



The Standard Bearer

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

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PRC Synod 1999

held at
First Protestant Reformed Church
Holland, Michigan

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Paul's Concern for His Kinsmen

In the first five verses of Romans 9, Paul speaks of his interest in and concern about his kinsmen according to the flesh.

The rest of Romans 9 reveals that the Word of God has its proper effect. It is the chapter regularly quoted to prove the doctrine of predestination, including both election and reprobation. This doctrine the church has held ever dear and has maintained faithfully. We, with the church of God throughout the ages, insist that God has chosen a people in Jesus Christ our Lord from before the foundation of the earth. There are many, however, who deny this doctrine; who ignore this chapter or distort it; or claim that it has no relevancy for today. The Christian, on the contrary, finds in this chapter comfort, encouragement, and hope.

Many claim that those who maintain the doctrine of predestination (election and reprobation) cannot preach the gospel properly. The doctrine does not allow, it is

claimed, for faithful mission work. Those who teach predestination are not concerned about lost souls. They are not interested in the gathering of the church. The argument, however, is false. The church of Jesus Christ that holds to the doctrines of God's Word must be interested in and concerned about the salvation of God's people. We, synod of 1999 of the Protestant Reformed Churches, must likewise show our concern for the salvation of sinners in our decisions through the coming week.

Two things we must remember as synod and as churches. We may never forsake the doctrines of the Word of God, and surely not the doctrine of predestination, which the late Herman Hoeksema called "the heart of the gospel." And further, that doctrine of predestination ought not to leave us cold and uninterested with respect to the preaching of the gospel to sinners.

There are several matters coming up at our synod that should impress upon us the importance of the Word proclaimed. We must treat matters of the seminary, as we do annually. We must examine a graduate of that seminary and, the Lord willing, declare him to be a candidate for the ministry of the

Word. That demonstrates interest not only in the doctrines of God's Word, but also in the proclamation of those doctrines faithfully in the church.

We must decide many mission matters this year—more than in many former years. We have on the mission fields four men working in areas outside of our churches — and a fifth soon to begin his labors. One is in Singapore, laboring with sister churches there and, with them, in neighboring countries. He must preach the Word to those who are unbelievers and instruct those who would grow in their knowledge of the Word of God. We have a missionary in Northern Ireland. He proclaims the Word there, not only in a local congregation, but also in other places throughout the British Isles. He must remind his hearers of the departure from the truth that characterizes so many within the churches there, and call them to return to the old paths. We also have two men laboring in our own land, in Pittsburgh and in Spokane and neighboring areas. And, the Lord willing, Rev. Moore will soon leave, with his wife, for Ghana. There he begins a work that seems almost impossible to fulfill. All these are matters of missions —

Rev. VanBaren is pastor of the Protestant Reformed Church of Loveland, Colorado. The above article is the text of the Pre-synodical Sermon preached on June 7, 1999.

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EDITORIAL OFFICE
Prof. David J. Engelsma
4949 Ivanrest
Grandville, MI 49418
(e-mail: engelsma@prca.org)

BUSINESS OFFICE
The Standard Bearer
Don Doezeema
P.O. Box 603
Grandville, MI
49468-0603
PH: (616) 531-1490
(616) 538-1778
FAX: (616) 531-3033
(e-mail: doezeema@prca.org)

CHURCH NEWS EDITOR
Mr. Ben Wigger
6597 40th Ave.
Hudsonville, MI 49426
(e-mail: benwig@juno.com)

NEW ZEALAND OFFICE
The Standard Bearer
c/o B. VanHerk
66 Fraser St.
Wainuiomata, New Zealand

UNITED KINGDOM OFFICE
c/o Mr. Sean Courtney
78 Millfield, Grove Rd.
Ballymena, Co. Antrim
BT43 6PD Northern Ireland

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the proclamation of the Word of God. All require our prayers, our support, and our encouragement. We must show our concern not only for "kinsmen according to the flesh," but for the lost from among the nations of the world.

The word that the apostle speaks in Romans 9 is therefore certainly a word that must influence and affect us as synod. "I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, that I have a great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh: who are Israelites." That great apostle Paul, who so powerfully expounded the glory and truth of predestination, was not hindered in the proclamation of the Word because of it. On the contrary, his heart was moved by the concern for the salvation of sinners to whom God would have His Word to go. And he was concerned especially about his brethren, the Israelites, who had forsaken that Word and had crucified the Lord of glory.

So this evening I would like to call your attention to Paul's concern for his kinsmen.

The apostle Paul is speaking here of Israelites. He does so in connection with the context, the preceding verses, in which he declares that there is nothing that can separate us from the love of God which is in Jesus Christ our Lord. The objection could, perhaps, be raised: What about those Jews who, though they called themselves children of Abraham and sons of God, had crucified the Christ?

The apostle in our text speaks of the glories of Israel. And he, as it were, piles up testimonies upon testimonies of these glories so that all who heard it could agree: Israel had a beautiful place in the purpose and plan of God. They were of the adoption. Sons of God they

were called. Of all of the nations of the earth, God had chosen one nation, the seed of Abraham. He had continued His covenant in the line of their generations. The Israelites had the glory, a reference, no doubt, to the tabernacle and later the temple. There was the ark of God's covenant. There was the law placed within the ark, but covered with the mercy seat upon which the blood of atonement must be sprinkled annually. They had the *Shekinah*, that cloud of glory that descended on the tabernacle when it was first erected, and later on the temple of Solomon. The visible evidence of the glory of God was right there in their midst. Israel had all of that.

They had the covenants (plural — not because there are many covenants, as some would teach, but because the covenant over the ages was revealed increasingly in all of its splendor and glory — first to Adam, then to Noah, to Abraham, later to Israel and through the prophets), so that God, gradually as it were, portrayed the wonders of His relationship with His people in Jesus Christ our Lord. That covenant is so filled with the riches and glory of God's work that it can hardly be expressed adequately in the singular. Israel had the covenants.

They had the giving of the law. God first gave that law as ten commandments at Mount Sinai. The ten commandments were spoken by Him from the Mount, so that Israel, hearing them, trembled. He then wrote them in tables of stone, so that Israel could have that law placed in the ark of the covenant. It reminded them: Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, soul, mind, and strength, and thy neighbor as thyself. That law had guided them as a nation. That law guided them in their family life. That law guided them in their worship.

Israel had all of that, in distinction from the many nations around them that dwelt in ignorance.

Israel had, too, the service or worship of God. They had the sacrifices of various sorts, but especially the burnt offering and the sin offering. These were presented daily before God. The priests would come to offer these in the sight of all Israel. Though it be in type and shadow, Israel beheld the wonder and the glory of the cross. They had also their feast days in which they commemorated regularly the work of God in the midst of His people.

All of that Israel had and, says Paul, in addition they had the promises (again, plural!). The promise is, of course, one. But when one views the promise in all of its riches, he finds that it is like a diamond ring with many facets. Each facet reflects the glory and wonder of God and His work with His people. They had all of these.

They had the fathers. In fact, they boasted oftentimes of their fathers: "We are of our father, Abraham," say the Pharisees. But the church of Jesus Christ in Israel did have reason to rejoice that they were of these fathers. They were a continuation of that line of the covenant that God had established with Abraham and his seed after him.

Then, as a climax, according to their flesh Christ came. He came not from the Gentiles, not from some other land, but out of the land of Canaan, out of the line of David, in the town of Bethlehem. Christ was born in their midst.

What a glory, what an honor, that nation of Israel had! The church of Jesus Christ, as it studies that history of Israel, ought always to recall that truth too. Israel did not deserve any blessings of God. As Moses had also reminded them, they were not more numerous than other people, nor were they better than other people. Nevertheless, God had blessed them and provided for them so that they would continue the line of the covenant and maintain that word which God had given.

It is a reminder of what benefits we have, too. Our situation is different. We live in the New Testament age. We have a history that differs from that of Israel of old. Yet, when we reflect upon the history of our own churches, we can only testify before God and to one another of the grace of God bestowed upon our churches. We can only thank Him for the wonders of the doctrines which He has revealed in us and through us. We can thank Him that from Sabbath to Sabbath we have the opportunity of fellowship and worship together under the preaching of His Word. We can thank Him for the opportunities given us to labor in the vineyard, even outside the established church.

There are other churches, whose history you know, which have departed from the Word. They have forsaken the truths that their forefathers held dear. They no longer teach the wonder of a creation in six literal days. They no longer emphasize the headship which God established in the creation of Adam and Eve. Some are no longer interested even in maintaining the truths of the atonement and truths of the incarnation. They rather proclaim a "social" gospel. They teach that their calling is to establish a glorious kingdom here on this earth. There is great apostasy today. Churches that have known the glories of God, and in their past generations have maintained these truths, for the most part faithfully, are now departing from those truths.

The faithful church of Jesus Christ today lives in the kind of situation of which the apostle speaks in our text as well. Israel had forsaken the Word of God, had crucified the Messiah. Today, too, much of that which is called church has likewise forsaken the Word and gone in its own willful way of disobedience.

Ought the apostle to be concerned about that? The Jews had shown great opposition to Christ

and His cause. They knew the promises of the Old Testament. They had studied the Word of God. They knew what God had revealed. Yet, when Christ came, they rejected Him. They called Him the prince of devils, Beelzebub. They said that He did His mighty works through the power of the devil. They mocked His word. They made plans to crucify Him. Finally, with the cooperation of the Romans, they accomplished that evil deed. With wicked hands they took Him and crucified Him. They pursued after His people, imprisoned them, and killed many of them. They sought thus to squelch the spread of the gospel. All of these things the Jews had done.

In chapter 11 the apostle speaks of these Jews and compares them to branches that are cut off from the vine. That was the situation for Israel — a nation that had departed from the Word of God and crucified the promised Messiah.

What was Paul's attitude toward them?

Paul was called to be an apostle to the Gentiles. Did not that calling to be an apostle to the Gentiles imply that he had forsaken his own people, that he was a kind of a traitor to his nation? Doubtlessly the Jews considered him to be such.

Besides, there was his teaching concerning predestination — including election and reprobation. If the Jews were reprobate, why should Paul be concerned about them? Why should he be interested in their salvation? Why should he preach the Word to them if, as he maintained, there was this reprobation? The apostle Paul points out in the words of our text that this truth of predestination did not hinder his work. It did not prevent him from being deeply concerned with the salvation not only of the Gentiles but likewise of elect Jews.

The same holds true today. Many have departed from the faith. Should we simply shrug our shoulders and say, "What have we to

do with those who have apostatized? What have we to do with proclaiming the Word outside of our own midst? Why should we go forth and preach the gospel even among the heathen? If God elects a people, surely they will be brought to glory whether we preach the Word to them or not. And if God reprobates a people, surely they will be damned no matter how much we preach the Word to them."

The concern of the child of God, as it ought to be the concern of our churches and of our synod, is the salvation of sinners. We do not know who are God's elect among them. We can only judge by the fruit. On that basis, we see that God has truly turned the heart from darkness to light. When we observe the world today, we see so many who deny the Word of God and forsake the truth. These seem to be going the way of disobedience and rebellion to their destruction. Do we say of them, "There is no hope, there is no reason to proclaim the Word before such disobedient ones, they have departed from the faith"?

The man that comes to my mind in this connection is the thief on the cross next to Christ. He was a rebel, apparently from youth. He was a robber, and it may be that in his robbery he had also committed murder. He was a hopeless case. It would seem as though such a person could never be saved. Yet,



Rev. VanBaren examines the student in Practica.

while he hung on the cross, he heard the testimony of the Word. The Spirit applied that Word to his heart. And he cried out, not long before he died, "Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom."

The church of Jesus Christ and its preachers of the Word realize that God accomplishes His purpose through the preaching. Without doubt He will save those whom He has chosen in our Lord Jesus Christ. He accomplishes that through the preaching of the Word, through the faithful labors of the church of Jesus Christ.

That same word, of course, testifies to the reprobate. Again, the preacher cannot normally identify who each of these may be. That is not our concern. God determines that. But the preaching of the Word exposes their wicked ways and causes them to rise up in greater rebellion and disobedience to the Word. God, through His Word, accomplishes what He wills to do: "He has mercy on whom He will have mercy; and whom He will, He hardens."

The apostle Paul, in that connection, shows his deep concern for the ministry of the Word. He says he has a great heaviness and continual sorrow in heart for his kinsmen, his brethren according to the flesh. There is great heaviness and deep pain. It concerned him by day and by night. He was interested in proclaiming the Word not just to the Gentiles. He was the apostle called to labor among the Gentiles, but in his labors he went first to the synagogue. He would bring the Word first to his brethren according to the flesh. He did not say, "They are all reprobates." He did not say, "It doesn't do any good to proclaim God's Word there." He spoke the Word, and God used that Word to turn some to repentance and to confession.

Then Paul would go to the Gentiles and proclaim to them the wonders of the gospel. But all of this burdened his soul. He was

troubled in the very center of his being. This controlled his thoughts and his labors daily. He was oppressed by the very thought that his brethren, kinsmen according to the flesh, had turned from the Word. He was concerned about their salvation.

In fact, the apostle Paul makes it so strong as to say this: "I could wish myself accursed from Christ for my kinsmen, my brethren according to the flesh." One would say, "How could he ever say that?" Wish himself accursed for the sake of the salvation of his kinsmen? The apostle Paul surely knew that this was an impossibility. God had chosen His people, including Paul, from before the foundation of the earth, in Jesus Christ our Lord. The counsel of God could not be changed, nor could it be frustrated. Nevertheless, Paul meant it when he said that if it were possible, he would even have himself accursed in order that his brethren according to the flesh could be saved. That was the sense of urgency demonstrated by the apostle Paul in this word of God.

It portrays the apostle, too, in a light in which we do not often see him. The apostle Paul is viewed, and correctly so, as a teacher of sound, deep doctrine. He was a person who could write under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and who could testify concerning the truths of the Word. We could view his doctrine as cold and abstract. But we see here this great apostle of Jesus Christ, missionary to the Gentiles, as deeply affected by the labor he is to perform. He knows the terrible destiny of those who do not repent of their sins. He knows the terrible judgment of the Jews who crucified Christ. These were his kinsmen, of his own flesh. They had heard the Christ, had seen His miracles, but had denied Him. And they had crucified Him. Of them the apostle is deeply concerned.

His attitude clearly reveals that there is nothing cold or hard about

the doctrine of predestination, including both election and reprobation. The contrary is often alleged. The claim is made that those who believe in eternal election have no incentive to preach to unbelievers. The elect, after all, will surely be saved whether one preaches to them or not. The reprobate will be lost no matter how many sermons are preached to them.

Yet from the very beginning of the chapter, Paul clearly shows that this kind of objection is false. Paul is deeply concerned with the position of the Jews who had received the promises. He desired to preach also to them. He was concerned about their salvation. When he saw their hardness and impenitence, it grieved him deeply.

We as synod and as churches must continue to confess the truths expressed in Romans 9. The chapter speaks of those precious truths of election and reprobation. Though many consider these hard doctrines, they are truly comforting and encouraging for the church. Many would deny them or adulterate them. But the church must continue to hold fast to this.

At the same time, and because of these very truths, we must be faithful in proclaiming the gospel. The synod deals with matters pertaining to our seminary. There the churches prepare young men for the preaching of the gospel. We have men who are laboring on the mission fields. There is, and there must be, a concern for souls. Earnestly we pray that God may save His people through the preaching of the gospel. We desire the gathering in of those given of God to His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. In all of the actions of synod, this concern must show. We must maintain faithfully all the doctrines of Holy Scripture. We must also faithfully, fearlessly, and tirelessly preach the gospel wherever God will have it sent. May God grant that to our churches and to synod. □

Synod of the PRC, 1999

The First Protestant Reformed Church of Holland, MI hosted the 1999 synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches (PRC). Synod met from June 8 through June 15.

The pre-synodical worship service was held in the Holland church building and was led by the president of the previous synod, Rev. Gise VanBaren. He preached on Romans 9:1-5, "Paul's Concern for His Kinsmen." That Rev. VanBaren led this service was especially appropriate since synod would approve his request to become emeritus.

Officers of the 1999 synod were Rev. Ron Cammenga, president; Rev. Dale Kuiper, vice-president; Rev. Wilbur Bruinsma, first clerk; and Rev. Ron VanOverloop, second clerk. All of the officers were delegates from Classis East.

Examination of a Seminarian

Nearly two days were devoted to the examination of seminarian Garrett J. Eriks. The faculty of the Protestant Reformed Seminary ex-

amined the senior seminarian orally in Dogmatics; Church History; Church Polity; Old Testament History; New Testament History; and "Practica." Delegates were permitted to question the student further concerning his answers. Mr. Eriks also submitted written examinations in Hebrew and Greek translation and exegesis of assigned passages of Scripture, which were approved. The examination began with the seminarian's preaching a specimen sermon before the synod on Matthew 7:13, 14. Synod approved the examination and declared Garrett Eriks a candidate for the office of the Word and Sacraments in the PRC eligible for a call on or after July 10, 1999. The graduation ceremony was held in the Holland church auditorium in the presence of the delegates of



First PRC, Holland

synod and the members of the Theological School Committee, as well as many members of the churches. Prof. David Engelsma spoke on "The Running of the White Horse," from Revelation 6.

Seminary

Synod admitted three men to the Protestant Reformed Seminary in the fall of 1999. One aspires to the ministry in the PRC. The other two are members of the Evangelical Reformed Churches in Singapore (ERCS). Pastor Lau Chin Kwee, who attended the seminary earlier, will return to complete the requirements for his diploma. The other man will begin a three-year program at the seminary. Synod committed the PRC to pay half the expenses of the latter while he attends seminary. Synod approved the decision of the Theological School Committee to release Prof. Herman Hanko from the seminary for at least six months during this coming school-year, to work with the ERCS in the establishment of a theological school in Singapore. A gift to the seminary of more than \$50,000 was gratefully received. Synod designated the use of it for providing instruction in missionary



Synod, 1999



Rev. Koole, Elder Brian Crossett

skills and for student internships involving missions. Prof. Russ Dykstra was reappointed to a four-year term as Professor of Church History and New Testament. Later in the sessions, Prof. Dykstra informed synod that he accepted this appointment.

Contact Committee

A meeting of the Committee for Contact with Other Churches (CC) with the United Reformed Churches in North America (URCNA) was approved. The report of the CC on this meeting stated that

our committee was gratified that both the papers presented by the Committee for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity (of the URCNA) and the discussion that we had on each point revealed a great deal of agreement between

our committees on the issue of common grace and the general offer of the gospel.

The CC asked for a synodical mandate to continue to discuss with the URCNA the issues that separate the URCNA and the PRC on the grounds that "1) our discussion on common

grace has revealed a great degree of agreement with the committee of the URCNA and 2) our meeting revealed some important areas which require further discussion." Synod gave the CC this mandate on these grounds.

The CC also reported (in a supplemental report) on a recent meeting with the Committee for Ecumenicity and Interchurch Relations (CEIR) of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC). One of the subjects discussed was the doctrine of the well-meant offer of the gospel. The report of the CC informed synod that

the committee from the OPC expressed their conviction that the doctrine of the free offer of the gospel is not binding doctrine in the OPC. They did grant that open opposition to the doctrine of the free offer, without pursuing complaint through the church courts, would undoubtedly be viewed as schismatic.

Discussion on this report of the CC, particularly the request of the CC that synod authorize future meetings with the OPC, resulted in synod's deciding to

direct the CC to discuss with the CEIR of the OPC all the issues that possibly separate us from the

OPC, particularly the well-meant gospel offer, in such a way that our CC forthrightly inform the CEIR what our belief is on these issues.



Prof. Engelsma: Dogmatics Exam

Synod approved the proposal of the CC that the CC hold a conference with the Evangelical Presbyterian Church in Australia in 2001. The subject will be "Biblically Regulated Worship."

With Elder Brian Crossett of Covenant Protestant Reformed Church in Northern Ireland present, synod approved the establishment of a sister-church relationship with the Northern Ireland congregation in 2000, if the other sister-churches of the PRC—the ERCS—have no legitimate objection. Elder Crossett greeted synod on behalf of Covenant Church and



Senior Seminarian Eriks



Congratulating the Candidate



*Officers: Rev. VanOverloop, Rev. Cammenga,
Rev. Kuiper, Rev. Bruinsma*

was given the right to speak on all matters involving the church. Synod was impressed with the need of the Covenant PRC in Northern Ireland for a church building and approved the request of the church to ask for collections for this purpose in the PRC in America. In view of the likelihood of a sister-church relationship in 2000, synod opened the pulpits of the PRC in America to the seminary of the Covenant Church presently in the seminary, if the faculty approves his speaking a word of edification in the churches.

Domestic Missions

The Domestic Mission Committee (DMC) reported on home missions in Spokane, WA and in Pittsburgh, PA. The work in Colorado ended because of lack of growth and interest. The remaining members of the Colorado mission donated some \$100,000 to the PRC for use in missions. Synod approved the DMC's continuing to send someone to the British Isles periodically, making the south of Wales the center of the work outside

Northern Ireland. \$29,500 was budgeted for radio broadcasting by the DMC in 2000. The DMC uses the messages of Rev. Carl Haak on the Reformed Witness Hour. Southeast PRC

in Grand Rapids, MI gave the DMC \$50,990 for use in the housing of the missionary in Pittsburgh.

Foreign Missions

The Foreign Mission Committee (FMC) informed synod that Rev. Richard Moore accepted the call to Ghana, Africa. He and his wife were to leave for the field in June, 1999. Synod received a report of a visit to the Philippines by a delegation from the FMC. The report stated that "there is definitely work for us to do in missions in the Philippines." Synod instructed the FMC to send two delegations to the Philippines, one in 1999 and the other in 2000.

New Directions

In response to an overture from the council of the Edgerton, MN PRC, that synod make a "minor revision of our Church Order," synod approved the "updating" of the Church Order of Dordt. Synod then gave the overture to a study committee, to make recommendations on the proposed changes in the Church Order. Edgerton proposed changing Articles 2, 18, 21, 29, 36, 37, 40, 41, 42, 45, 47, 48, 50, 51, 52, 53, 65, 69, and 70.

Article 13 of the Church Order of Dordt, which is the Church Order of the PRC, views financial support of emeriti (retired)

ministers as the churches' honorably providing for them "in their need." At the recommendation of its special committee, synod decided that

payment from the Emeritus Fund continue to be on a "needs" basis, but with the added provision that some amount up to a maximum limit be made available to retirees and/or their spouses upon request but with no questions asked.

Synod then specified that this amount be set at a maximum limit of \$15,000 per year, beginning in 2001.



Rev. VanOverloop, Rev. Haak

Synod also decided to establish a group plan for purchasing long-term care insurance for emeriti ministers and their wives. This decision was in light of the high costs of nursing homes and other forms of special care.

The same special committee that recommended the change in Article 13 of the Church Order concerning support of emeriti ministers also presented a proposed investment policy for use in investing excess synodical funds. Synod 1998 had mandated this committee "to prepare an investment policy, including both fixed income and equity securities, for use in investing excess synodical funds." The attached summary of the investment policy states, among other things, that "funds assets must be invested in a diversified portfolio of stocks and investment grade bonds, or mutual funds that invest in these, according to the



Pre-advice: Rev. Haak, Prof. Decker, Elder J. Lenting



Rev. denHartog

Prudent Man rule." Synod adopted the proposed "Investment Policy Summary" ... and the "Statement of Investment Objectives and Policy" ... "for use in investing excess synodical funds." Despite pointed caution against recent expansion of the duties and powers of the Board of Trustees, synod authorized the Board of Trustees to select an investment manager to direct the investment of synod's funds; to supervise the investment manager; and to review the investment performance of the funds on a quarterly basis.

In response to the offer of a gift to the PRC of a life insurance policy, synod instructed the Board of Trustees to study the propriety of the PRC owning life insurance policies given by individuals.

Appeals

Two individuals and a



Elder D. Ondersma, Rev. Kleyen

consistory appealed decisions of Classis East regarding consent to an unbiblical divorce and regarding separate maintenance. One decision of Classis was that "it is not always wrong to give consent to a divorce pursued by a spouse." The first of Classis' grounds for this decision was

While any effort to put away a spouse for unbiblical reasons is wrong, and every effort must be put forth to defend and preserve a marriage, the expression "let him depart" in I Corinthians 7:15 permits a believer to give consent to (only in the sense of compliance, acquiescence, or agreement to, not assent or agreement with) a divorce pursued by one's spouse.

The other decision of Classis East was that "separate maintenance is not the same as divorce." The first two grounds were:

1. Legally, the state does not equate the two, as is evident from the fact that the state does not permit remarriage of those who have been granted separate maintenance.
2. While separate maintenance can be used in a sinful way, there may be instances in which separate maintenance (legal separation) is permitted, e.g., in cases where legal protection is deemed necessary.

Discussion of the appeals was lengthy. In an unusual move, in view of the fact that synod had declared two of the appeals legally before the synod, the decision of synod was that synod not enter into the appeals. The ground was

that in the decisions being appealed Classis East had departed from an original, concrete case. Synod then advised Classis East to reexamine these decisions in the light of the above action of synod.

Another appeal against a decision of Classis West was declared illegal in closed session.

Emeritation

The request of Rev. Gise J. VanBaren for emeritation on the ground of age was approved. Rev. VanBaren was ordained into the ministry in the PRC in 1956. He served pastorates in Doon, IA; Randolph, WI; First, Grand Rapids, MI; and Hudsonville, MI. He is presently pastor of the congregation in Loveland, CO. Synod ex-



Prof. Decker, Rev. Cammenga, Prof. Hanko

pressed its appreciation to Rev. VanBaren for his many years of faithful service in our churches.

75th Anniversary Celebration

The PRC are planning to celebrate the 75th anniversary of their existence as a denomination in 2000 by a denomination-wide gathering on the campus of Calvin College, Grand Rapids, MI for five days, June 19-23. The theme will be, "Living out of Our Heritage." Families and individuals are being encouraged to attend all days of the event, staying on campus if at all possible. The annual convention of the young people is scheduled for the same time and place. Synod received a thorough report from its special 75th Anniversary

Committee. A report by the 75th Anniversary Committee is published elsewhere in this issue of the *Standard Bearer*. In order to keep the cost of the celebration affordable for larger families and because the celebration "belongs to the very heart of our existence as churches," synod decided to subsidize the cost of the celebration by budgeting \$35,000 in 2000.

Other Matters

Synod expressed its concerns of

love to the family of Rev. Steven Houck in the serious illness of Mrs. Houck. A committee of synod was able to convey this expression to the Houck family by a personal visit.

Synod approved the organization of a new congregation in northwest Indiana—Cornerstone PRC—and its inclusion in Classis East.

A synodical budget for 2000 of \$1,263,878 was adopted. The assessment for each family is \$741,

an increase of 1.1% over the assessment in 1999.

Georgetown PRC in Western Michigan will be the host for the synod of 2000. Synod will convene on June 13, in conjunction with the celebration of the 75th anniversary, God willing.

May God bless the work of the synod, making it fruitful for the gathering and preservation of the church of Jesus Christ at the turn of the century. □

— DJE

Cornerstone PRC of Northwest Indiana



The new Protestant Reformed Church in northwest Indiana has chosen the name Cornerstone. The congregation called candidate Nathan Brummel to be their minister. Mr. Brummel has accepted their call.

Letters

■ This Generation

Thank you for your continued defense of the amillennial view of eschatology. While many "stars" of theology have changed their view over the years (taking their followers along with them), you have remained faithful in your stand for the Reformed truth.

I have one suggestion for the *Standard Bearer* that I feel would be

of great benefit to readers struggling with this millennial question: Do a study of Matthew 24:34. The whole basis for the preterist view seems to hinge on what is meant by "this generation" in verse 34. R.C. Sproul's recent book is based almost entirely on this subject. Sadly, almost no Reformed or Presbyterian commentators seem to agree on what the correct interpretation of "generation" in this text

is. Therefore, your exegesis of this term would be very helpful!

Jerry Grigsby
Presbyterian Church
Addyston, Ohio

Response:

I gave the interpretation of Matthew 24, particularly verse 34, in the April 1, April 15, May 1, and May 15, 1996 issues of the *SB*. If you would like a copy of these ar-

ticles, request it of our business office.

Basically the explanation was that the natural sense of "this generation" is the normal lifetime of those to whom Jesus was speaking. All of the things that Jesus foretold in verses 3-31 would take place within about 40 years. Quoting now from the May 1, 1996 issue of the *SB*:

Inasmuch as the destruction of Jerusalem was the type of the end, everything that Jesus has taught in the preceding verses can be said in verse 34 to "be fulfilled," that is, happen, in AD 70. "All these things" happen *typically* in AD 70. But these things do not happen in AD 70 *exhaustively*. They do by no means happen *in reality* in AD 70. The reality of all these things will happen when Jesus comes in the body at the end of the world.

I quoted Herman Ridderbos and Calvin at length to demonstrate that this explanation of Matthew 24:34 is that of the Reformed tradition.

It is striking that the Christian Reconstruction preterists find support for their interpretation of Matthew 24:34 largely outside the Reformed tradition. They are silent about Calvin's explanation of the text. Why do they say nothing about Calvin's explanation of "this generation"?

— Ed.

■ Christ Learned Obedience

You really helped me with my dilemma in starting to comprehend that Christ as man was without the ability to sin, yet tempted as we. (I thank you because I do not want to be a heretic or one of these "Nestorian guys"!)

Your instruction to me that Christ "saw that the proposals of Satan required submission to Satan," which would be "the way of disobedience," made a much clearer picture to me. So, now, even if Christ had the capacity to sin, this idea of His

submitting in the slightest way to Satan is impossible! Therefore, the capacity or ability to sin becomes a moot point. From now on I will think in this vein, that as temptation came to Christ He immediately submitted to the will of God and cut Satan off, as He does in Matthew 26:39, 42.

In the answer to my original question, you did manage to bring up a couple more that I am not clear on!

1. You say: "Christ had to learn obedience ... by the things that He suffered." Does this refer to His childhood, as in Luke 2:51, or do you mean He was learning what it is to be human by the temptations?

2. In glory we too shall be "not able to sin" (Augustine), but that follows our resurrection. Is it true or false that Christ too had different capabilities after His resurrection than He did while He was walking around on earth prior to the Cross? Could the "ability to sin" have been one of these changes?

Al Salmon
Moorestown, NJ

Answer:

Mr. Salmon asks pointedly concerning the meaning of Hebrews 5:7, 8: "Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared; though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things that he suffered." He asks specifically concerning the meaning of the clause "yet learned he obedience"; and he asks how it was possible for Christ to *learn* obedience.

I freely admit that I have often wanted to preach on this text, but never quite dared until a couple of years ago. And then, having preached on it, I decided that, after all, it would have been better if I had not. The mystery is too great.

Nevertheless, we may say a few things about it, although these

few things are a very limited explanation of the profound truth wrapped up in this statement of sacred Scripture.

The statements in verse 7 seem strongly to suggest that the reference in the text is to our Lord's profound sorrow in Gethsemane. The struggle through which the Lord passed was so great, so intense, so bitter that Scripture wisely hangs a veil over it and only reports briefly on what happened. It was too ... awful(?) for human eyes. Here in Hebrews 5, God lifts up a corner of that veil so that we get a brief glimpse. Yet the glimpse is enough to force us to shrink back in horror.

The text emphatically states that our Lord was Son. It would even be better to translate it that way, "Though he were Son" He was at that moment the eternal Son of God, equal with the first and third persons in the holy Trinity, who had eternally devised the counsel by which the church would be redeemed through the blood of the Son of God. He was Himself the Author of the plan. And, even more, He was one with the Father and the Spirit in the perfect execution of that plan.

Yet He had to learn obedience! How can we ever understand that? The obedience to which the text refers is the obedience that was required of Him to accomplish all the purpose of His Father (His Father being, not the first person of the Trinity, but the triune God). He had to learn obedience as the Mediator of God through whom alone God brought salvation. He had to learn obedience so that He could truly sing Psalm 40: "I come to do thy will, O God; in the volume of the book it is written of me" (see also Heb. 10:5-10).

Our Lord did not have to learn obedience in the sense that He had to learn what God demanded of Him while He was in the world. He did not have to learn obedience in the sense that He had been disobedient, or even could be disobe-

dient, and now had to correct His life. But He did have to learn obedience in the sense that He had to understand that obedience involved the greatest possible sufferings, and that, although His soul shrunk from the horror of the cross in fear, yet obedience required it.

In this respect, too, our Lord was like us in all things. How often is it not true that obedience to the will of God is not a sun-filled path of pleasure and delight, but rather a way dark and deep, a way of self-denial, a way which seems, from every earthly point of view, to lead to disaster, a way of taking up our cross and following the Lord. We may not, under such bleak circumstances, refuse obedience with flimsy and self-serving excuses. We have to learn obedience as so necessary, so crucial to our life, so important, that it must be our way regardless of any considerations.

Christ learned this kind of obedience in the Garden when the thought of the cross all but killed Him. And so He can now be a sympathetic High Priest for us when excruciating sufferings are the inevitable result of our obedience to God. Have not countless martyrs walked the same way of obedience? Did not they take up

their cross — as Christ took up His? Was (and, is) it not always a mere matter of obedience? Nothing but obedience? "Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams" (I Sam. 15:22).

The second question must be answered with a sharp and emphatic: "It is false." It is false that Christ "had different capabilities after His resurrection than He did while He was walking around on earth prior to the Cross."

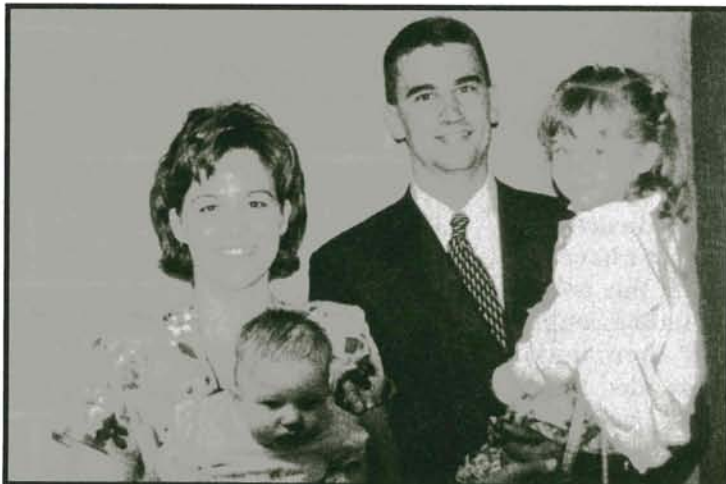
Here too is mystery. But some truths force their way into the foreground. Christ remained, every moment He was on earth, the person of the Son of God. This is stressed in Scripture, and is, in fact, the meaning of Hebrews 5. While the AV is correct in translating verse 8: "Though he were Son ...," the Greek is too rich to be captured exhaustively by that translation. The idea is also there, imbedded in the language used: "While He remained Son, yet learned He obedience...." Paul expresses the very same idea in II Corinthians 8:9: "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich." Again, the AV is correct in its translation; but the meaning is richer, and we could

translate in addition to what the AV says: "While he continued to be rich, yet for your sakes he became poor...." Rich and poor at the same time! God and man at the same time.

The second truth that thrusts itself forward in Scripture is that Christ's divine nature was hidden behind the veil of His human nature while He was in the state of humiliation. Only at times, like a blinding flash of lightning, did the glory of that divine nature burst through the human nature. That happened particularly in the miracles. In this sense, the great power and majesty of the Godhead was hidden behind the human nature, which made Him like us in all things except sin.

He had no different capabilities on earth than He has now in glory. But while on earth He walked among us in humiliation that is too great to contemplate, for it is the shame and degradation of our sin and sinful nature. And this is why we must, sometimes, peek behind the veil that hid our Lord in the Garden; for, although we cannot understand, that suffering is the measure of our sins — for which our Lord died. And that is glorious beyond words.

— Prof. H. Hanko



Jennifer, Alison, Garry, Abbie

1999 Candidate Garrett Eriks

Age: 26

Wife's name: Jennifer

Children: Abbie, Alison

Internship: Loveland PRC, Loveland, CO

College: Dordt College, Sioux Center, IA

Contact:

1577 Port Sheldon

Jenison, Michigan 49428

(616) 457-8320

The Christian and Entertainment*

In preparing this speech, at the request of the Evangelism Societies of the First and Southeast Churches, I thought it would be helpful to check out in a concordance the words usually associated with our subject of entertainment. What do the Scriptures say? What is the scriptural emphasis? I believe this is the proper and safe way to proceed. And I want to share my findings with you at the outset.

The word *entertainment* is not found in the Bible at all. Once we read "entertain," in the sense of hospitality, but never the word *entertainment*. The word *fun* is never used in the Bible. The word *games* is never to be found. The word *play* is used a number of times: playing on musical instruments, playing the harlot, Israel sitting down to eat and drink and rising up to play (a reference to their naked dancing and worse), the boys and girls of Israel playing in the streets of Jerusalem after the return from captivity. The words *vacation*, *retirement*, and *sports* are not found in God's Word.

We may notice that there are words often used in the Bible that are practically the antonyms of the words we have just mentioned. We are admonished to *work* with our hands: "six days shalt thou labor and do all thy work." We have

been placed on this earth to work! The words *sober*, *sobriety*, and being *sober minded* are often to be found. Watch and be sober. Let us who are of the day be sober. Officebearers are to be vigilant and sober. Aged men and young women are called to be sober. The words *mourning*, *weeping*, and *tears* are often used. Yes, Scripture also speaks of *rejoicing*. The child of God is to rejoice always. We are to rejoice in the Lord!

And finally I thought it would be profitable to check out the words *glorying* and *boasting*. When we get into the area of games and organized sports, boasting, bragging, and glorying are very much at point. Well, God tells us to glory in nothing, save the cross of Jesus Christ. God tells us that the wise man is not to glory in his wisdom neither the mighty man in his might, nor the rich man in his riches, "but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me" (Jer. 9:24). He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord. The Lord does not take delight in the legs of a man, in physical strength and skills. But the Lord delights in lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness. All other glory is vainglory.

Now, what does all this mean? What conclusions can we draw from the fact that such words as sports, vacations, playing, and retirement are not found in the Bible? It would be wrong, of course, to conclude that this means we may not be involved in such things at all. You could just as well say, Because the Bible does not mention pizza, we may not eat pizza. But this brief word study sends us in

the right direction. It gives us the proper emphasis. And it shows us that the Christian life must always be a life of balance and moderation. We recognize that many things have changed since biblical days; in fact, life has greatly changed in the last one hundred years. Our society has gone from a rural, agricultural economy to a suburban, industrial one. The result of these many changes is that we have more disposable income (income that is not necessary for the basic needs of life) and more discretionary time (time not spent on the job but used in other ways). But we must also recognize that some things have not, and must not, change since biblical days. There are truths and principles that must still guide us in these last days.

Does Entertainment Have a Place?

Is there a place for entertainment in the Reformed Christian's life? If not, why not? If so, what is that place, and how large is that place?

We believe that there is a legitimate place for entertainment in the life of the child of God. The Christian may relax, go on a vacation from time to time, have some fun, and enjoy the good gifts that God has bestowed upon him and his family. Paul writes to Timothy, "Every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving: for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer" (I Tim. 4:4, 5). That passage is important for the understanding of our subject, for it warns against legalism and a too strict view of the Christian life, and

Rev. Kuiper is pastor of Southeast Protestant Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

* This is the text of a lecture given in First Church, Grand Rapids, MI on April 22, 1999.

it tells us that we can use all things that God has made, keeping two things in mind: first, the Word of God instructs us *how* to use God's creatures and gifts, and secondly, by prayer in respect to this use, His gifts are sanctified unto us. Then we use this world, and not abuse it.

Another passage that comes to mind in respect to our use of God's gifts is I Corinthians 10:31: "Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." This means, of course, that entertainment is not an end in itself. Entertainment may not be divorced from our calling as Christians to serve and glorify God at all times. Entertainment may not, and cannot, stand on its own feet as something good in itself. It is only a means, a means to a higher end and purpose. Recreation and exercise as a means unto better health? Fine. Vacations and sports as a means of relaxation in order to serve God the better? Fine. But as soon as entertainment goes beyond that, as soon as it becomes an end in itself, as soon as our sports and our hobbies consume us, then we abuse God's good gifts and our lives are not lives of balance and moderation but rather of excess and imbalance.

All the emphasis in our society is on having a good time. Everyone has to have fun in some way every day. Forgotten is the truth that God has put man on earth to work. Man works as little as possible in order that he may play. He does not play a little, the better to work. Life is viewed as a playground, rather than a workplace or a battlefield. And this holds true today, not only for little children, but for the adults as well. This situation is one of the signs that Jesus' second coming is almost here. Paul writes in II Timothy 3, the opening verses, "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come." And then he describes the world of unbelief: "Men shall be lovers of their own

selves, covetous, boasters," and so on. And, "They shall be lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God." The Christian is a lover of God! The unbeliever is a hater of God and a lover of pleasure! And as that love of pleasure develops into pleasure-madness all around us, that constitutes a peril for the church. These are perilous times for you and for me, and for our children. We stand in the midst of peril!

Our society, wealthy beyond compare, with free time almost beyond belief, is thoroughly hedonistic. A lover of pleasure is a hedonist. Hedonism is the moral philosophy that pleasure and happiness are the chief goal of human life. That is the religion according to which most people live today. The rightness or wrongness of some activity is determined by whether it results in pleasure or in pain. If you get pleasure from something, do it; it's a good thing. If it causes you pain or discomfort, avoid it like the plague; it's bad or evil. Do you see the peril of being surrounded by people of that philosophy and outlook? Of living in the midst of such a perverse generation? I will leave it to you to discover how much of that thinking you have adopted, and to what extent that thinking controls you in your world and life view.

What are the dangers for us and our children? There are five areas of great concern. The matter of movies and television springs immediately to mind. That movie attendance and television viewing are out of bounds for the Christian, are incompatible with the godly walk of those who are called to be saints, is clear beyond any dispute. Is it not true that movies and television exalt that which is base and depraved, and debase that which is exalted and good? Is it not true that watching the entertainment of the world, its sexual presentations, its violence and bloodshed, its blasphemies against the holy God, makes a person guilty of the sin

described in Romans 1:32, "Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them"? Psalm 101, which I encourage you to read right now, is a psalm of David, the man after God's own heart. He says, "I will walk within my house with a perfect heart. I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes: I hate the work of them that turn aside; it shall not cleave to me." And a little later in the psalm, "I will not know a wicked person." Although he may be tempted, were he alive today, David would not attend the movies nor watch television!

Secondly, we mention the sports craze, not only the March Madness of basketball tournaments, but the year-round sports activities of the world, the proliferation of professional sports teams. I am afraid that sports have a strangle-grip on many of us. I read in the *Grand Rapids Press* a few weeks ago a quote from a baseball fan: "Opening day is a holy day for us who worship in baseball parks." Now we may shake our heads at the audacity of such a statement, but that is literally true for millions of people. Their churches, well attended on the Sabbath, are the stadiums, arenas, and ball parks of the land. Their gods are the ball players. And their offerings to these gods enable the players to have salaries of millions of dollars a year. Life without sports would be inconceivable to them. Life simply would not be worthwhile if they could not fanatically attach themselves to some team, and cheer their hearts out for their idols. Does it make sense that the Christian put his dollars in the pockets of these godless athletes? Does it please God that the Christian yell himself hoarse at a home run, a touchdown, or a three-pointer? Does it belong to the Christian witness that he blend his voice with the voices of ten thousand unbelievers, in the praise of

man, man's abilities, man at his very worst?

Professional sports, the NBA, the NFL, the NHL, MLB, or any other letters you care to mention, all professional sports, are under the curse of God. And 99%, if not 100%, of these athletes are under the curse of God as well. It is sad, then, that our children like to line up to shake hands with these so-called stars and get their autographs. It is sad, then, when our children know the names and statistics of these profane people better than the books of the Bible, and the names of the prophets, the kings, and the apostles. Can we say it with David, "I will not know a wicked person; him that hath an high look and a proud heart, I will not suffer"?

Thirdly, the music that is being produced and distributed by the most vile creatures on God's earth belongs to the perils that surround us, and constitute a peril for our young people especially. The night before this lecture was given, a rock group gave a "concert" in a downtown arena. It was reported the next day that, after ripping pages from the Bible and stomping upon them on the floor, these so-called musicians sang songs which encouraged young people to use dope, engage in promiscuous sex, and even to kill their parents or anyone they felt like killing. And today learned men and women discuss the question whether the entertainment industry in the United States has anything to do with violence in public schools! Parents, do you know what your children are listening to? Children, do you think you can listen to these perversions of God's good gift of music, and not be influenced?

Fourthly, we ought to be aware that the entertainment craze is having its effect in the worship services of many churches. Church members are viewed as consumers, and you have to give the consumer what he wants. What he wants is

to be entertained! God must be presented as a consumer-friendly God. Do not talk about His holiness, His wrath, and His justice; talk exclusively of His love. Present God as a nice old man, who is always there to help you and make you happy. Much of today's worship is oriented to the idea of entertainment. The people must have a jolly good time or they will leave the church and go to one which has a better band, a funnier preacher, a bigger stage, and more brilliant lighting effects. Edward Farley, writing in *Christianity Today*, comments that "Contemporary worship creates a tone that is casual, comfortable, chatty, busy, humorous, pleasant, and at times even cute." He goes on to say that "If the seraphim would adopt this Sunday morning mood, they would be addressing God not as 'holy, holy, holy' but as 'nice, nice, nice.'"

I know this to be true from personal experience. I was sent out to preach to a group that was showing an interest in our churches, and before I went on the pulpit I was told to tell a few jokes, for the people appreciated some humor mixed in with the message. Well, of course, I could only say that if he could show me some jokes in the Bible, I might be able to tell a joke or two. Can you imagine? Can you picture Isaiah telling the people some jokes before he went on to speak of the captivity? Or Jeremiah beginning his message with the words, "We're going to have a good time tonight"? In many circles, a successful, effective worship service is measured by the extent to which the people have been entertained.

The fifth danger that I want to mention is the peril presented to us in regard to breaking the Sabbath Day with our vacation and travel plans. The desire to be entertained, and to be entertained in new and different ways, can easily lead us to break the Sabbath. We have all this surplus money. We have all this free time. Not just

two or three weeks off per year to get away from the pressure of the shop or the office, but six, eight, ten weeks of vacation a year. And then there is retirement, and *early* retirement. What to do? The Fourth Commandment rings down through the corridors of time: "Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy." Commenting on the Fourth Commandment, the prophet Isaiah was inspired to write, "If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a delight, and holy of the Lord, honorable; and shalt honor him, not doing thy own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, not speaking thine own words..." and then the prophet speaks God's words of blessing upon those who keep the Sabbath holy (Is. 58:13, 14). He speaks of a great contrast between our pleasure and God's pleasure; our ways and God's ways; our words and God's words. All in regard to the day of rest!

It is a fact of travel today that you get the lowest airfares if you are willing to stay somewhere over Saturday night. It is a fact of tourism that most cabins rent from Saturday noon to Saturday noon. It is a fact that most ship cruises operate from Sunday to Sunday. But it is also a fact, it is an everlasting truth, that we are to keep the Sabbath holy, consecrated to the Lord, by ceasing from our ordinary labors and pleasures, and by entering into the rest that our Lord Jesus Christ has gained for us on the cross! As God rested from His work of creation and enjoyed that perfect work on the seventh day, so we are to rest from our earthly labors and enter into the enjoyment of God's perfect work of redemption. Someone will say, But I go to church on my long, far-off vacations. Yes, the world is full of churches. But the world is not full of churches where you can really rest in the Lord by hearing the truth of the gospel.

Recently some of our churches

had people missing to the extent of a quarter or a third of their memberships. Do you know what is going to happen? I predict that, in just a generation or two, so many people will be absent from special services, and perhaps even from some Sunday services, that several congregations will come together in one building to have a joint wor-

ship service. That has already happened in some denominations. The people simply do not come! Unless this trend is reversed, unless we change our attitudes and practices regarding vacations and entertainment on the Sabbath, the same thing is going to happen to us. Do not forget that old saying, "Where we walk, our children will

run." When our children inherit our wealth, and add to that wealth themselves, when our children notice our example and must live in a generation more pleasure-crazed than our own, what do you expect they will do?

□

(To be concluded
in two following articles.)

Come, Lord Jesus

Rev. Cornelius Hanko

Signs of the Times

8. Enduring to the End

"But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved."

Matthew 24:13

There may be a question in our minds whether this encouragement and warning should actually be included under the signs of the times. Taken entirely by itself, it would seem out of place, yet the fact remains that this assurance that the faithful will be saved is a sign that God guarantees to us the safety and salvation of His church even unto the end. The very fact of God's preservation of His elect people under severe trial is a definite sign of end times.

Our Lord had spoken of the animosity, slander, and cruel hatred of the false church against the remnant that remains steadfast in the faith. He had also warned of apostasy, of wars among the nations of the earth, and the horrifying lawlessness that takes over completely in a world that is at enmity against the living God. And

He had spoken of the signs of judgment in nature, such as famines, pestilence, and earthquakes.

We live in trying times that can only become more difficult and distressing as the end approaches. It is heartrending to see churches and individuals depart from the truth of the Word of God, especially those individuals who were once with us. It is often difficult for us on our jobs, in the factory or in the office, to bear up under the sting of the daily scorn and reproach of the world and to be ready to give account of the hope that is within us. Even our family life is at times besieged with threats through the various means that Satan uses to make his onslaughts on God's people. Especially our young people face trials far greater than we ever experienced in the past, even being challenged to stand firm under the ridicule of their peers.

Along with the sufferings that we bear as followers of Christ we experience the judgments of God that come upon the world. We need but mention that in this past year, 1998, forty-one States suffered

from drought, floods, fires, winds, hurricanes, or a combination of these. A hurricane took 11,000 lives and did untold damage in the Atlantic basin. Other calamities have come as visitations upon other parts of the world. These judgments affect the believer as well as the unbeliever. This is God's purifying process whereby He separates the church from the world. Scripture calls it God's threshing. He is separating the wheat from the chaff and thereby preparing His church for glory.

We ask: why? Why must the church, why must we as God's people, suffer in an evil world? The answer of Scripture is that God is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any of us should perish. God restrains His strong desire to take His own unto Himself until each one of us is fully prepared for glory. We are being prepared to be precious jewels in God's eternal temple. Therefore we are cut, chiseled, ground, trimmed, and polished until we are ready to be fit into our own niche in God's glorious dwelling place. Only when the last stone is ready

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

to be put in its place will God's house be complete.

In all this we are called to endure to the end. Endurance is the ability to suffer pain, hardship, distress, or prolonged stress without succumbing. It means that we hold that which we have, that is, that we remain faithful to the truth of God's Word, the faith once delivered to the fathers. It means that we take up Christ's cross and follow Him over Golgotha to glory. It means that we daily stand clothed in the full armor of God: the girdle of truth firmly clasped about our loins, our heart protected by the breastplate of Christ's righteousness, our feet shod with the durable boots of the preparation of the gospel of peace, and we ready and willing to defend the truth entrusted to us, wearing the helmet of salvation as the protecting assurance of God's grace. In our left hand we firmly clasp the shield of faith, fully prepared to quench all the fiery darts that are ceaselessly aimed against us by the onslaught of the wicked. And with a strong, determined grip we hold in our right hand the sword of the Spirit, determined to fight off the powers of darkness as they seek to destroy us.

Thus fully equipped we are called to stand in an evil day to fight the battle of faith even unto the end! Our Lord reminds us that this applies to each of us individually. He said that *many* shall be offended, the love of *many* shall wax cold, but *he* that shall endure to the end shall be saved. This may very well involve forsaking father and mother, sister and brother, and all who are most dear to us, to stand in an evil day, alone.

This implies, first of all, that we maintain the antithesis between light and darkness, between the church and the world, between the believer and the unbeliever. Especially today, when many are seeking to compromise by closing the gap between themselves and the world, seeking out "the good that

sinners do," and allowing the world to come into the church, it is our calling to maintain our unique distinction as a chosen generation and a royal priesthood. "For what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? and what concord hath Christ with Belial, or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel, and what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? For ye are the temple of the living God!" (II Cor. 6:14-16).

Endurance is a matter of conviction. We must know what we believe and be able to defend it. It is not sufficient to say, "My church maintains this," or "I was always taught this." But we must be convinced that this is the truth of God's Word. We must not merely say, "The Bible says so," but we must be able to prove our conviction from the Scriptures. Without that, we can never stand. We may not compromise, for if we compromise we are lost. We are called to obey God, not men. We may have to stand alone. We may have to lose all our possessions, give up wife and children for our conviction. In fact, we must be willing to go to prison or to die for our conviction. With Luther we say: "Here I stand, I cannot do otherwise, so help me God."

We are reminded of the three friends of Daniel in Babylon. They, along with Daniel, were among the Jewish princes who were the first to be brought into captivity by king Nebuchadnezzar. How easy it would have been for them, like the other princes who came from Judah, to take the attitude that for their own safety and for the sake of their families they would follow the customs and practices of the Babylonians. Yet, along with Daniel, these three men remembered their early training in the laws of Moses. They might not defile themselves by eating anything that was offered to idols or that was unclean.

In due time they and other Jewish princes were given positions of authority in the kingdom. The day came when all the prominent leaders and rulers of the kingdom were called to bow down to the image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up. All the servants of the king bowed with their faces to the ground in worship, including those other Jewish princes. But the three friends of Daniel stood erect, arms folded, most conspicuous in their defiance of the orders of the king. They would bow before no other than the true God, Jehovah.

The king offered them a second opportunity to show their reverence for him and his image. But they were firm and determined in their conviction. They told the king that he could do what he would, but they would not bow before his image. We know the rage of the king and his attempt to punish them by casting them into the fiery furnace, but also how God protected them with the presence of the Angel of Jehovah, even as a witness of God's power over the king. The Jewish princes who bowed down before the image of Nebuchadnezzar showed a preference, but Daniel's three friends showed conviction. Endurance is possible only when we have conviction. Only by a firm faith in God can we endure unto the end. We are always the victors!

Endurance is the love and devotion of the servant of Jesus Christ to His Lord. Jesus teaches us: "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. He that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me is not worthy of me" (Matt. 10:37, 38).

Scripture is replete with examples of those who were found worthy. Read Hebrews 11, the verses 32 to 38, which give account of men and women of valor who experienced cruel mocking, scourging, bonds and imprisonment, "were slain with the sword, wan-

dered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented." Compared to them, we have as yet experienced very little of the suffering for the cause of Christ. We can still worship our God freely both in our homes and in our places of worship. Hebrews 12 reminds us: "Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin."

From all this we learn that faith is the victory that overcomes the world. By faith we are assured that our sins are forgiven and that we are righteous solely in Christ Jesus. Therefore by faith we can walk in newness of life and in covenant fellowship with our God. We have intimate communion with our heavenly Father through the gift of constant prayer. And we are equipped by the Spirit of Jesus Christ to fight the battle of faith

even unto the end. We are always the victors.

Our perseverance is the result of God's preservation. We are kept by the power of God through faith unto the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. The wonder of grace is that God preserves His church, makes His servants strong in the power of His might, and gives them the victory. The very fact that it is God who preserves His church throughout the ages, in spite of all the onslaughts of the powers of darkness, and even through their instrumentality, is evidence that He is faithful to His promise. As the tribulation increases and the church is threatened beyond human endurance, God reveals His power in preserving His cause and preparing His people for the glory that is drawing near.

Those who endure unto the end shall be saved. The end is the purpose, the goal, that God sets for all the work of His hand. When the wicked die they have filled their cup of iniquity. When the righteous die, they are prepared for glory. When the final goal is attained, God's counsel with all His creation will be fully realized. Time will be no more, and we as God's church are more than conquerors, through Him who loved us unto death and loves us still, even forever.

For we hear the reassuring voice of Jesus through all the turmoil of this present time: "Behold, I come quickly." And along with that, the voice of our God: "Behold, I make all things new." Come, Lord Jesus, yea, come quickly! Amen! □

Bring the Books

John Calvin

The Day of Small Things

This doctrine may be also applied to us: for God, to exhibit the more his power, begins with small things in building his spiritual temple; nothing grand is seen, which attracts the eyes and thoughts of men, but everything is almost contemptible. God indeed could put forth immediately his power, and thus rouse the attention of all men and fill them with wonder; he could indeed do so; but as I have already said, his purpose is to increase, by doing wonders, the brightness of his power; which he does, when from a small beginning he brings forth what no one

would have thought; and besides, his purpose is to prove the faith of his people; for it behooves us ever to hope beyond hope. Now when the beginning promises something great and sublime, there is no proof and no trial of faith: but when we hope for what does not appear, we give due honour to God, for we depend only on his power and not on the proximate means. Thus we see that Christ is compared to a shoot, which arises from the stem of Jesse (Is. xi. 1). God might have arranged that Christ should have been born when the house of David was in its splendour, and when the kingdom was in a flourishing state: yet his will was that he should come forth from the stem of Jesse, when the royal name was almost cut off. Again, he might have brought forth Christ as a full-

grown tree; but he was born as an insignificant shoot. So also he is compared by Daniel to a rough and unpolished stone cut off from a mountain (Dan. ii. 45). The same thing has also been accomplished in our age, and continues still at this day to be accomplished. If we consider what is and has been the beginning of the growing gospel, we shall find nothing illustrious according to the perceptions of the flesh; and on this account the adversaries confidently despise us; they regard us as the off-scourings of men, and hope to be able to cast us down and scatter us by a single breath.

There are many at this day who despise the day of paucity, who grow faint in their minds, or even deride our efforts, as though our labour were ridiculous, when they

Calvin's commentary on Zechariah 4:10, and his prayer after the commentary.

see us sedulously engaged in promoting the truth of the gospel; and we ourselves are also touched with this feeling: there is no one who becomes not sometimes frigid, when he sees the beginning of the Church so mean before the world, and so destitute of any dignity. We hence learn how useful it is for us at this day to be reminded, that we shall at length see what we can by no means conjecture or hope for according to present appearances; for though the Lord begins with little things, and as it were in weakness, yet the plummet will at length be seen in the hand of the Architect for the purpose of completing the work. There is at this day no Zerubbabel in the world, to whom the office of building the temple has been committed; but we know that Christ is the chief builder, and

that ministers are workmen who labour under him. However then may Satan blind the unbelieving with pride and haughtiness, so that they disdain and ridicule the building in which we labour; yet the Lord himself will show that he is the chief builder, and will give to Christ the power to complete the work.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that since Satan at this day sets against us many terrors to cast us down, and we are very weak,—O grant, that with our eyes lifted above we may meditate on that invincible power which thou possessest, and by which thou canst overcome all the hindrances of this world: and then, when nothing in this world but what is contemptible appears to us as ca-

pable to confirm and support our faith, may we, by the eye of faith, behold thine hidden power, and never doubt but that thou wilt at length perform what the world at this day thinks to be impossible and therefore ridicules; and may we so constantly persevere in this confidence, that every one of us may devote to thee his labour to the end, and never faint in the work of promoting the spiritual building, until at length we ourselves shall be gathered, and others shall be gathered through our labours, to offer to thee not only spiritual sacrifices, such as thou receivest now from us, but also to offer to thee, together with the angels, eternal sacrifice of praise and triumphant thanksgiving, on seeing perfected what at this day is only weakly begun.—Amen. □

Book Review

Marriage, the Mystery of Christ and the Church: The Covenant-Bond in Scripture and History, by David J. Engelsma. Grand Rapids: Reformed Free Publishing Association, 1998. 239 pp. \$24.95 (cloth). [Reviewed by Charles Crismier III.*]

At last! A refreshing relook at Marriage ... *The Mystery of Christ and the Church*.

God has only one wife. He calls her the "Bride of Christ." And the "Apostle of grace," Paul, makes clear that Christ will not come back for a Bride with spot, wrinkle, or any such thing (Eph. 5:27). What then does God think of people professing His name while engaging in serial divorce and remarriage?

Is this an end-time issue measuring the end-time church? Have we been "weighed in the balances and found wanting"?

Consider these spirit-boggling facts. According to evangelical pollster George Barna, the divorce rate among fundamentalist Christians now exceeds the nation as a whole by 7%. "Born again" Christians were 4% more likely to divorce than the society as a whole. A Hartford Seminary study of 4,440 Protestant ministers in 10 denominations revealed pastors "are equally as likely to have their marriages end in divorce as general church members." And John Maxwell's Partners in Prayer newsletter from INJOY Ministries lamented that pastors have the "2nd highest divorce rate among all professions ... up 65% in the last 20 years."

While conservatives and evangelicals have for a generation excoriated the "world" for abortion and homosexuality, it appears we have taken the lead in tearing down the family. While wringing

our hands in emotional outrage over the carnage wreaked by angry children, we have blindly offered our young as a sacrifice on the altar of personal happiness through the carnage of divorce. Divorce has become to the church what abortion is to the nation. How did it happen? And what can be done to restore godly, enduring marriages among those who bear Christ's name?

David J. Engelsma, in his revised *Marriage, the Mystery of Christ and the Church*, Reformed Free Publishing, 1998, provides what may well be the clearest expression of God's heart on the matter of marriage in print today. In simple, readable form, the author sets out the biblical view of marriage. Avoiding the pop-culture mantras of the day, Engelsma carefully reweaves the tapestry of the earthly marital union from the common thread of the Old and New Covenants into a practical and beautiful expression of the "great mystery," the relationship of Christ and His church.

* Charles Crismier III is founder of SAVE AMERICA Ministries, based in Richmond, Virginia, and host of VIEWPOINT, a daily radio program, "Confronting the Issues of America's Heart and Home."

Engelsma leaves no biblical stone unturned. He wipes the tarnish off the mottled model of marriage displayed in America's post-modern, post-Christian culture, restoring the glory of God's divine intention from the creation.

Marriage is a "creation institution" according to the writer. God Himself conducted the first wedding, declaring, "It is not good that man should be alone." Yet God did not intend for His man to divorce in order to remarry. "From the beginning it was not so."

Then how can we explain supposed Bible-believing Christians taking the lead in divorcing their spouses and remarrying others, baptizing such actions in blithe "God bless you's" and "I prayed about it"? Have we wrapped rebellion in religious cloak and marketed it to a consumer church addicted to good feelings and the American doctrine of the "pursuit of happiness"?

Engelsma contends religiously-correct divorce in the church reveals the end-time lawlessness prophesied by the "Apostle of grace." "This is not simply lawlessness. This is antinomism. Antinomism is the heresy that finds in grace an excuse, if not a warrant, for sinning."

With refreshing candor, this book refuses to pander to cultural whim or engage in biblical gymnastics to vault over or around clear truth. It might leave a few people-pleasing pastors rubbing their tender toes. On the other hand, it could lead many to gasp for the oxygen of faith ushering in

a glorious revival of marriage.

The integrity of the author's treatment is amplified by stepping across "religiously-correct" lines to reveal the seeds of the current divorce culture having been planted by the very Reformers themselves. Authenticating remarriage was the key, according to Engelsma, that unlocked the Pandora's box for free-wheeling divorce in the church. And it was John Calvin who handed the church the key, claiming "that adultery certainly and desertion probably are valid grounds for remarriage."

"The theory that adultery dissolves a marriage," says the author, "runs seriously stuck on the gospel of grace." "The bond established by God can and does survive adultery." "The Reformers and the tradition that followed them must be criticized and rejected" because "tradition, precious as it is to us, must not be allowed to override the Scriptures."

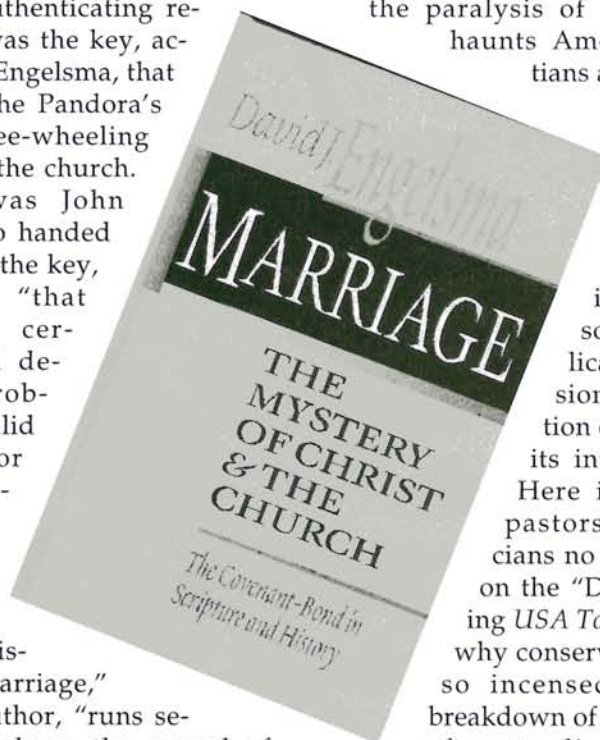
Many may wince at David Engelsma's biblical proscription of remarriage and prescription for repentance. Certainly there will be painful fallout in turning from a pastorally-blessed system that has driven a stake through the heart of

biblical marriage. Could the pain of repentance be any worse than the excruciating pain that has devastated an entire generation of America's children? Take courage!

Here is hope for the healing of a nation. Here is the antidote for the paralysis of renewal that haunts American Christians after a generation of crying to our Lord for a nation-changing revival. Here is well reasoned and biblically-based vision for restoration of marriage to its intended place. Here is liberty for pastors and politicians no longer to gag on the "D" word, forcing *USA Today* to inquire why conservatives can be so incensed about the breakdown of the family yet refuse to discuss divorce honestly as its cause.

Have I overstated the case? I think not! Revival may hinge upon it. Eternal destiny of many may depend upon it. This is a must read for every sincere Christian as we see the signs of the soon return of our Lord who will receive only a pure Bride.

David J. Engelsma is to be commended. Let *Marriage, The Mystery of Christ and the Church* become a beacon of hope in every Christian home. □



Report of Classis East

Classis East met in regular session on Wednesday, May 12, 1999 at the Grace Protestant Reformed Church in Standale, MI.

Each church was represented by two delegates. Rev. K. Kooles was the chairman for this session.

Most of the business of this ses-

sion was routine. Two matters, however, did command the attention of the classis.

First, delegates from the newly-

May 12, 1999
Grace Protestant Reformed Church

organized congregation in northwest Indiana presented their credentials to this classis. This congregation had been organized by Classis West under the auspices of the South Holland PRC. Classis East decided to receive the credentials of and seat the delegates from this new congregation. The following grounds were adopted for this action: 1) It is the desire of the consistory that their congregation be part of Classis East, 2) This is in compliance with the rule for classical membership laid down in the

By-Laws of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America, VI, B. Rev. W. Bruinsma was appointed as moderator for this congregation. Classis gave a hearty welcome to these delegates and wished God's blessings upon them as they begin their life as a congregation.

Second, a brother brought an appeal against a consistory's decision. This matter concerned divorce and had been treated previously by the classis. The brother argued, however, that new evidence was available to him and, on

that basis, the consistory ought to reconsider his complaint. Classis sustained the appeal of the brother and instructed the consistory to consider and respond to the new evidence presented.

Classical appointments were given to the NW Indiana congregation. Expenses for this classis amounted to \$783.25.

Classis will meet next on Wednesday, September 8, 1999 at the Hudsonville PRC.

Respectfully submitted,
Jon J. Huiskens, Stated Clerk

News From Our Churches

Congregation Activities

The week of May 24-27 the Young People's Society of the Covenant PRC in Wyckoff, New Jersey hosted what we hope will be their first annual Young Adults' Retreat. We say first annual because, from all indications, this retreat was very worthwhile and something that should be repeated.

Since most of the 35 or so young adults, representing nearly all of our churches in Canada and the U.S., were able to arrive by Saturday afternoon, the congregation at Covenant organized a BBQ dinner at their church for the evening. This was followed on Sunday with worship together around God's Word, dinner at church, and a singspiration after the evening service.

The retreat "officially" began the next morning, with the young adults traveling to Harvey Cedars Bible Conference Center on Long Beach Island on the Atlantic Ocean. As you might imagine, activities for the week included a day trip to New York City, as well as historic Philadelphia, and a day spent at the beach.

The theme for this retreat was,

"Let Your Light So Shine Before Men," based on Matthew 5:16. Monday, Prof. R. Dykstra gave the first speech, entitled, "Dating in the Light of Christ." Tuesday Rev. C. Terpstra spoke on "How Does Your Light Shine?" and on Wednesday evening Rev. M. VanderWal concluded the retreat by speaking on "Into the Darkness of the World."

The Hudsonville, MI PRC sent out a notice to area churches inviting their recent high school graduates and college students to a six-week course this summer aimed at arming them against the error of evolutionism as taught in their college classes and elsewhere. These classes began on June 15 and were to meet for the five weeks following.

We also take this opportunity to welcome to the back page of the *SB* our newly organized congregation in northwest Indiana. Recently their council presented them with four choices for a name. These choices included Calvary, Cornerstone, Grace, and Trinity. At a congregational meeting on May 16, they chose the name Cornerstone. Hopefully we will be hearing more from them in the future.

Minister Activities

At that same congregational meeting, the congregation of Cornerstone extended a call to Can-

didate Nathan Brummel to be their first pastor. With him on that trio were Rev. J. Slopsema and Rev. A. Spriensma.

After Rev. S. Key's decline of a call from the Hull, IA PRC, that congregation has extended a call to Rev. A. denHartog to serve as their next pastor. With him on the trio were the Revs. B. Gritters and K. Koole.

Mission Activities

Rev. and Mrs. Daniel Kleyn left for the Philippines on May 18. They were scheduled to meet Rev. and Mrs. Kortering there, and together they were planning on visiting contacts we have in Manila, Daet, Bacolod, and Cagayan de Oro. Their work involved preaching, lecturing, and giving instruction in the truths of the Reformed faith. They also hoped to continue investigating the possibility of establishing a field for our churches there in the future.

Evangelism Activities

With the help of their congregation, the Evangelism Committee of the Hudsonville, MI PRC recently distributed approximately 2000 copies of the booklet, "The Family: Foundations are Shaking." On May 11 and 12, volunteers left Hudsonville church with boxes of booklets. The city had been di-

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

vided into 9 areas, with 4-6 people distributing to the homes in each area. In addition to the many positives that come from a project like this, everyone who helped now knows what it feels like to be a mailman.

On May 7 and 8 our Bethel PRC in Roselle, IL again sponsored an evangelism conference. Rev. A. Spriensma was the guest speaker. On Friday evening he spoke on the topic, "Sovereign Election and Zealous Evangelism." Saturday's topic was a meditation on Acts

26:29, followed by presentations from the Evangelism Committees of the Peace and South Holland PRCs. The Domestic Mission Committee and the Reformed Witness Hour also gave presentations on their current work.

The Evangelism Committee at First PRC in Grand Rapids, MI invited area congregations to hear Rev. R. Moore speak, on May 16, concerning the work he and his wife will be doing in Ghana.

On June 6 the Byron Center, MI PRC once more sponsored their an-

nual special service, in which a concerted effort is made to invite the community to worship together with them. Rev. Doug Kuiper preached on Philippians 4:6, 7, which explained the biblical way to deal with anxiety and worry and the blessing that the child of God has in dealing with them correctly.

Food For thought

"Anxiety springs from the desire that things should happen as we wish rather than as God wills."

—Anonymous □

ANNOUNCEMENTS

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Men's Society of Hope Protestant Reformed Church in Redlands express their deepest Christian sympathy to Larry and Duane Huisken and their families in the death of their father and grandfather,

MR. HENRY HUISKEN, SR.

Mr. Huisken was a frequent visitor at the Men's Society, and his insights into God's Word will be greatly missed. May you find comfort and blessed assurance in the knowledge that death is itself the entrance to everlasting glory and life. As God's Word instructs us: "I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live" (John 11:25).

Rev. Arie denHartog, President
Earl Grothman, Jr., Secretary

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Mary Martha Society of Hope PRC in Redlands expresses their heartfelt Christian sympathy to Donna and Esther Huisken and their families in the loss of their father-in-law and grandfather,

MR. HENRY HUISKEN, SR.

We pray that they might be comforted by God's Word: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life" (John 5:24).

Rev. Arie denHartog, President
Cindy Grothman, Secretary

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On July 19, 1999, our parents,
**REV. RONALD and RHONDA
CAMMENG,**

will celebrate their 25th anniversary. We, their children, would like to thank them for all their years of Christian love, guidance, and godly instruction they have given us. We are thankful for Christian parents who have fulfilled their covenant vows in raising us with His Word and by their faithful example. We pray that God will continue to bless them and keep them in His care. "For this God is our God forever and ever: he will be our guide even unto death" (Psalm 48:14).

✿ Marc and Rebekah Kuiper
✿ Kerwen and Catherine Kooiker
✿ Ben and Liz Cammenga
✿ Chuck, Laura, Leanne, Amy,
Daniel, Tracy, Cherith, Jared

Grandville, Michigan

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The consistory and congregation of Hope PRC of Redlands, CA express their Christian sympathy to Elder Larry Huisken and family in the passing away of their father and grandfather,

MR. HENRY HUISKEN.

May they be comforted with the words of Scripture: "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" (Revelation 14:13).

Doug Pastoor, Clerk

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On June 21, 1999, our beloved parents, grandparents, and great grandparents,

FRED and MARION ONDERSMA,
celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary.

We are very thankful to our heavenly Father for His gift of covenant parents, for the Christian love, godly instruction, and faithful example they have given us.

We give thanks to God for His great faithfulness and pray that God will bless and keep them in their remaining years.

"It is God that girdeth me with strength and maketh my way perfect" (Psalm 18:32).

✿ Robert and Kaye Moelker
Henry and Arlene Westhuis
Henry, Katy, Robb, Lindsay, Aaron
Russell and Amy Zwak
Kelly, Kurt, Kyle, Kamy, Kraig,
Kaley, Kara

✿ Gary and Roselyn Moelker
Michael and Jennifer Moelker
Joshua
Scott and Sharla Moelker
Erica, Branden
James and Tami Boorsma
Todd, Lynette

✿ Larry and Judy Meulenberg
Jeremy and Heidi Meulenberg
David James (in glory), Madeline
David and Dawn Meulenberg
Rick and Marianne DeVries
Derrick, Caitlyn
Mark, Jodianna, Julianne,
Cherianne, Joshua, Caleb,
Matthew

Grandville, Michigan

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On June 19, 1999, our parents and grandparents,

GERRIT and JEANETTE BOVERHOF, celebrated their 40th wedding anniversary. We thank God for the Christian example that they have shown to us for all these years and for the never-ending love and guidance they have given to us. May the Lord bless them as they continue their lives together.

"Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain that build it" (Psalm 127:1a).

- ✿ Gary and Deb Boverhof
Mike, Brent, Joel
- ✿ Scott and Joyce Boverhof
- ✿ Dan Boverhof
- ✿ Jeremy and Tressa Lubbers

Grand Rapids, Michigan

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

MR. and MRS. ROBERT MOELKER

celebrated their 40th wedding anniversary on June 26, 1999. We, their children and grandchildren, thank God for them and for the faithful covenant instruction they have always given us. We pray that God will continue to bless them in the years to come and keep them and us faithful to His word.

- ✿ Henry and Arlene Westhuis
Henry, Katy, Robert, Lindsay, Aaron
- ✿ Russ and Amy Zwak
Kelly, Kurt, Kyle, Kamy, Kraig,
Kaley, Kara

Grand Rapids, Michigan

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On May 17, our parents,

STEVE and CAROLYN HOUCK, celebrated 30 years of marriage.

We wish to express our appreciation for the wonderful Christian example they have shown us throughout their marriage as well as for their dedication in leading us in the ways of the Lord. We pray that God will continue to bless their marriage. "...as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Joshua 24:15b).

- ✿ Beth
- ✿ Sarah
- ✿ Joel
- ✿ Nate
- ✿ Jeremy
- ✿ Daniel

Lansing, Illinois

TEACHERS

The Federation of the Protestant Reformed Christian Schools has decided to establish a Clearing-House to provide school boards with a list of possible candidates for teaching positions in the PR Christian Schools. Persons who are members of the PR Churches may register. College students are urged to register. To obtain registration forms, write or call the Federation of the PRC Schools, Agatha Lubbers, Executive Director, 2068 Cranbrook Dr., Grand Rapids, MI 49505; telephone: 616-458-2057; FAX: 616-458-4522. Registration forms can be obtained by contacting the administrator of your local PR Christian School, or by contacting your pastor.

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The council and congregation of the Grandville PRC of Grandville, MI wish to express their sincere Christian sympathy to fellow member Mrs. Jo Pastoor in the loss of her brother-in-law,

MR. ALLEN LUBEN.

"Blessed be God, ... the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort, who comforteth us in all our tribulation" (I Corinthians 1:3, 4).

Rev. A. Spriensma, Pres.

Tom Bodbyl, Clerk

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The council of the Byron Center PRC expresses its heartfelt sympathy to retiring elder Sid Miedema, Jr., and to elder elect Duane Mingerink and their families in the death of their father and father-in-law,

SID MIEDEMA, SR.

May they experience Jehovah's compassion in this time of sorrow, and hope in His promises. "Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the LORD" (Psalm 27:14).

Rev. Douglas Kuiper, president
Leroy DeVries, assistant clerk

REMINDER:

The address of the bulletin clerk for Georgetown PRC is:

Mrs. Deborah Altena
1015 Elmwood Dr.
Jenison, MI 49428
(616) 667-2897

NOTIFICATION OF CANDIDACY

All Protestant Reformed consistories are hereby informed that the 1999 synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America has declared Mr. Garrett Eriks a candidate for the gospel ministry in the Protestant Reformed Churches. Candidate Eriks will be eligible for a call on or after July 10, 1999.

Mr. Eriks' address is:

1577 Port Sheldon
Jenison, Michigan 49428
Phone: (616) 457-8320

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The council and congregation of the Grandville PRC of Grandville, MI wish to express their heartfelt sympathy to our fellow members Mr. and Mrs. Jon Huiskens and LaRae Huiskens in the passing to glory of their beloved father and grandfather,

MR. HENRY HUISKEN.

"Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city" (Revelation 22:14).

Rev. A. Spriensma, Pres.

Tom Bodbyl, Clerk

NOTICE!!

Classis West of the Protestant Reformed Churches will meet in South Holland, IL, on Wednesday, September 1, 1999, at 8:30 A.M., the Lord willing. All material for the Agenda is to be in the hands of the stated clerk 30 days before classis convenes, that is, by August 2, 1999. All delegates in need of lodging or transportation from the airport should notify the clerk of South Holland's consistory using the forms provided for that purpose.

Please note: There will also be an officebearers' conference on August 31. More information to come.

Rev. Steven Key,
Stated Clerk

NOTICE!!

Classis East will meet in regular session on Wednesday, September 8, 1999 at the Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church, Hudsonville, MI. Material for this session must be in the hands of the stated clerk no later than August 9, 1999.

Jon J. Huiskens,
Stated Clerk

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The council of the Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church expresses its Christian sympathy to fellow officebearer Jim Jansma and family in the death of his father,

MR. FLOYD JANSMA.

"Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel and afterward receive me to glory" (Psalm 73:24).

Rev. B. Gritters, Pres.
Robert Drnek, Clerk

1999 Summer Seminar!

*The Biblical Way through the
Millennial Maze*

July 21
Postmillennialism
by Rev. Ron Cammenga

July 28
Premillennialism
by Prof. Russ Dykstra

August 4
Dispensationalism
by Prof. Russ Dykstra

August 11
Amillennialism
by Rev. Ron Cammenga

All sessions start at 7:00 P.M. at:
Southwest Protestant Reformed
Church
4875 Ivanrest
Grandville, MI 49418
Questions? Call (616) 532-6876
Sponsored by the Evangelism Committee
of Southwest Protestant Reformed Church

The plans for the 75th Anniversary are progressing very nicely. As we stated in our last notice, the celebration will be held, the Lord willing, from June 19-23, 2000 at Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan.



The sleeping facilities at the college will have two single beds in each room and a bathroom shared with one other identical connecting room. Children may sleep on the floor, and a larger family may take two rooms with a bathroom connecting both rooms. We have been informed that no camping in motor homes or travel trailers will be allowed at Calvin College, so everyone who will be staying on campus will be required to stay in the dorms. Motor homes will be allowed to be parked here on campus during your stay.

The preliminary cost for the week is estimated as follows:

Adults 18 and older: \$150 per person for the week. This will include all meals, lodging, and use of the facilities.

Children 4-17 years: \$50 per child for the week. This will include all meals, lodging, and use of the facilities.

Children 3 and under: Free.

We hope to keep the maximum cost per family at \$400.00 for the whole week. This will keep the maximum amount any family will pay for at 2 adults and 2 children. We hope to be able to do this by offsetting some of our costs with a special finance drive for the celebration this fall. All the speeches and programs will be free. The rate for attending for a day will be \$15.00 for adults, \$5.00 for children (4-17), children 3 and under, free. The maximum for a family will be \$40.00 per day. This will include 2 meals and use of the facilities.

The program committee will be preparing a commemorative booklet with pictures and information about the celebration. This booklet will be given to everyone who registers for the celebration. A coloring book will also be given to the children. It will include some of the events that the children, with their families, may be involved with during their vacation at the celebration. A supply of these coloring books will be sent out this fall to all the churches for our children.

The activities committee is looking for volunteers willing to teach the Children's Bible School. Please contact Mary VanOverloop at (616) 669-3860 if you are interested.

Finally, we ask for your prayers that God will use this celebration for His honor and glory and for the edification of our churches. May we give Him all the glory.

The 75th Anniversary Committee