I must separate other meanings from the meaning I want to communicate, or else my communication is not communication at all, but mere nonsense.

If I say, "The sky is blue," I make a positive statement which implies a negative distinction, namely, that the sky is not black, or purple, or grey. It is a judgment about the "blueness" of the sky. If all "color" were blue, the word "blue" would mean nothing. It would be nonsense.

When a person claims to be a Christian, and he supports his claim with the explanation that his faith depends on his own free will, or that his relationship to God depends on the fact that God saw that he would believe in Him and therefore chose Him because of some-

thing in him, he is making a judgment about the meaning that he conveys. He is making *distinctions* so that it is more or less clear to him and his hearers that he is the source and the reason for the grace and the god that he confesses.

If I accept such a confession, which makes such distinctions, on its "face value," I allow that it is true. I endorse it as proper. I *judge* it is acceptable. If I endorse a confession indicating agreement with any of the viewpoints listed above, I may have qualified agreement (an example of "qualified" agreement is, "I may not say it in just the way you do, but I think you are correct, and I accept what you are saying as true"), but I am nevertheless communicating *agreement*. I am joining the person in the positive judgment that he is confessing the true, Christian faith.

I am therefore saying that the issue of whether he thinks that he is the reason for his faith, and his own moral disposition is the reason for God's interest *does not matter* where my "endorsement" of his confession is concerned. These things are *irrelevant* to the point.

But what if God's Word says that giving God all the glory, and taking no credit for myself, and depending entirely on the work of God in Christ, and depending not at all in any work or choice or will on me, *is* the point where true faith is concerned?

Then my positive endorsement of a confession that qualifies "grace" in terms of human faith, "free will," or sincerity is a judgment on the Word of God, *and thus is a judgment on God Himself!*

By saying "yes" to a confession that qualifies grace, *I am making a judgment* about the Bible's insistence that grace cannot be qualified with human work and still be grace, as, for example, in Romans 11:5, 6:

So too, at the present time there is a remnant chosen by grace. And if by grace, then it is no

longer by works; if it were, grace would no longer be grace.

I am saying that such an insistence, found in the Bible, is overly harsh and unyielding, overly straight and narrow, overly one-sided and "black and white."

So, I am being judgmental about God, and judgmental toward God. I am saying that I think that God should "lighten up" with His grace, and not be so "bent out of shape" over interpreting and applying His grace, as though it were His alone to do with as He wished, and we could not make a significant contribution to it by helping it along in making its edges a little softer and its distinguishing features a little more fuzzy so as to accommodate it to a greater number of people who did not all see it just the same way.

In tolerating what is not allowed in the confession of God's Word, I am showing intolerance toward God, and His Word. I am passing judgment on God, and showing the ultimate in prideful self-righteousness.

I would rather show intolerance toward a confession of salvation that qualified grace and added human work to grace, than show intolerance toward the teaching of God's Word, which allows for no such addition of human work.

Therefore, I conclude that intolerance toward a sinful confession is a virtue. It is right to be intolerant toward a confession of faith that does not really confess true faith at all, but rather confesses the proud assumption that I am the reason for my own salvation. On the other hand, intolerance toward the confession of God's Word is a great evil, and is from the devil.

So, why are people like me seen as so onerous, so mean?

Why are people like me, who are afraid to say anything against God's grace, seen as the lowest scum of the earth, as people who use the Bible as a meat cleaver?

The reason is this: I, and others like me who confess God's grace, am seen as a mean, judgmental person *by those who show a hatred for God's grace by tolerating what is not grace.*

How could I, and people like me, be seen any other way? Those who love God's grace, and the truth of it, are always hated and vilified by those who do not.

Those who hate God's grace see God's discrimination in the way He gives grace to some and not to others as an expression of meanness towards those who are excluded from it rather than an expression of mercy toward those it includes in the salvation of God.

Are you one of them?

What is *your* fear?

Are you afraid to offend men, or are you afraid to offend God?

Do you desire to please men, or do you live for the pleasure of God?

Would you rather be accused of being judgmental of men than be exposed as judgmental of God?

Is God's love expressed in tolerance of sin, or is God's love expressed in intolerant hatred of sin?

On the cross, God displayed His supreme intolerance and judgmental nature — toward sin. To secure acceptance and forgiveness for those whom He chose to save from sin, God did not tolerate sin. Rather, He showed intolerant hatred for sin by pouring out His righteous anger on the One who was "made sin for us, so that we might become the righteousness of God in him" (II Cor. 5:21).

God is no less intolerant of sin now than He was then. When we cite the cross as the reason why we are tolerant of sin, we deny the cross and show ourselves to be enemies of the cross. Our denial is an affirming denial, the worst denial of all. And so our judgment will be the worst judgment of all.

Does your God *tolerate* sin, and sinful confessions, because of Jesus "covering" that sin, and those sinful confessions?

Or does your God *hate* sin, and sinful confessions, because of Jesus resolving that sin, and those sinful confessions, by His own precious blood, so that those who hold on to Jesus would turn away from and hate sin, and not tolerate and excuse sin?

Does your God allow you to see the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ as a covering, a cloak, for immorality, even the immorality of a confession of faith which is really a confession of ultimate pride, confessing one's self as the reason for his own salvation?

Then we know why you see me as so harsh, and so distasteful.

You and I have a different God.

No wonder you fancy me to be so judgmental, so harsh, so intolerant! No wonder you see me as so *picky* about things that don't matter, about minor points!

Because to you, these points about "who chooses whom" and "election and predestination" and "free will" really do *not* matter! They really *are* minor points!

They do not matter to you, and they are minor points for you, because you have made a *judgment* that they do not matter! You have made a judgment about God, for whom these "points," as they speak of sinful pride and self-reliance, matter enough to demand the

blood of His Son to secure the resolution of these "points" in the lives of His people. I remind you that your *judgment* is serious, proud, and self-righteous.

If there is one thing that darkness hates, it is light. If there is one thing that self-righteousness hates, it is the exposure of such self-righteousness as evil by comparison to the perfect holiness of God. If there is one thing that a tolerant, "non-judgmental" person hates, it is the reminder that his "tolerance" toward the "sinfully flawed" confessions of men (such as those listed above) is really an expression of intolerant hatred toward the righteous confession of God's Word, his love for the world is hatred for God, his charity toward the lie is really love for the lie and hatred of the truth and of the one who tells the truth.

That is why the greatest slander, and the highest disdain, is reserved not for ax-murderers, wife-beaters, genocidal maniacs, or child molesters. The most refined expressions of contempt are reserved for the "judgmental ones," who fear slighting God's grace and the cross of His dear Son Jesus, and, by this slighting, to pass judgment on God.

If you, my friend, have this

slighting disdain, I urge you to see it for what it is and change your mind about what it is you tolerate, and the God you think tolerates *you* in your tolerance. I urge you to be intolerant about your tolerance of sincere religious affirmations of grace which are nothing more than expressions of pride. Your pride.

I urge you to look to the true Christ, whose intolerance of sin, and sacrifice for sin, is the reason why all who renounce their tolerance of sin find refuge, comfort, and righteousness, in Him.

And I urge you to join me, and suffer reproach with me, as one who would rather express a negative judgment about a sinful confession than about the God who gives true confessions at the price of His own blood. Be willing, my friend, that men should tag you as a mean-spirited, harsh, judgmental person rather than show disrespect for the sacrifice of Jesus, whereby He was exposed to harsh, intolerant, consuming judgment for the sins of His people.

Give up your false god, the god who tolerates and "grades" grace on a curve delimited by the religious sincerity and good intentions of men.

And join me as one of the hated, intolerant ones, by God's grace. □

News From Our Churches

Mr. Benjamin Wigger

Evangelism Activities

The Evangelism Committee of the Randolph, WI PRC recently sponsored their church's annual Spring Lecture. This year Rev. R. Cammenga, pastor of the Southwest PRC in Grandville, MI, was the guest speaker. His speech, entitled "Angels Unawares: What the Bible Teaches About Angels," was given on April 17 in Randolph's sanctuary.

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

The Evangelism Committee of the Grandville, MI PRC planned a special service on Easter Sunday morning to promote their church in the Grandville area. They encouraged their congregation to invite family, friends, and acquaintances to join them in worship. Rev. A. Spriensma, pastor at Grandville, preached from Matthew 28:6-8, under the theme "Go and Tell."

Many of you no doubt know about the nearly full-time volunteer work Mr. Edward Stouwie has done as part of the Evangelism Committee of our South Holland,

IL PRC. You may also be interested to know that he decided to retire from that post on March 1 of this year. He felt that at his age (77) he should cease his involvement on the committee so that, should ill health or anything else become a factor, he wouldn't have to leave the work with projects half done and the committee not aware of where he was in processing them.

Those of you who are "new-comers" to our denomination may have obtained much of our PR literature through the South Holland church, always accompanied by a

gracious, handwritten note from Mr. Stouwie. The long-term results of his labors will not be known until the full heavenly roll call. Perhaps the fact that Mr. Stouwie himself changed his denominational affiliation to the PRC in the 1970s had a lot to do with his zeal in letting others know what a precious heritage we have.

Congregational Activities

The Adult Bible Study of the Grandville, MI PRC invited their entire congregation to join them at their March 25th meeting to hear Prof. D. Engelsma, professor in our Seminary, speak to them on "The Tolerance of Polygamy in the Old Testament."

The Adult Bible Study of the Peace PRC in Lynwood, IL sponsored a combined Bible study for their members, along with the Bible Studies of the Bethel PRC in Itasca, IL and the South Holland, IL PRC. Bible discussion was on the subject of "Communication in Marriage and the Family."

The Council of the Bethel PRC recently reported that they are now within \$70,000 of the goal needed before construction can begin on their new church home. When they are within \$20,000 of this goal, they plan to hire an architect for detailed drawings, and to begin construction when they are within

\$10,000 of the total funds needed. They wait patiently on the Lord to provide them their needs according to His will.

The Choir of the Lynden, WA PRC gave their Spring Concert on Sunday evening, March 23. They encouraged their congregation to join with them for an evening of song as they commemorated the death and resurrection of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. The audience was also invited to participate in several of the songs.

This year's Ladies' Spring League meeting was hosted by the Edgerton, MN PRC. Rev. A. Brummel, pastor at Edgerton, spoke on Titus 2:3-5, with a theme of "The Official Work of Women in the Church of Jesus Christ."

The Adult Societies of the Grandville, MI PRC acted as hosts for this year's combined Mr. and Mrs., Adult, and Junior Societies' League Mass Meeting. Prof. R. Dykstra, professor in our Seminary, spoke on the subject, "The Great Value of PR Bible Societies."

School Activities

Rev. R. VanOverloop, pastor of the Georgetown PRC in Hudsonville, MI, spoke in late March for Heritage Christian School's PTA Meeting. He considered the theme, "Current Threats to Raising God's Children."

The Hope School Foundation of the Hope PR Christian School in Grand Rapids, MI recently sponsored an evening of ice-skating and organized hockey at Belknap Ice Arena in Grand Rapids.

Minister Activities

Rev. Doug Kuiper, pastor of the Byron Center, MI PRC, and Teresa Brands were united in marriage on April 10 in our Loveland, CO PRC. We take this opportunity to wish them the Lord's richest blessing in their marriage as they begin their life together and build a Christ-centered home.

The Hope PRC in Walker, MI has extended a call to Rev. C. Haak, presently pastor of the Bethel PRC in Itasca, IL.

The South Holland, IL PRC also extended a call to Rev. C. Haak to serve as their pastor.

Since Rev. T. Miersma, our churches' home missionary in Alamosa, CO, declined the call to serve as missionary to Ghana, the Hull, IA PRC has made a new trio consisting of the Revs. K. Koole, J. Mahtani, and A. Spriensma.

Food For Thought

"I have had many things in my hands, and I have lost them all. But whatever I have been able to place in God's I still possess."

— Martin Luther □

ANNOUNCEMENTS

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On May 23, 1997, our parents and grandparents,

MR. and MRS. ANTHONY DE YOUNG, will celebrate, D.V., their 50th wedding anniversary. We thank the Lord for the years He has given them together and for the blessing they have been to us. May the Lord continue to bless them in their life together.

* Jozsef and Anna Mae Postma

Phillip, David, Daniel, Steven

* Rev. Meindert and Beverly Joostens

Dan and Faith Bult,

Timothy, Steven, Joy, Paul

South Holland, Illinois

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Young People's Society of South Holland PRC experienced the loss of one of their members and wish to express their sincere Christian sympathy to his family, Rich and Julie Worries, along with their son Joel, in the death of their son and brother,

MICHAEL WORRIES.

May they find comfort in the words of Job 1:21: "Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD."

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The council and congregation of the Southwest PRC of Grandville, MI wishes to express its heartfelt sympathy to our fellow members Mr. and Mrs. James Schipper and Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth Schipper in the passing to glory of their beloved mother,

MRS. HELEN SCHIPPER,

who had just celebrated her 89th birthday. Mrs. Schipper lived many years in PR parsonages as the faithful helpmeet of the late Rev. Marinus Schipper. May the family be comforted with the apostle's words in Revelation 14:13, "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them."

Rev. Ron Cammenga, Pres.

Jay Boone, Vice-pres.

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On May 31, 1997, D.V., our parents,
MR. and MRS. EGBERT GRITTERS,
will celebrate their 40th wedding anniversary. We
congratulate them and mark this milestone with
thanksgiving to God that we can share in His bless-
ings as they are experienced in faithful parents.

"And I will establish my covenant with thee,
and thou shalt know that I am the Lord" (Ezekiel
16:62).

- * Brian and Denise Gritters
- * Rick and Roxanne Terpstra
- * Jim and Brenda Regnerus
- * Loren and Nancy Gritters
- * Marvin and Marcia Gritters
- * Rhonda Gritters and Greg Holstege
- * David and Susan King
- * Joel and Valerie Minderhoud
- * Sharla Gritters

21 grandchildren

Hull, Iowa

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Martha Society of the Hull Protestant Re-
formed Church express their sympathy to Mrs. Judy
Brummel in the loss of her father,

MR. THOMAS VANDEN BOSCH.

May she and her family find comfort in these
words from Job 19:25: "For I know that my re-
deemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter
day upon the earth."

Rev. Richard Moore, Pres.
Mrs. Jannet Moore, Sec'y.

NOTICE!!

The Board of Covenant Christian High School,
on behalf of the Society it represents, extends its
thanks and congratulations to Miss Agatha Lubbers,
teacher and administrator, on 45 years of faithful
service directed at the molding, instructing, and di-
recting of our covenant children in the ways of our
Sovereign Lord.

In response to Miss Lubbers' desire to retire
from active involvement in teaching and adminis-
trating at the close of this school year, a day of
recognition is being planned, D.V., May 30, which
will include among other activities, an open house
at the high school starting at 4:00 which will culmi-
nate with a special program beginning at 7:00.

Our prayer for Miss Lubbers as she concludes
her labors at the high school is found in Ruth 2:12:
"The Lord recompense thy work, and a full reward
be given thee of the Lord God of Israel, under whose
wings thou art come to trust."

Walker, Michigan

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On June 2, 1997 our parents,
MR. and MRS. CORNELIUS JONKER,
observe their 50th wedding anniversary, D.V.

We, their children, grandchildren, and great-
grandchildren, are thankful to God for the years He
has given them together. We are also thankful to
our heavenly Father for giving us God-fearing par-
ents who brought us up in the fear of His holy name.
It is our prayer that the Lord will continue to bless
them and keep them in His care.

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

- * Don and Jacque Jonker
- * Phil and Linda Jonker
- * John and Darlene Graeser
- * Eric and Marilyn Ophoff
- * Bernie and Laurie Kamps
- * Eugene and Sharon Kamps

23 grandchildren

2 great-grandchildren

Grand Rapids, Michigan

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Adult Bible Society of South Holland Prot-
estant Reformed Church wish to express their heart-
felt Christian sympathy to our members Rich and
Julie Worries, along with their son Joel, in the death
of their son and brother,

MICHAEL WORRIES.

May they find comfort in the beautiful words of
Philippians 1:21: "For me to live is Christ, and to
die is gain."

CALL TO SYNOD!!

Synod 1996 appointed Grandville Protestant
Reformed Church, Grandville, MI the calling church
for the 1997 Synod.

The Consistory hereby notifies our churches
that the 1997 Synod of the Protestant Reformed
Churches in America will convene, the Lord willing,
on Tuesday, June 10, 1997 at 9:00 A.M. in the
Grandville Protestant Reformed Church, Grandville,
Michigan.

The Pre-Synodical Service will be held on
Monday evening, June 9, at 7:30 P.M. Rev. James
Slopsema, president of the 1996 Synod, will preach
the sermon. Synodical delegates are requested to
meet with the Consistory before the service.

Delegates in need of lodging should contact
Mr. Cornelius Jonker, 4639 Ju-Le-On Dr. S.W.,
Grand Rapids, MI. Phone: (616) 453-1247.

Consistory of
Grandville PR Church
Mr. Cornelius Jonker, Clerk.

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

The children of
CHARLES and DOROTHEA KALSBECK
thank God that in His great providence He has given
our parents 30 years of marriage this May 19, 1997.
God has seen fit to use their faithful labors as cov-
enant parents in such a way that another genera-
tion may come to know and love the rich Reformed
truths found in Scripture "that they might set their
hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but
keep his commandments" (Psalm 78:7).

- * Harlan and Lenora Hoekstra
Charles, Emma, and Tess
- * Jeffrey and Mary Kalsbeek
Michael, David, and Bethany
- * Becky Kalsbeek
- * John Kalsbeek
- * Dort Kalsbeek
- * Anne Kalsbeek

Grand Rapids, Michigan

TEACHER NEEDED

Hope Christian School (Redlands) is seeking
a teacher for the 1997-1998 school year. The open-
ing is for the middle grades (3-5), but grade assign-
ments are negotiable. Interested persons please
call the school at (909) 793-4584, Mr. Doug Pastoor
at (909) 792-9392, or Mr. Glenn Feenstra at (909)
794-5859.

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On May 27, 1997, our dear parents and grand-
parents,

CHARLES and LOIS KREGEL,

will celebrate their fiftieth wedding anniversary. We
are grateful that our covenant God has preserved
them for each other and for us. We know He will
continue to be with them in the future as He has in
the past. Their instruction and godly walk is a con-
tinuing blessing to us.

Psalm 100:5, "For the LORD is good; his mercy
is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all genera-
tions."

- * Kenneth and Mary Velthouse
Mike and Kathy, Kris, Matt, Marc
- * Joel and Ellen Bruinooge
Heather, Derek, Kyle
- * Charles Kregel, Jr.
- * David and Mary Kregel
Bradley (in glory), Lisa, Brent, Jason,
Ryan, Emily
- * Andrew and Laura Nickle
Drew

Byron Center, Michigan

There will be an Open House Saturday, May
31, 1997, from 2-4 P.M. at the home of David and
Mary Kregel.