



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

The Standard Bearer

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The Divine Record-Book

Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name.

And they shall be mine, saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.

Malachi 3:16, 17

We humans are fascinated with records and record-books.

We are diligent to keep books that record the names of men and women who distinguish themselves by their achievements and exploits. We love to remember the names and deeds of the famous people who are recorded in the books, even though they died long ago.

Nations record their rulers and heroes with their deeds—their William of Oranges, George Washing-

tons, and Winston Churchills. Schools remember their outstanding students and their accomplishments. What sport does not have its records, and what fan does not know them? There is even a Guinness book of records for all kinds of extraordinary human conditions and acts.

Behind this fascination with books of records are mankind's love of glory and, for the one who is included in the book, the desire for a certain immortality. To be in the record-book is to live on in the memory of the people, nation, or race.

The LORD our God has such a record-book. There is a divine book of records. So the prophet

Malachi informs us: "a book of remembrance was written before him," that is, before the LORD.

A book of remembrance is a book that records the names of certain persons and their deeds, so that they and their deeds can be remembered later on. Because the book is written by the LORD's direction and because it is written as a book of remembrance "before him," it is a book whose purpose is that the LORD Himself will remember certain persons and their deeds.

Comes a day when the LORD will look into this book: "in that day when I make up my jewels." Then He will remember every one written in the book and his deed, his exploit.

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

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Website for RFA: www.iserv.net/~rfpa

This record-book is not in Washington, DC or in Coopers-town. In fact, it is not on earth. This record-book is in heaven. In heaven, there is a book of life, in which are written the names of all the elect. This book is finished. In heaven, there is also another book, a book that is in preparation, a book in which names were being written in Malachi's day and in which names are being written today.

The divine record-book!

Always the names of men and women are put into record-books for certain outstanding *acts* that they have done, for memorable feats. Similarly, the LORD puts in His record-book the names of those who are distinguished for a certain *act*: "(they) spake often one to another." This seems not to be any glorious, noteworthy thing, worthy of a record-book, or everlasting remembrance. It is no glorious *earthly* deed: winning a war; conquering a dreaded disease; writing a classic book; or even getting the most base hits. Nor, for that matter, does it seem to be any glorious *spiritual* achievement. They did not reform the church, or expose some heresy, or sacrifice themselves as missionaries, or lose their lives as martyrs.

This is important, for if it takes some heroic act to be written in this book most of us will never be included.

Their deed was just this, that they spoke one to another. They came together and talked with each other.

Obviously, what they spoke is the reason why the LORD records their names in His book. The content of their speech, although not stated, is clearly implied in the descriptions of them: "they that feared the LORD"; "that thought upon his name." They spoke about the LORD whom they feared. They spoke about God as their Father, whom they loved, and all His fatherly care for and salvation of

them, e.g., the redemption from Egypt. They spoke about God as their sovereign, whom they revered, and all His wonderful acts of power on their behalf, e.g., the deliverance from Babylon.

The subject of their conversation, inevitably, was that upon which they were always thinking: the name of God. This was the revelation of God to them in the prophetic Word and, in the light of the prophetic Word, in creation and history. Centrally, it was the revelation of God as the faithful covenant God of His chosen people in the promised Messiah, Jesus Christ, as proclaimed in His proper name, Jehovah (translated LORD in the KJV). In one word, they spoke truth.

Their speaking was not a confession to the heathen. Nor was it the evangelism of the straying. It was simply the people of God talking to each other of that which lived in their heart and filled their mind.

This goes in the divine record-book: that men and women speak to each other about the LORD and His truth. This act and these people, God will remember.

The book is figurative, of course, for God's remembering such with favor for a worthy deed.

Still today, God is recording in His book our speaking with each other of His name. We do this in our gatherings for public worship. Not only does God speak to us of His name in the preaching, but we also speak with each other of His name in our singing of the Psalms and in our confession of the faith (Col. 3:16). Twice every Lord's Day! Like the saints of Malachi's time, we speak with each other "often." Daily, we speak with each other in our covenant homes, reading and discussing Holy Scripture, praying, singing. We do this in our visiting on a Sunday evening. When we

get together and speak, not about politics and work, not about sports, not about all the faults of the brothers and sisters in the congregation but about God and His truth, God puts it in the book. We are doing this in our Protestant Reformed Christian Schools. What goes on there, *often*, but this, that one—the teacher—speaks on our behalf with the others—the covenant children—of God's name?

We have the opportunity to do this in our societies and classes for Bible-study that now begin another season. These are worthwhile aspects of our church-life. There is the fellowship, which is also suggested in the text. There is the learning of the name of God. There is also the speaking with companions about God's truth. We have our reasons for not attending: we are busy; we get nothing out of it; we dislike the leader. A reason for attending remains: speaking to each other about the LORD our God.

This is worthwhile!

Speaking the truth of God with each other is a worthy activity!

Only rare, weighty, significant deeds are noted in a book of records. Even earthly record-books do not record the ordinary, the commonplace, the insignificant. Jehovah God certainly keeps only the memorable in His book. He re-

members in this way only that which is worth remembering. Our speaking about Him is worth remembering.

The remarkable character of this speaking is indicated when the prophet says that Jehovah "hearkened and heard." He paid attention to it. He listened.

Something was going on in Judah that was worthy of God, that pleased Him greatly. God does not so hearken to the bombast in Washington, DC; to the international conferences at Geneva; to the fanatical roaring in

*Jehovah God
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Wrigley Field or the United Center; or to the religious talk in the Vatican. But He pays attention to the discussion of sound doctrine by Reformed men, women, young people, and children in their meetings for Bible study. He notices the meeting, listens to the conversation, and puts names in the book.

For this speaking is rare.

How much is it done?

How much is it done in the professing church? How much is the LORD God the subject of *our* talk? How much speaking about the truth is there today?

It was a rare thing in the Judah of Malachi's day. The book of Malachi is a rebuke of Judah for *forgetting* the LORD and *despising* His name. Judah—the Old Testament church!—forgot the name of God in their public worship, in the official teaching by the priests, in their marriages, and in their giving. The result was that most spoke *against* the LORD, as verse 13 charges: "Your words have been stout against me, saith the LORD." In the midst of that apostasy, a remnant—a very few—spoke with each other about God's precious name.

Speaking to each other the truth about God is rare today. It is rare in the nominally Christian churches. In perfect harmony with the fact that much preaching is either blasphemy (lies about God) or entertainment of the people, the singing at church either echoes the blasphemy or celebrates the people. The hideous din of the television set accompanies the family meal, rather than the reading of the Bible. When the members get together, it is for games and physical exercises, not for study of the Word.

Speaking to each other about God is also a weighty activity. It is not light, frivolous, and empty, like making money, sports, politics, winning wars, and establishing empires. This speaking concerns the name of God. That's heavy! That's glorious for a human! That's the

reason for the creation of the world!

The speaking that God remembers in His record-book is the expression of the fear of God by His own elect saints in the world. *Those who fear the LORD and think upon His name* speak often one to another. The speaking arises from the fear of God in the heart and the thinking on His name in the mind.

Speaking to each other the truth about God is rare today.

The mouth speaks of that with which the heart is full. This is why they speak. It is not to impress people. It is not even to get into the record-book. But they reverence and love the LORD. The fear of the LORD is precious. It glorifies the LORD. Thus also does the speaking that expresses this fear glorify the LORD. It is the loving service of the heavenly Father by His child in the world, as the text suggests: "... as a man spareth his own son that serveth him."

This is the worthiness of the deed to be remembered in the divine book of records.

And to be rewarded.

It is always the case that being in a record-book brings a benefit. This is the reason why having one's name in a record-book is desirable. Often, there are financial rewards. Above all, there is fame, fame that will live down the ages.

The same is true of being written in the divine record-book. We are remembered by the LORD with a view to His rewarding us. The text states that "a book of remembrance was written before him *for them*."

What the reward will be, verse 17 informs us: "And they shall be mine ... in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them."

As these people remembered Him, the LORD will remember them

in "that day," that is, the Judgment Day.

Negatively, He will spare them. He will spare them the punishment of damnation in hell, a judgment that will be visited upon the nominal church members who never did speak with each other about the name of God, because they did not fear Him. Implied is that those who spoke about the LORD will live everlastingly. This is the immortality of the divine record-book.

Positively, acknowledging them as His own people and property, He will bless them with His own life and glory in Christ Jesus. They will be displayed as God's treasures, His "jewels." This is the honor of the divine record-book.

That immortality and glory are the reward of our speaking about God is no doctrine of salvation by merit. Our speaking about God does not earn salvation. Conclusively, the text says that those who spoke about God will be "spared." They merited only one thing: punishment. In the judgment, they will be "spared" by compassionate

grace on the basis of the cross of Jesus Christ alone.

Besides, it is the grace of the Spirit of Christ that causes us to fear the LORD, think upon His name, and speak about His truth. Ultimately, the cause is the book of election. In the Day of Christ, the names in both books, the book of election and the divine record-book, will correspond exactly. The remnant who fear and speak are the remnant according to the election of grace, and they are the former because they are the latter.

Unlike all earthly record-books, therefore, this divine record-book gives no occasion to pride, boasting, and glorying in man.

But it is incentive to our frequent and faithful speaking together about God and His truth. □

The remnant who fear and speak are the remnant according to the election of grace, and they are the former because they are the latter.

The Running of the White Horse*

(2)

And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals, and I heard, as it were the noise of thunder, one of the four beasts saying, Come and see.

And I saw, and behold a white horse: and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer.

— Revelation 6:1, 2

Necessary for the church and her ministers is the confidence that the powerful presence of Jesus Christ in the world—the preaching of the gospel—is victorious.

The Victory of the White Horse

How the victory of the church's preaching of the gospel is taught in every possible way in the passage!

The white horse runs as the execution of the counsel of the enthroned God, indeed as the execution of the decree that has primacy in the counsel.

The white horse runs at the will and direction of the Lamb who has authority to loose this and all seals as the one who was slain and who now receives all power.

There is the white color of the horse, symbolic of heavenly triumph.

There is the great battle-bow.

Such is the victory that the rider is given the crown of victory before ever the white horse begins to run in New Testament history. Victory is a foregone conclusion.

Then, to the highest honor of Jesus Christ, it is said that the white horse runs, not only with the purpose of conquering, not even with the final outcome of conquering, but also and indeed *conquering at every stage of its course and as regards the entirety of its course*. The white horse is never defeated. It is not defeated when the early church after the apostles is brought to the stake and the arena. It is not defeated when the church institute dreadfully departs in the apostasy of the Middle Ages. It is not defeated when by the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre and other atrocities the false church virtually roots the true church out of France. It is not defeated when men and women reject and blaspheme the gospel on the mission field. It is not defeated when your son or daughter, or mine, in the sphere of the covenant tramples the blood of the covenant underfoot. It is not defeated when at the end the two witnesses lie dead in the street of the great city because the beast out of the abyss has "overcome them" (Rev. 11:7).

The white horse is the presence of Jesus Christ in history, and Jesus Christ is invincible.

The presence of Jesus at His first coming was symbolized by the lowly ass. His presence now by His Word and Spirit is the all- and ever-conquering charger.

This is true, and can only be

true, because the mission of the white horse is spiritual: the establishment and extension of Messiah's spiritual kingdom in the regenerated, believing hearts and holy lives of all those in all nations whom the triune God has chosen to be citizens and for whom the Lamb was slain.

Make Christ's mission in our present age earthly, view His kingdom and kingdom as carnal—a matter of numbers, of earthly success, of physical dominion, of political power, and of social influence—then, perhaps, you can say that the white horse runs with the purpose of conquering, or even with the final result of conquering, but you cannot say, "conquering." If the mission of Christ in history is earthly, the white horse is often defeated. Recall the very circumstances in which Christ revealed to John the victory of the gospel. Antichristian Rome ruled. The synagogue of Satan was powerful. The church hid in the catacombs, a martyr-church. Old John was driven from his pulpit and congregation and was exiled on Patmos.

And the white horse was running, conquering and to conquer!

For the gospel triumphs as the spiritual power which, according to the will of God as carried out by the Lamb, unites to Jesus Christ, justifies, sanctifies, and preserves the Lamb's people, every one, so that they all witness to Christ in their place in the world. In the salvation of the elect in every nation, all the nations are made disciples of Christ (see Matt. 28:19).

Fundamental to the triumph of

* The text of the address given at the graduation exercises of the Protestant Reformed Theological Seminary on June 14, 1999 in Holland, MI. The first installment appeared in the August, 1999 issue of the *Standard Bearer*.

the gospel is that its goal is not the salvation of all. If the purpose of Christ with the gospel is universal salvation, the white horse is defeated. Many perish, never hearing the gospel. Many others perish, rejecting the gospel in unbelief. But the gracious purpose of Christ with the gospel is particular: the salvation of those whose names are written from eternity in the book of life of the Lamb (see Rev. 13:8). It is also Christ's purpose with the gospel to judge the reprobate world of the ungodly, which is always the kingdom of the beast. The running of the white horse is the first seal, and the seals are judgments. The battle-bow destroys the reprobate wicked: "Thine arrows are sharp in the heart of the king's enemies" (Ps. 45:5).

The victory of Christ in the gospel demands, and includes, that Jesus Christ is *preached* as victorious. The *content* of the preaching is the conquering Jesus Christ. He is to be preached as triumphant in His death and resurrection (Rev. 5). He is to be preached as triumphant in His return at the end (Rev. 19).

But He is also to be preached as triumphant in the preaching of the gospel. This is the issue for the church in our day. Denial of this by affirming that the Jesus of the gospel loves and is gracious to all hearers, sincerely desirous of saving them all, is, as such, denial that the white horse runs "conquering." And this is the wedge to introduce the denial of the victory of Jesus Christ in its entirety. To put it theologically, Arminianism is incipient modernism. The doctrine of a "well-meant offer" is a public declaration that the white horse is often defeated, indeed, that whatever victories it enjoys are due to the will of the sinner. So also is the doctrine of a gracious, justifying, but conditional promise of the gospel to every physical child of believers alike.

The white horse does not conquer apart from the *message*, the

content, the *doctrine*, the *truth*, of the gospel. This message is sovereign, particular, efficacious grace, by means of the Word and Sacraments, according to the eternal decree of election, and a hardening operation of the Spirit upon others, determined by the counsel of reprobation. Only as a gospel with this message does the gospel always conquer. Inasmuch as the gospel is both a savor of life unto life and a savor of death unto death can the apostle exclaim, "Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ" (II Cor. 2:14-16).

The message is the sovereign Christ of the Reformed faith as this faith is set down in the Reformed confessions.

Because the synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches labors for the one, true gospel, its meeting is validated and significant. Because the young man graduating from the Protestant Reformed Seminary loves this gospel and is ready to vow faithfully to preach it and energetically to defend it, his graduation is a joyful occasion.

Encouragement of Church and Minister

For the church in the world and especially for a young man taking up the ministry, the grand vision of the running of the white horse is encouragement.

Church and minister need this encouragement.

We need this encouragement, first, because the white horse runs in battle. The white horse is the *war-horse*, the most powerful, fearsome instrument of war in the world at that time. This explains the bow in the hands of the rider. That the white horse runs in battle is implied in the words "conquering, and to conquer." The battle is against the dragon and his beast, with the whore as ally. The battle is for the kingdom and glory of Jesus Christ in the world. By virtue of her calling to preach the Word, the true church is plunged

into this war. By virtue of his office, the young minister must fight in this war. In this war, encouragement is necessary for the army of Christ—not any encouragement whatever, but specifically the encouragement of the vision of the running of the white horse "conquering, and to conquer."

We need this encouragement, second, because, although the white horse conquers, we often can neither see nor feel the victory, but rather suffer seeming failure and defeat.

Let the young minister work in the congregation or on the mission field with his eye of faith on the huge, invincible white horse. It is reality. The failure and defeat of the gospel are only seeming.

In the running of the white horse is motivation to labor. Every sermon, every catechism class, every sick call, every admonition, every faithful bringing of the Word to the needy in the late hours of the night, yes, and all the faithful preparation, is the running of the white horse.

The lazy, faithless, or heretical minister will not cripple the horse, nor frustrate its running, but on his part he is guilty of the attempt, and the hooves of the white horse will grind him into powder.

Keeping his eye on the white horse will strengthen the young minister to endure in the ministry. When there is unfair criticism, when your work seems to get nowhere, when your congregation seems so small, when the forces of darkness increase, when your own weaknesses, "thorn," and sins bid fair to undo your ministry—then believe that the white horse conquers, in your ministry.

And at the end of your ministry, should Christ not yet have returned in the body, this will be your satisfaction and reward: "By the grace of the Lamb who saved me, my life and work were privileged to be one stride, short though it was, in the glorious running of the white horse." ■

New Bavinck Book by the Dutch Reformed Translation Society

This summer the Dutch Reformed Translation Society (DRTS) produced another book by Herman Bavinck in English translation. This is the second put out by the DRTS. The first was *The Last Things: Hope for This World and the Next* (Baker, 1996). The recent volume is a 289-page paperback entitled, *In the Beginning: Foundations of Creation Theology*. As *The Last Things* is the eschatology section in Bavinck's hitherto untranslated four-volume work of Reformed dogmatics, *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek*, *In the Beginning* is the section on creation.

The book is available from Baker Books in Grand Rapids, MI for \$15.99. Baker is the publisher of the Bavinck translation for the DRTS.

The importance of the publication is that it makes the thought of the great Dutch Reformed theologian on creation available in English for the first time. Included is Bavinck's treatment of the creation of heaven and its angels; the six days of creation week; the controversy between creation and evolution; the creation of man; the image of God; the covenant with Adam; and providence.

It is not my purpose here to review the book. A review will ap-

pear in a later issue of the *Standard Bearer*.

My purpose is twofold. I call the attention of our readers to this significant new book. Since the DRTS receives royalties on the sale of the book, which helps with future publications, buying the book is a way of supporting the work of the DRTS. I also like to recommend support of the work of the DRTS in another way.

A number of Reformed laymen, pastors, and theological professors organized the DRTS in 1994 to make important Reformed theological and religious literature originally published in Dutch available in English translation. The Society decided to begin with the four volumes of Herman Bavinck's *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek* (*Reformed Dogmatics*). The two paperbacks already published by the Society are excerpts from this classic work of Reformed theology. The Society plans to publish its translation in four, handsome, hardback, matching volumes, beginning with volume I next year, God willing.

The translation of the entire four-volume set is 90% finished. Editing of the translated material is about 30% finished.

The translating, by a professional translator, and editing make up the cost of the project for the

Society, and this cost is sizable—about \$80,000. About \$10,000 is still needed to finish the project.

The Society is already planning the translation and publication of other Dutch works, specifically, works on Reformed spirituality.

Interested persons can support the work by becoming a member of the Society. For a contribution of \$100 or more, one becomes a lifetime member of the Society. This enables him or her to buy all publications of the Society at a 50% discount and to receive periodic newsletters informing the members of the ongoing work of the Society. A major donor—one who gives \$500 or more—receives all DRTS publications free and a large copy of an original drawing of Herman Bavinck suitable for framing.

The DRTS is incorporated as a not-for-profit corporation in the state of Michigan. All contributions, including the \$100 membership donation, are tax-deductible.

Membership donations and other contributions, as well as requests for more information (the DRTS has an informative brochure which it will send upon request), should be sent to:

Dutch Reformed Translation Society
P.O. Box 7083
Grand Rapids, MI 49510. ■

DeMar Declines Debate

In a letter published in the May 15, 1999 issue of the *Standard Bearer*, Christian Reconstruction postmillennialist Gary DeMar chal-

lenged me to a debate.

This was not the first challenge thrown out to me by this leading advocate of postmillennialism. In

a letter published in the March 15, 1995 issue of the *Standard Bearer*, Mr. DeMar wrote:

Why not open the campus of the seminary of the Protestant Reformed Church (*sic*) to a debate on the topics of "the last days" and "postmillennialism"? I would be willing to pay my own way to participate in such a debate. How about it, Prof. Engelsma?

I accepted the challenge subject to three perfectly reasonable conditions: the topic of the debate will be amillennialism vs. postmillennialism; the basis of the debate will be Holy Scripture as summarized in the Reformed confessions; and the debate in Grand Rapids will be followed by a debate in Atlanta (see "Acceptance of the Challenge to Debate," in the *Standard Bearer*, June, 1999).

We notified Mr. DeMar of this acceptance of his challenge by certified mail.

Now Mr. DeMar informs us that he declines to debate after all.

What follows is his "bedankje" in full without any editorial comment.

July 28, 1999

David Engelsma
Protestant Reformed Seminary
4949 Ivanrest Avenue
Grandville, MI 49418

Dear David,

Since I do not get the *Standard Bearer* in subscription form, I do not always know what you write. Friends periodically send me portions of your articles or e-mail me telling me things you have written. You write: "I expected that Mr. DeMar would get in touch with me, to arrange a time for the debate. But I heard nothing more from him." How would I know to get in touch with you? The polite and official thing to do would have been to send me a letter.

And why do you get to set the conditions? You state "Everything depends upon the right understanding of Matthew 24." If there is a debate, then it will be on this passage. Hours can be spent on this very significant portion of Scripture. I don't want to go hopscotching through the Bible until

this large portion of prophetic material is nailed down. Since the majority of *Last Days Madness* deals with the Olivet Discourse, then this will be the topic of the debate.

I am not interested in having you come to Atlanta. My initial challenge to you was to come to your seminary and present my case before your students. Your circle of influence is too small for me to spend too much time on this matter. Please don't take offense at this. I'm considered small potatoes in dispensational circles. It's a matter of the proper allocation of limited resources.

Since I do not have a subscription to the *Standard Bearer*, please send me all the articles that you have written on the topic and any book that represents your views. While I am extremely busy, I will take time to read them.

Sincerely,
Gary DeMar

President, AMERICAN VISION
Atlanta, GA □

Marking the Bulwarks of Zion

Prof. Herman Hanko

Cassianus, Faustus, and Semi-Pelagianism (1)

Introduction

The attack against the doctrines of sovereign grace which had been made by Pelagius and his disciple Celestius were answered by the great bishop of Hippo, Augustine. But Augustine was only one individual in the

church. He was its greatest thinker; he was its soundest theologian; he towered over his age like a colossus. But what he believed and taught, while influential in the lives of many others, could not become official church dogma until the church adopted his position.

Would the church do this? That was the crucial question of the age. Sooner or later the church was going to have to say something about the matter. It could not turn its eyes the other way and act as if the controversy did not exist. The differences of opinion were too

sharp, the divisions too deep. A doctrine of "one, holy, catholic church" required a statement on this divisive issue of sovereign grace.

If one knew nothing about the outcome of the controversy and had no idea of what the church ultimately decided, one could almost certainly predict that Augustine would lose, his views would be rejected, and his position repudiated. And so it happened. There is an irony here: Rome has canonized Augustine; in Rome's book of saints, Augustine's name is writ-

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

ten in large letters. But he is apparently, according to Rome, a saint who had his theology all mixed up. He goes down in Rome's annals as one who attained sainthood in spite of terrible heresies. This anomaly Rome has yet to explain.

The story of how and why Rome repudiated Augustine is a long one. It cannot be told in one article. It extends over 400 years. But it is an interesting story that is worth telling. I can think of at least three reasons why the story is so interesting. One is that the struggle was long and bitter, and indeed ended in the brutal murder of one of Augustine's most eloquent defenders. A second reason is the fact that, when one carefully considers the problem Rome faced, he sees that Rome really had little choice but to repudiate Augustine's views. Rome could not be Augustinian and remain Rome. This was true already in Augustine's lifetime, but it became more abundantly clear in the centuries following Augustine. We shall have to examine why what I say is true. And the third reason why the story is interesting is that the controversy shows, in an astonishing way, how the issues that faced the church a millennium and a half ago are issues which still divide the church today. Pushing aside for the moment many different questions that were discussed, we can say with certainty that the real issue was this: Is the grace of Almighty God sovereign or resistible? And, in this same connection, it is interesting to observe that the defenders of, e.g., the well-meant offer of the gospel, raise today the same objections to the view held in the Protestant Reformed Churches which the enemies of Augustine raised in his day against Augustine's teachings.

With that, let us get on with the story.

John Cassianus and Faustus of Riez

These two men are not, taken

by themselves, very interesting or important men. Not a whole lot is known of their lives, nor did they contribute anything substantial to the history of the church of Christ or the history of the development of the doctrine of Scripture. Their importance lies strictly in this: they both were sharp opponents of Augustine's doctrines.

A word or two about their lives will suffice.

John Cassianus was born in or near Marseilles in southern France. Although he received some education in his hometown, he soon traveled to the East, where he entered a monastery in Bethlehem. In Bethlehem he came under the tutorship of Germanus, the head of the monastery, and an extremely influential man in Palestine and Egypt.

Apparently both Cassianus and Germanus were fascinated with the whole concept of monasticism, because they traveled together to Egypt to visit with the Egyptian monks. They stayed on for seven years and learned the theory, practice, and doctrine of monasticism.

At this point I must say something which needs to be explored more fully at some later point. The fact is that monasticism was based on a certain theology, although the theology was primarily ethical. Monasticism taught that one who practices celibacy, self-denial through various ascetic practices, and poverty lived on a higher level of holiness than the child of God who married, brought up a family, and earned a living. Because these monks (and nuns) lived on this higher plane of holiness, closer to heaven and God, they were saints of a higher caliber. It is not difficult to see that such thinking would inevitably lead to the notion that such saints, practicing such self-denial, were more pleasing to God than the ordinary run-of-the-mill Christian who struggled with raising his children, loving his wife, and earning his daily bread. But if God was more pleased with the

monk who starved himself than with the hard working laborer who enjoyed his evening meal, then some works merited favor in God's sight. The determinative word here is "favor." In other words, out of monkery came the idea of the meritorious value of good works. Monks, quite generally, believed they were meriting with God. So did John Cassianus.

But more about that at another time.

After seven years in Egypt, John and Germanus traveled to Constantinople. Nothing much happened here of importance, except two things: one was that John met Chrysostom, the golden-tongued preacher, and studied under him. Chrysostom also ordained John as a deacon. The other event was that, when Chrysostom was exiled because he attacked the wickedness of the empress, John and Germanus, friends of Chrysostom, thought it the better part of wisdom to leave.

John returned to Southern France (Gaul, as it was known in those days) and spent the rest of his life in his hometown.

John's name has gone down in Roman Catholic history as the real founder of monasticism in the West. He had learned his lessons well in Bethlehem and Egypt. Upon returning to France, he founded two monasteries, one for men, one for women. The one for men became in time one of the most famous monasteries in Europe, the Abbey of St. Victor. Over these monasteries he exercised his rule, and for these monasteries he drew up a set of rules.

The dates of John's birth and death are obscure. He was apparently born around 360, although even that is in question. He died anywhere from 435-448; but he is said, by at least one historian, to have died when he was 97 years old. Some quick figuring will show that the dates do not come out very well.

Faustus of Riez was, like

Pelagius himself, a native Englishman. He was born around 410, and he chose also the monastic life. He soon moved to Brittany, and from Brittany to Southern France. He is said, by his contemporaries, to have been a very pious and self-sacrificing man who devoted his life to helping others. His reputation as a pious man, a preacher, and a writer soon earned him a bishopric in Riez. One outstanding event in his life (in our judgment, at any rate) was the fact that at the synod of Lyons he was instrumental in having a certain Lucidus condemned for his views on predestination. Lucidus followed Augustine closely, and that kind of adherence to Augustine could not be tolerated. In fact, Faustus has the dubious honor of persuading Lucidus to retract his "heresy."

Other honors came his way. Faustus was chosen by the emperor to engage in negotiations with Euric, king of the Visigoths. The barbarians had already made several successful incursions into Italy and had even sacked Rome. Efforts were being made to keep the

empire intact. Faustus loved politics.

But enough of that.

A Brief Statement of Augustine's Views

We would probably call Augustine a Calvinist if he had lived in our day — at least as far as the truth of God's grace is concerned. He held firmly to the five points of Calvinism, although he lived over 1000 years before Dordt. Augustine not only taught total depravity, but specifically denied the freedom of the will and the whole concept of merit. He insisted that, because man is totally depraved, grace is absolutely essential for salvation. God has to take the initiative, for man can do nothing of himself. Grace is irresistible in its operations, so that God's intentions and purposes are always accomplished. And grace is particular, rooted in the eternal decree of predestination.

Some have challenged the assertion that Augustine taught double predestination, i.e., election and reprobation. There can be no doubt about it that he did. Nor did Augustine teach some wishy-

washy conditional reprobation, a reprobation based on God's prediction that man would reject the gospel. Augustine taught a sovereign reprobation which reflects God's own purpose and will — not man's unbelief.

Perhaps by way of a footnote, I could add here that I have searched many of Augustine's writings to learn what his teachings on predestination were. I have in my file numerous quotes in which Augustine speaks emphatically and unequivocally of reprobation. The conclusion I have come to is the conclusion of other scholars of Augustine as well, even some who disagree violently with Augustine's position.

It nevertheless remains a fact that Augustine, while believing in all the truths of sovereign grace from the beginning of his controversies with Pelagius and Celestius, sharpened and clarified his position when Cassianus and Faustus attacked him and he defended himself against their attacks. This became known as the Semi-Pelagian controversy.

But our discussion of this must wait till next time. □

When Thou Sittest in Thine House

Mrs. MaryBeth Lubbers

The Reformed Family: Catechism

"Feed my lambs, Feed my sheep."
John 21

"I am persuaded that the use of a good Catechism in all our families will be a great safeguard against the increasing errors of the times. Those who use it in their families or classes must labor to explain the sense; but the words should be carefully learned by heart, for they will be understood better as years pass."

C.H. Spurgeon

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

In just a few weeks, catechism classes for the instruction of children in the Protestant Reformed churches will begin. The same questions and answers which we and our parents and grandparents learned will be resounded (echoed down) to the children. "That ye may tell it to the generation following" (Ps. 48:13b).

My earliest memories of catechism begin with Rev. Heys in the

poorly-lit basement of the old white clapboard Hope Church. How impressed we were that a minister could play the piano! We always began catechism class by singing Psalter number 53, and we always ended the class with Psalter number 65. "Grace and truth shall mark the way." Those two virtues became closely associated with catechism, and grew dearer and more meaningful as the years rolled by.

I thought memorizing questions and answers would always be a cinch.

Q. "Who made the world?"

A. "God."

Q. "In how many days did God create the world?"

A. "In six days."

That was easy. And who couldn't understand it? When Dad sat down to check my catechism memorization at the end of the week, I remember telling him that I would recite both the questions and the answers! That was in 1947. Just 10 years later, and those six days to which I so glibly responded in 1947 were infused with new meaning by the popular theologians of the day — and the questions had much more difficult answers. (See H.C., Q and A 26.) Now, I was asking Dad for just a little start, and all sorts of assists here and there.

Sometimes Rev. Heys wasn't able to lead catechism. Then we were taught by one of the elders. When we were in the 8th grade, an old, unschooled — but learned and wise — elder taught the lesson about Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch. Only, he spent the entire hour calling him the Ethiopian Enoch. Like us, I don't think he knew precisely what a eunuch was. But no one laughed. No one so much as cracked a smile. No one showed a hint of amusement. We knew better than to let such a report reach our fathers' ears. Only when we were walking home later that night did we double over with laughter. To our eternal good fortune, no she bears came out of the

Riverbend woods that evening to teach us a sobering lesson about respect.

With the three examples in the paragraphs following, I hope to illustrate three essentials which should characterize a Reformed catechism class. These could also be summed up as *The Pedagogy of Three Professors*.

Discipline: "Discipline has an important place in catechetical instruction. In fact, without discipline, instruction soon breaks down completely" (*Catechetics*, p. 31, Prof. H. Hanko).

A former catechumen remembers it this way.

We thundered down the church steps to the basement where Professor Decker (then, Rev. Decker) sat at the head of the table in the catechism room. We were only first and second graders, and with all the boisterousness of unbridled colts we scrambled for chairs, scraping them noisily across the floor as we began the settling down process.

So far, our new minister and catechism teacher had not spoken a word, and even if he had, we scarcely would have heard him. Gradually, the shuffling and noise subsided. Still, no word. If we had had any sense at all, we would have perceived the ominous stillness emanating from the head of the table. Then, with eyes flashing lightning, and no ceremonious "good mornings," Professor Decker reached for the heavy wooden gavel lying handily nearby, and brought it down on the table with all the force of a lumberjack. With authoritative words and in the sternest of voices, he warned us once and for all that catechism began just outside the church building; he never wanted to hear that din again; let us open with prayer.

For the remainder of Professor Decker's stay in South Holland we crept down those stairs and into that catechism room as silently as a Chicago fog. Professor was always sitting at his customary place at the head of the table when we arrived. He never got up to head us off at the pass. He didn't have to. And the dent from

that gavel has to be embedded in the table, as it is in our memories, to this day.

Proclamation: "... the catechete must take his work as seriously in the catechism class as he does on the pulpit. Rev. Hoeksema writes: 'Instruction of the children and the early adolescents is no less important than the preaching of the Word. It is the ministry of the Word for the coming and growing church. And this is of greatest significance. Even the preaching of the Word depends on the work that is done in the catechism class. The minister therefore must not take his catechetical task too lightly. The temptation is not imaginary that while he faithfully prepares himself for the pulpit, he soon imagines that he can go to the catechism class without preparation. This is a serious mistake'" (*Catechetics*, p. 38, Prof. H. Hanko).

Former catechumens recall their young adult catechism experiences this way.

These were the "glory days" of our catechism life. We were teenagers. We had jobs. We were involved in sports programs. There were birthdays and anniversaries celebrated in our families. But very little deterred us from attending the catechism classes. We wanted to be there. Professor Engelsma's (then, Rev. Engelsma) classes were highly structured and intensely personal. "Sometimes I thought I was the only teenager in the room, and he was talking to me alone." Old doctrines came alive with new practical implications for living out one's salvation in the modern age. He answered our typical teenage questions and addressed our concerns, slaying heretical dragons with rapier wit and aplomb.

Nor was he naïve about young people. I remember the boy who was unable to answer the catechism questions, explaining to Professor Engelsma that he had a learning disability when it came to memorizing. Professor asked him, "Do you have difficulty writing?" Well, no. No problem writing. "Well, then," said

Engelsma, "you stay after class, and we'll decide how many times you'll write the questions and answers each week." That catechumen's memory improved markedly.

Professor Engelsma taught by this axiom: "Know your stuff, know whom you are stuffing, and then stuff the children elegantly." When that "stuff" is the Word of God echoed down by one who "shows by his actions and words that there is nothing quite so important in all life as the knowledge of God whom to know is life eternal" (Catechetics, p. 38), and when the children are not just any children, but rather, children of the covenant, then the "stuffing" is truly elegant.

Refuting Heresy: "The instruction which he (the catechumen, MBL) has received and is in the process of receiving must become his own in such a way that he receives it, not because anyone else has said that this is true, but because he is convinced that it is the truth of the Word of God. It is precisely for this reason that youth during this period in their lives are so often questioning. This has a way of frightening parents and teachers because the impression is often left that the child wants every conceivable heresy under the face of the heavens. And, indeed, if such a child is not given guidance and is not brought repeatedly to the Word of God, this is the time of life when such a one will quickly go astray, running after every promise of men and being pushed by every wind of doctrine. The catechete must not be unduly alarmed by the many questions which are asked. He must treat them all patiently and seriously. He must not quickly wring his hands in despair when many of the questions seem to suggest heretical opinions on the part of his catechumens. But the catechete must, above all, lead these youth to the fountain of all truth and emphasize times innumerable the obligation of God's people to bow before the authority of God's Word"

(Catechetics, pp. 48, 49, Prof. H. Hanko).

I recall it so.

The year was 1959. Professor Hanko (then, Rev. Hanko) had accepted the call to Hope PR Church, Walker, Michigan, right from seminary. Several of us in his Wednesday night catechism class were freshmen in the local Christian college. We planned to make confession of our faith that spring, and often spoke of that commitment walking home after catechism. I speak for all of us when I say that we loved Professor's classes. This was our fourth year under his tutelage, and the stimulating discussions that took place night after night were one of the reasons why we were not eager to make confession of faith.

But, as I said, we were collegians now — challenging the system and testing the waters. The waters in the church world that year were the theory of theistic evolution, taught openly in the college which we attended. Our catechism lessons that fall centered on the doctrine of creation. Week after week, with variations on the same theme, we baited Professor Hanko — rather poorly, I now am convinced — with questions gleaned from our several college courses. "Why did it matter how long each creation day was, as long as we believed that God created?" "Why did a day have to be a 24-hour day?" "Isn't it just possible that the first few days might have been great, long periods of time?" And, then, the particularly annoying question posed by teenagers: "Are you implying that a person can't be saved if he believes this theory?!" Patiently, but without compromise, Professor Hanko explained the heresy implicit, and the path down which this error would eventually lead. Professor was not the avuncular fellow which some mistakenly might think him to be today. He never smiled until Christmas. He brooked no "free" memorization of the H.C. Every preposition — every "of," every "in" — must be recited verbatim. So, when after weeks we were forced to move on in our treatment of the catechism with the warning that we would not be making con-

fession of our faith if we adhered to any part of this false doctrine, we understood the terms clearly.

As it turned out, we all did make confession of our faith that spring. Nor did Professor let us down: the last question asked to each of the five young people was as he had promised, "Do you believe in the period theory?" Each answered firmly, "No." I know this is true because we asked each aspirant for full church membership as he came out of the consistory room. My turn was last. I had convinced myself that I could honestly answer "No," but hold to a few unspoken reservations. Professor Hanko, and the elders, asked all the routine questions about the doctrines of grace, the chain of salvation, and did I attend movies? Then came the question for which I was now prepared, "Do you believe in the period theory?" Without hesitation, I answered, "No." Without batting an eye, Professor looked up and asked, "Why not?" I couldn't believe my ears. Professor caught me completely off guard. He had not required this response from any of the others. In spite of myself, but with added respect for this wily interrogator, I flawlessly and with conviction gave back to him the six reasons that he had so carefully taught us why the period theory must be condemned. They are in my catechism notes to this day. And I never knowingly tinkered with the glorious doctrine of creation again. The time had come to defend the faith, rather than to continue attacking. I have only one remaining question: "How did Professor know 40 years ago that tampering with the doctrine of creation would lead to a full-scale denial of any and all Scripture?"

I think I speak for hundreds of God's saints everywhere when I say thanks to all the faithful ministers and elders for the wonderful catechism classes. How can we ever thank you enough? Some, undoubtedly, have sat under this means of grace, and then left the church altogether. God will be the judge of that, although such ones will never escape or shake off the instruction which they have re-

ceived. A faithful remnant by grace, however, will continue to use the Scriptures to instruct their covenant children and bring them to a conscious faith in and saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

What a heritage!

Parents, make it your primary concern that your children and young people be instructed in catechism. Make sure that the chil-

dren learn their questions and answers word for word as much as they are able. Only on very special and rare occasions should they ever skip catechism. It's that important. The times are evil, lax, and indiscriminate. We, therefore, must be especially pure, strict, and discerning.

Children and young people, re-

spect your catechism teachers as if you are sitting at the feet of Christ Himself. For you are. Learn your questions and answers thoroughly as if it is your very life's blood. For it is. Above all, reverence the Scriptures.

Pray for all our catechism teachers because "Grace and truth shall mark the way." The way that leads to heaven. □

Search the Scriptures

Rev. Mitchell Dick

Revelation & The Wreckage

(John 20)

Some thing has just happened.

A great storm.

Some destructive thing.

Did you hear about it?

Hurricane Calvary!

And awful wreckage.

Do you see it?

Jesus died! Jesus dead!

The thing, the storm and the wreckage, is recorded in John 19 and the other gospel accounts.

There it is: the great wrath wind from God Himself; then the still, lifeless body of the Lord. And His being buried.

That truth—that killing, and that death—is a real test of faith.

I believe in other storms. And it is impossible to deny *their* wreckage.

But *this*? Who can believe such a Good God Father so casting off

and casting down His God Son? Who can believe the death of the Son of God? And that, after His death, He will live again?

What kind of a God is this anyway? What kind of a religion is being demanded of us anyway?!

The man who *appeared* to be the Savior of Israel, the Life-Giver, is dead, and is buried. Thus, to all appearances, according to EKG's, stethoscopes, and medical examiners, according to everything observable and measurable of life and death, the cross was the end of Jesus. The storm of Calvary seems to have carried away our Lord and deposited His soul forever in hell. It appears to have broken His body beyond hope that there was anything for Him now besides corruption and becoming dust.

How will faith look past this? How will the first disciples be able to see anything more in the cross than defeat, and anything more in Jesus than a failure? How will they be able to think anything better of Jesus than that He was either just another deluded visionary or a flimflam man?

Think how little their faith was to begin with! They were constantly missing the point of our Savior's teaching. They remained so carnal in their expectations of the kingdom. And though they had boasted of their loyalty, yet, when the going got really rough, they had all run away from their Master. How little the faith of the disciples seems compared, for example, to the Old Testament worthies of faith who, not having received the promise, nevertheless believed. *Just how would these weak disciples believe*, who, having received the Promise, just saw Him *die*!

Revelation, I say.

The only way. Revelation.

Revelation is God above making Truth known here below.

Revelation is absolutely necessary for faith.

God speaking. God unveiling. And the masterpiece, the Wisdom and Salvation of God being known then. That is revelation. *Then, something having been revealed*, will

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be faith—if ever there is to be faith.

But what, in this wreckage, in *this* death of Jesus, after this impossible thing has occurred, is to be revealed? What, I say, *can even God say?!*

Here is what. Hear: *Resurrection!*

Friday. Saturday. Dead. Sunday. *Risen!* Hell could not hold Him. Men might not exterminate Him. His own stopped heart, collapsed lungs, and bloodless and cold body could not keep the life out of Him. On the first day of the week, having been dead and in Joseph's tomb for parts of three days, Jesus our Savior lives again!

And now this resurrection will be *revealed*. No one will and may see the resurrection itself. But there will be *appearances*, appearances of Jesus for forty days before His ascension to heaven. No ordinary appearances, these. But revelation! Indeed, infallible proofs of the Truth of God and of the death of death and of the Living One and our living too. Things for faith to see. Appearances which work the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. Appearances. Revealing ones. Special ones indeed! That the disciples might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing they might have life through His name!

And ... the wonder continues!

Across the ages, across the miles, across culture, from eternity to time, from infinity to our little place, from Good to sinners...*there is still this revelation!*

What? Yes. *Even in our wreckage!* Lives devastated by sin. Marriages destroyed by lust. Disease wracking bodies. Death on every side. And we and ours dying in the midst. Life. *Wreckage!*

And world wanting us to believe in *it*. Their counselors offering to peel away the hurts, to lift us up, to put us back on our feet, to get us a quick and all-for-the-

better divorce. Their heroes tempting us to trust in them, to believe in them. Their things, their pleasures dulling us to things unseen, and exciting us more than pleasures of the heavenly kingdom.

Revelation. Even in our wreckage. Louder, more mighty than the whole world.

But how can we believe?! Disciples, we, as the first ones: of such little faith!

Here is how.

Now *to us* the risen One comes. He does not appear. We do not see. But there it is the same: *revelation! Special*, gospel revelation. God speaking to His own of God with us in and through the crucified and risen One, Jesus of Nazareth, Jesus of God, Jesus Son of God.

Where? Where this revelation, that I might find it! O, that I *knew* where I might find it, and find *Him* through *it!*

It is in a book, my friend. Look. Listen. Read. It appears

there, this revelation. Not now in human form, but in written. It appears there, in the Holy Bible. In the sacred Spirit Word. It is the book about Jesus who died for our sins, and is risen for our justification. It is the book of the Justice and Love in the Storm Calvary. Love of Father for the Son. Love for the many sons and daughters He will call His own. Love for His own glory. It is the revelation so wonderful that to know *it*, to believe *it*, is to know *God*, and believe *God!*

Listen. "*These things are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God*" (John 20:31).

Blessed is he that has not seen, and believes the revelation of God.

Blessed is he that reads, and hears the word, this revelation.

Revelation in the wreckage.

Rejoice!

And hope for the day when, as revealed, *as written*, the wreckage will be no more.

For Study, Meditation, & Discussion

1. The Resurrection of Jesus

What evidences does Scripture give that Jesus rose from the dead? What texts, Old Testament and New Testament, prophesy and prove that Jesus rose from the dead? What does the resurrection of Jesus declare about Jesus' sacrifice on the cross and our salvation?

Study the great creeds of the church and discuss what these say about Christ's resurrection.

How does the truth of Christ's resurrection influence our life? How do we show that ours is resurrection life? Resurrection hope?

2. The Appearances of Jesus

List in order the appearances of Jesus to His disciples.

What does Acts 1:3 say was the

purpose of Jesus' appearing to His disciples for the forty days after His resurrection?

What kind of body did Jesus have when He appeared on earth? How was it the same/different from the body of His humiliation?

3. Jesus' appearance to Mary Magdalene (John 20:1-18)

From the various gospel accounts be able to tell the order of events that resurrection Sunday.

What does the Bible say about Mary Magdalene?

Why does Jesus appear to Mary *first*?

What does this appearance reveal of Jesus?

Why may not Mary touch Jesus (v. 17)?

4. Jesus' appearance to the disciples that first day (John 20:19-23)

How did Jesus appear to them?

What is the "peace" Jesus conveys to the disciples at this time (vv. 19,21; cf. other references in Scripture to the "peace" of Jesus)?

At this time Jesus reminds the disciples that He has sent and is sending them (v. 21). The Greek word for "send" means "send officially" as ambassadors of Christ, to commission one for a special work. What does Matthew 28:18-20, Acts 1:8, and other passages have to say about the commission of the disciples of our Lord?

What great gift are the disciples given at this time in order to discharge their office? How does this gift compare with that given on Pentecost?

Jesus speaks in verse 23 of the disciples "remitting sins," and "re-

taining sins." How do we explain this in light of the fact that the Bible teaches elsewhere (where?) that only God forgives sins or holds people to account for their sins?

5. Jesus' appearance to Thomas (John 20:24-29)

Doubting Thomas! What was the problem Thomas had which prevented him from believing the resurrection of Jesus?

When Jesus appears to the disciples with Thomas present He again preaches, "Peace be unto you" (v. 26). Why did Jesus speak this again?

Upon seeing Jesus and hearing Jesus' words, Thomas believes! What is the significance of Thomas' confession at this time (v. 28)?

After Thomas' confession, Jesus says, "Blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed" (v. 29b). What is Jesus saying by this?

6. Perspective (John 20:31)

Appearances of Jesus recorded in Scripture. Important! What several virtues do they show of Jesus, Son of God?

Appearances of Jesus. How do these confirm *our* faith?

Appearances of Jesus—today? To us? By vision? By voice? In us?

Appearances. How do these compare to revelation? What is revelation? Is it special? Natural? (Cf. Belgic Confession, Art. 2.)

Blessed are those who, having not seen, believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God! Blessed are those who, believing, have life through His name! What is a blessing you receive through this revelation of the appearances of Jesus? Do you experience this blessing in the midst of the sufferings, even the wreckage of this present age? □

Special Article

Rev. Dale Kuiper

The Christian and Entertainment (3)

It was suggested that the questions submitted in writing after the speech at First Church in April, and the answers given to them, be included in this final article on entertainment. The dozen or so questions fall into four distinct categories.

A. *What about vacations where we*

cannot worship in our Protestant Reformed Churches?"

Can we observe the Sabbath while on vacation?

What are your thoughts concerning vacationing over Sunday away from our Protestant Reformed Churches?

What type of discipline should be taken in the Protestant Reformed Churches for members who are absent for months at a time?

These questions show that there is a real problem in the churches in regard to keeping the

Sabbath holy and vacationing. We confess that we do not know the answers to all the questions that come up in this regard. We are aware that at least two consistories have addressed pastoral letters to their members, warning them against this trend and pointing out the dangers that are involved. These issues are also addressed regularly in the preaching of the gospel: the delight of the Sabbath properly kept is set forth, and the evil of Sabbath-breaking is warned against. By some these warnings are being ignored.

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This situation presents great difficulties for the elders. The first difficulty concerns *consistency*. How can the elders call upon those whose church attendance is spotty when everyone knows there are others who are elsewhere for two, four, or six months a year? The second difficulty concerns *officebearer nominations*. How can men be nominated for the offices if they are not present in the congregation to do the work required, and to be good examples to the flock? Anything that strikes at the well-being of the congregation and interferes with the marks of the true church (faithful preaching, proper partaking of sacraments, and Christian discipline) is clearly wrong. The problem of poor church attendance must be addressed, the evil must be rooted out, and this can best be accomplished on the individual, personal level. Perhaps the following will be helpful:

1. Long absences from the congregation remove one from the supervision or oversight of the elders. Although the promise is made at confession of faith that one will submit himself to the government of the church, some willingly place themselves in a position where this becomes impossible. The elders are caretakers of our souls. Through them Christ works our spiritual welfare and safety.

2. Long absences from the congregation deprive one of the pure preaching of the Word of God. We find it ironic that when some return home from their long vacations they remark how good it is to hear sound, Reformed preaching again. Or we find it discouraging when others talk about the good preaching they have heard in churches which differ radically from ours in doctrine, life, and worship. Have they no discernment? Do they not care? Let those who find it easy to worship in any church where they happen to be ask themselves the question, "Why do I have my membership in the

Protestant Reformed Churches?" Doesn't the answer to that question mean that we are in our churches as much as possible?

3. Those long absences prevent the faithful use of the sacraments. The Lord's Supper is celebrated in the congregation. Babies are born and presented for baptism. But these important signs and seals of the righteousness that is by faith are often missed by some. Further, we hear reports that some members take communion in other churches. This is wrong! One implication of our practice of guarding the holy table from being profaned by exercising "close communion" (allowing non-PRs to partake with us only after an interview with the elders to examine confession and walk) is that we do not partake in other churches either. How can we individualistically partake with others who cannot partake with us at home? How can we partake with those who work on Sunday, or are union members, or are divorced and remarried, or disagree with our doctrinal positions? Is this lack of good order, perhaps a chafing under our practice of "close communion"?

4. Long absences from the congregation do much damage to the communion of the saints. "But now God has set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him" (I Cor. 12:18). Although the apostle has in view the body as the church of Christ in all ages and places, his teaching also applies to the local congregation as a manifestation of the body of Christ. *There* God has placed us; *there* we are to suffer and rejoice with fellow believers. But when we are elsewhere, saints are hospitalized and unvisited by us. Saints die and families are not comforted by us. Babies are born, marriages entered into, confessions of faith made — all of this without the

knowledge of those who are who knows where.

5. May we never be gone from our congregation? We would never want to make such a rule. Certainly we may visit with relatives from time to time, perhaps worshiping with them on the Sabbath. There may be the need to be elsewhere for medical treatment, or one's health requires a warmer, drier climate for a time. But those who are absent from the congregation month after month, as a matter of choice, must be warned sharply against this practice by the elders. And if the necessary changes are not made, they must be disciplined for neglect of the means of grace. And those who are repeatedly absent for shorter periods — a couple of weeks here and a couple of weeks there — ought to reexamine this practice in the light of Isaiah 58:13, 14.

B. *Do the Protestant Reformed Churches actually have a stand we must abide by regarding movies, or do we consider it up to the Christian himself — the same as with dances?*

What you mention about drama is what some simply write off as bad drama. Can good drama (that is to say, school skits and religious movies) be lumped into the same category or not?

Is there any drama that is wholesome, or that teaches any moral good?

Is it fair to liken television-viewing (drama) to Baal worship?

Why do we need an official stand by classis or synod to avoid those sins which are so clearly condemned by Scripture?

Why do we need an official stand by classis or synod to avoid those sins which are so clearly condemned by Scripture? Doesn't a little sanctified wisdom show us that viewing movies and television leads to impure thoughts, improper language, silently partaking in the blasphemy of others, discontented attitudes, and wicked be-

havior? No, movie attendance is not a matter of Christian liberty, nor is social dancing, which is mentioned in the same question.

We get off on the wrong foot when we try to judge this issue on the basis of content: good drama or bad drama, moral lessons or immoral teaching, constructive influence or destructive examples. Certainly the content of almost 100% of dramatic productions (movies, television programs, plays, skits, operas) place these things out of bounds for the Christian. Besides, how do you know what the contents and influences are until you have viewed the drama? Too late then! Are we going to look to the world, the world at its most depraved and ungodly state, to teach us moral lessons? Why cannot we take the Catechism to heart when it teaches us that all images are to be condemned, and "God will have His people taught not by dumb images, but by the lively preaching of His Word" (L.D. 35)? Scripture is sufficient!

But content is not the root of the issue. The question that must be asked is, "Is acting right or wrong?" Men more capable than I have shown conclusively that acting itself is sin. The distinction between *imitation* and *impersonation* must be appreciated. We may *imitate* those of pure moral character: God, Christ, the apostles, the saints. But we may never *impersonate* anyone! To impersonate is to pretend you are someone else, good or evil, and to induce those who watch you to believe that you are someone else, good or evil. That's playing around with personality, which is a distinct and unique creation of God; and that's playing around with corruption or holiness, both of which are terribly serious before God. Acting is simply hypocrisy. By the way, the Greek word for actor is hypocrite.

We recall two interesting remarks made on family visitation some years ago. A man said, "If I watch television for a couple of

hours, I can't pray at night." Another man said, "Watching television causes me to lose my judgment of things." How true. Let us be warned. For further reading on this matter, we recommend the pamphlet "The Christian and the Film Arts," by Prof. H. Hanko, available from all our evangelism societies. We recommend also a series of articles in the *Standard Bearer* by Rev. Barry Gritters entitled "Renewing the Battle: Drama, Television, Movies" (Vol. 69, 70 of the SB).

C. *Could you clarify what you mean by saying that professional athletes are cursed: What Scriptures help us here?*

I was wondering if passages such as Philippians 3:13, 14; Hebrews 12:1; and II Timothy 4:7 might also inform your position on sports? It seems to me that the apostle Paul may have been a bit of a sports fan.

The remark was made that professional sports of every kind, and 99 if not 100% of professional athletes, are under the curse of God. We could have included much of college sports, the entire movie and television industries, and those who are engaged in popular "music." Professional sports are under God's curse because they produce nothing truly worthwhile for God, man, or beast. They are merely the opiate of the masses, rather successfully drawing men's attention away from the issues of life, and fleecing them of their money in the process. The athletes, though splendid physical specimens, are actually among the most depraved in our society. They are all Sabbath-breakers. They are heady, high-minded, proud, and boastful. Among them are found adulterers, whoremongers, union members, alcoholics, substance-abusers, divorced and remarried individuals, all in higher percentages than in the general populace.

The Catechism asks, in L.D. 32, "Cannot they then be saved, who, continuing their wicked and un-

grateful lives, are not converted to God?" And it answers, "By no means, for the holy Scriptures declare that no unchaste person, idolater, adulterer, thief, covetous man, drunkard, slanderer, robber, or any such like, shall inherit the kingdom of God." Biblical proof for that answer is I Corinthians 6:9, 10; Galatians 5:19-21; Ephesians 5:5, 6; and I John 3:14, 15.

Can professional athletes be converted to God? Of course they can, if God wills it and works it. But then they are no longer professional athletes, but ex-athletes who mortify the old man, and with joy of heart live according to the will of God in all good works.

As to Paul being a sports fan, we really have no idea. The Scriptures are silent on this matter. He was a studious and industrious man, filled with zeal for his work, both before and after his conversion. I rather doubt he spent any time watching sporting events. But that's really not the question in regard to those quotations cited. As the apostle to the Gentiles, Paul wrote to those who *were* acquainted with the Olympic Games and other contests. With that familiarity in mind, he used figures from the games such as fighting and running to illustrate the truth of the Christian life. Keep in mind, too, that Paul was inspired by the Spirit of truth to use these figures. And that means that sports, games, and races are not per se wrong.

D. *Do you have suggestions as to how I would go about changing my home from the entertainment-centered type to the dining room table type?*

We will try. First of all, know that such a change is possible. Your question indicates a desire to have your family life more closely conformed to the biblical model. Sometimes when we look at how it goes in our families, we almost despair of making the necessary changes. But we are assured in Philippians 4:13 that we can do all

things through Christ who strengthens us.

Secondly, praying about these changes is absolutely essential. Prayers by the father and the mother in the quiet of the night when all alone with God. Prayers about these very things with the children in family devotions. The fervent prayers of the righteous availeth much (James 5:16). As we confess to God our failures as parents, our inconsistencies in instruction and discipline, as we express to Him our longing to have strong, covenant homes, God forgives us for Jesus' sake, and grants us our holy desires. But then pray for wisdom to initiate these changes too. This is possible to accomplish, but not easy.

Thirdly, the difficulty lies in

the fact that for a long time we have made television-viewing, bad music, lack of worthwhile family devotions, and failure to communicate a part of our daily lives. We are all but stuck in a deep rut. And the difficulty is especially great when older children and young people are involved. Generally, their concern for holiness and spiritual growth is not very lively. Their abhorrence of the world is not fully developed. Some would rather listen to friends than to their parents. So you may experience sharp opposition from them when steps are taken to root out worldliness, and to make of the home a citadel of holiness and truth. Even so, this can be done. Occasionally we read of families that have succeeded in turning off the TV for a month or a year. Even without a

spiritual motive this has been done. And they discovered that more worthwhile activities filled the void. How much more is this possible, permanently, with those who possess the power of the Spirit and grace of God!

Finally, make every effort to have at least the evening meal together. Read and discuss the Word of God. Reflect on the sermons that were preached on the Sabbath. Speak words of encouragement and correction. And make plain as parents what Joshua made plain to Israel: as for me and my house, *we will serve the Lord!*

We speak and write these things in love for the church of Christ, in love for the Protestant Reformed Churches, and in love for the church of the future. □

Ministering to the Saints

Prof. Robert Decker

Caring For the Widows

When in this article we concentrate on the calling of the elders of God's church to care for the widows, we do not mean to deny the need of the widowers, nor do we mean to minimize the elders' calling to care for them as well. Widowers mourn the loss of their wives and they are lonely. They too need to be comforted by the Word of God, and the elders must see to it that these are brought the Word of comfort. In addition, much of what we shall have to say concerning the elders'

calling to care for the widows applies also to their care of the widowers.*

Widows are mentioned often in Scripture. The Israelites were warned in no uncertain terms not to afflict any widow or fatherless child. The punishment for doing so was the supreme penalty, death (Ex. 22:22-24). Scripture says the Lord must be feared and obeyed because He is a great God, and, "he doth execute the judgment of the fatherless and widow" (Deut. 10:18). The Israelites were called to support the widows with their tithes (Deut. 14:29; 24:17). The one who perverted the judgment of the widow was cursed by God (Deut. 27:19).

The Lord expresses His gra-

cious compassion for the widows in many of the psalms. God is a Father of the fatherless and a judge of the widow (Ps. 68:5). Among the great sins for which the wicked are judged is that "they slay the widow and the stranger and the fatherless" (Ps. 94:6). And the inspired psalmist writes, "The Lord relieves the fatherless and widow" (Ps. 146:9).

God, through the inspired prophet, calls His people to "plead for the widow" (Is. 1:17). The Lord warns us that the widows must not be oppressed and we are not to do them violence (Jer. 7:6; 22:3).

We find these same emphases in the New Testament Scriptures. One of the sins for which Jesus condemns the Pharisees is "devouring

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widows' houses" (Matt. 23:14). The office of deacon was instituted in the church of the New Testament so that the Grecian widows would not be neglected in the daily ministrations and to enable the apostles to busy themselves with the preaching of the Word (Acts 6:1-6). That this received God's approval and blessing is evident from the very next verse, which reads, "And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly..." (Acts 6:7).

According to the Epistles the church is called to honor widows who are widows indeed (I Tim. 5:3). Widows must trust in God and continue in prayer. They must be provided for by their relatives, and if these are unable to do so the church must provide for the widows. Widows are called to walk in good works, lodge strangers, wash the saints' feet. The younger women ought to marry and bear children (I Tim. 5:3-16). To cite no more, part of pure and undefiled religion before God our Father is that we visit (the Greek verb translated "visit" by the A.V. means "come to the aid of") the fatherless and widows in their affliction (James 1:26-27).

These passages (and more could be cited) certainly indicate that the Lord has a great concern for the widows of His church. And Christ, the Chief Shepherd of the sheep, takes care of the widows primarily through the elders of the church!

Consider what the believing, godly widow has lost. She has lost her husband, i.e., the man who loved her just as Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it (Eph. 5:25). She has lost her godly husband, who loved her sacrificially and unselfishly and with all his heart. Her husband, to whom she submitted in love just as the church submits to Christ, she has lost (Eph. 5:22-24). The love, the bond of perfectness, which they had for each other in their hearts,

that love which made them one flesh in the Lord (Gen. 2:24; Matt. 19:4-6) is lost. That most intimate, wonderful, and profoundly beautiful relationship, the union of one man and one woman in the bond of marriage is lost when the husband dies. Who can adequately describe or appreciate the pain experienced by a godly widow?

Still more, the widow has lost the one who was her head (Eph. 5:23). As the head of his wife the husband is responsible for her care. The husband is to provide for her earthly needs: food, shelter, clothing. This may not be as keenly felt today in our affluent society as it was a number of years ago. However that may be, in the death of her husband the widow has lost her head.

More than this, however, is the fact that the widow has lost her spiritual head and her family's spiritual leader. Her husband's instruction, his encouragement, his guidance, his wise counsel for the children and his discipline of them, all this and more are lost when the Lord takes a husband and father from his wife and family.

This last point was brought home to me when a widow expressed some criticism concerning what I had written regarding family visitation in an earlier article. In that article I stressed that the elders should control the visit and bring the Word. The widow's criticism was that this would deprive her of her only opportunity to learn about what is happening in the congregation and, as well, the opportunity would be lost to let her voice be heard. After all, the Bible does say, "Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law. And if they will learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church" (I Cor. 14:34-35). This widow's point was of course that she had no husband "to

ask at home" concerning matters going on in the congregation. This is one of the reasons why the elders must take the time to "come to the aid" of the widows of the congregation. If the widows are visited by the elders on a regular basis, once per month and more often if necessary, there will be ample opportunity for the widows to ask their questions and express their concerns for the affairs of the congregation. Family visitation ought not be reserved for this.

Let the elders of Christ's church be sensitive to the great loss experienced by the godly widows of the congregation. With the sympathetic understanding of God's love, the elders must bring to the widows the comfort of God's Word. This, after all, is the only source of comfort for the Christian. Nothing else than the Word of God's grace, mercy, and love in Jesus can comfort the widows. And, again, let the elders remember that God's Word is always effective. God's Word never returns void. It always accomplishes God's purpose!

The Word of comfort must be brought as soon as possible after the death of the husband. And the Word of comfort must be brought in the weeks and months following the funeral. These are the most difficult days for the widows. The busy activities of the funeral are over. The days are long and the nights are even longer for the lonely widows. They need to hear from God's Word that God is always good. They must submit in their sorrows to the Lord and His way for them. God did it after all! "God took your husband," the widow must be told. He is the sovereign Giver of life and He is the sovereign Taker of life. Widows must not complain or rebel against the Lord. They must submit to His way and learn to be content also in the state of the widow (Phil. 4:11, 12).

Is this easy? Absolutely not! This is incredibly difficult! No, this

is impossible! Apart from the grace of God in Christ, this is impossible. Godly widows cannot bear the loss without God's grace. And God's grace is given by means of the Word! God loves us with eternal, unchanging love in Christ Jesus. God is our all-wise Father who knows what is good for us. Even though we may not be able to understand God's way, God is good in all His ways. In His infinite goodness to us in Christ, God causes all things, also the loss of our spouses, to work together for our good and salvation.

Think of that! The widow's loss is great. A cause of agonizing grief and terrible loneliness is her loss. But widows do have God as their heavenly Father for Jesus' sake. Their sins are washed away in Jesus' shed blood. Widows have been given new life by the power of the resurrection of Jesus.

This earthly life, therefore, is

emphatically not all there is. There's more, much more! Life on this earth, and all that belongs to it, also marriage, is a pilgrimage. Everlasting life! Perfect, everlasting fellowship with all the saints in Christ Jesus. And in Christ Jesus perfect communion with God our Father. Fellowship with God in Christ and with all the saints in the wonderful glory of the new heaven and earth. This is the end of our earthly pilgrimage!

This is what the apostle John has given to us. Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit John wrote, "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the

tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away. ... these words are true and faithful" (Rev. 21:1-5).

This is the great comforting hope of the widows and of all the saints in God's church. In this hope they will never be put to shame! □

* We are aware of the fact that the deacons too are called by God to care for the widows and widowers of God's church. We leave this subject for our colleague Rev. Douglas Kuiper, whose assignment is to write on the deacon's office.

Taking Heed to the Doctrine

Rev. Steven Key

Christ, the Head of the Covenant

As we continue our consideration of Christ in relation to the covenant, we find from Scripture that not only is Christ the *Mediator* of the covenant, but also the *Head* of the covenant. This is a truth that has raised considerable opposition and discussion through the years, primarily because of a common misunderstanding as to the nature of the

covenant. When the covenant is defined as an agreement or contract between two parties, namely, between God and His people, it is hardly possible to speak of Christ as the *Head* of the covenant. That Christ is *Mediator* of the covenant is not difficult to understand, if the covenant were a contract. But how could He possibly be viewed as *Head* of that covenant?

The difficulty is removed, however, with a proper understanding of the covenant of grace.

Writers in the *Standard Bearer*, this one included, have repeatedly demonstrated from Scripture that the covenant is not an agreement,

but a bond or relationship of intimate fellowship and love which, first of all, characterizes the life of the triune God.

God is a covenant God. He lives a life of perfect fellowship and love within His own divine Being.

But in addition, God has revealed His grand and glorious purpose of establishing with His people that same covenant relationship.

He does so by taking them into the fellowship of His own covenant life, and establishing with them the friendship and intimate love that He enjoys within His own divine life.

Rev. Key is pastor of the Protestant Reformed Church of Randolph, Wisconsin.

He does so by the wonder work of His grace.

He does so *in Christ*.

It is important that we be reminded of the fact that when God reveals to us the covenant life that He lives within Himself, He doesn't do so merely by telling us something about His own covenant life. The revelation of the covenant of grace is not merely that God gives us a certain amount of information about how He Himself lives in perfect covenant fellowship within Himself. There is much more to it than that!

When God reveals Himself by establishing His covenant of grace with His people, He does so in such a way that He takes His people into the very essence of His own covenant life. He makes them His *friends*, and embraces them with His covenant love. He does so in such a way that our knowledge of that covenant life is not merely a matter of having some information about it. But we enter into the enjoyment of and experience the blessed reality of fellowship with God! The God of our salvation is our heavenly Father!

Bear in mind, God establishes that covenant with us who are miserable sinners. He takes those who are desperately wicked, corrupt and depraved sinners, and brings us into His own fellowship!

How is that possible?

When the prophet Habakkuk addressed God in Habakkuk 1:13, he said, "Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity." Jehovah is the Holy One. Because of His very nature, and because of His holy love for Himself and His own glory, He can have no fellowship with a sinner, but must certainly drive him out of His presence.

There is, therefore, only one

possibility for our entering into covenant fellowship with God, and that is that the guilt of our sin be taken away.

*When
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by establishing
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very essence
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covenant
life.*

But how is *that* possible? We can't do it. All we can do is increase our guilt! Even daily we add to our debt by the multitude of sins that we commit.

The only possibility for that fellowship with God is through Jesus Christ who paid for all our sins.

The Lord Jesus Christ paid for the sins of His people. He did so by offering Himself as the perfect sacrifice (Heb. 7:26,27; Heb. 9:26b-28). He did so as the Head of His people. He did so, according to God's sovereign purpose, as the Head of the covenant.

Christ is the Head of His people. He is the Head of His people in a twofold sense.

In the first place, He is Head of His people *legally*. That is the emphasis of Romans 5, verses 12-18. Just as Adam was the legal, representative head of the whole human race, so Christ stands as the legal, representative Head of all His people.

Christ represented His people legally before the tribunal of God. He became totally and completely responsible for them judicially. He took all the guilt of all His people upon Himself. He assumed responsibility for the full penalty — and that penalty was the everlasting and full wrath of the just God. When on the cross He endured that infinite wrath of God for the sake of His people, He did so as their legal Head, which means also that all the righteousness that He earned is now the righteousness of all those for whom He died. His righteousness is imputed to His people, exactly because He stood in their place, as their legal Head.

Again, it is only because of this

truth that we can even be partakers of the covenant of grace. Our legal Head removed our guilty stains, and opened the way of fellowship with God that had been lost in our fall in Adam.

In the second place, Christ is the Head of His people *organically*. As Adam was also the organic head of the human race, so that all came forth from him, so Christ is the organic Head of His people. Scripture makes clear that this is true because His people are grafted into Him by the living bond of faith, and thus become members of His body.

Scripture reveals that truth in a very wonderful way, with figures and expressions that demonstrate the beauty of this relationship between Christ and His people. Ephesians 4:15,16 speaks in terms of Christ being the Head: "From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love."

The beautiful relationship of holy marriage is reflective of the intimacy of the relationship between Christ and His church. "For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body" (Eph. 5:23).

Because Christ is the organic Head of His people we become His body, bone of His bone and flesh of His flesh, partakers of His life. And therefore we come as close to God as is possible for us to come — in Jesus Christ our Head. This is the way in which God takes us into His own covenant life — in Jesus Christ our Head.

Still more, when we see Christ as the Head of the covenant, we come to a clearer understanding of the truth that God established His covenant with Christ *first*. He established His covenant not first with Adam or Noah, or in a more general sense with believers and

their seed. But God established His covenant first with Christ. As Colossians 1:15 and following teaches, in the eternal counsel of God Christ was first. "And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence" (Col. 1:18).

That is confirmed from a little different perspective in Galatians 3:16, where we read, "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ." Then we read in verse 29 of that chapter, "And if ye be Christ's,

then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."

Christ is our way into God's covenant. He is so as Head of the covenant.

Because God dwells in Christ in all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, and because the church is the body of Christ, God and His people dwell together in perfect covenant fellowship. That is true — let us not forget — because of the work which our Lord Jesus Christ performed, His perfect work, His amazing accomplishment of perfect obedience and perfect sacrifice, even to the death of the cross. He is the One who, as the Mediator of the covenant, has reconciled us unto God.

Through Christ God has taken us into the fellowship of His own covenant life of perfect love. Through Christ our Head God has given us to enjoy and experience the amazing wonder of being part of the family of God! In Christ as the Head of the covenant this fellowship is perfectly accomplished.

Therefore the covenant is absolutely sure.

God has established it.

God realizes it through Christ Jesus His Son, our Lord.

God maintains and perfects His covenant. He does it all through Christ, the Head of the covenant.

Believing this, we shall show forth His praise! □

News From Our Churches

Mr. Benjamin Wigger

Congregation Activities

This past summer the congregation of the Hudsonville, MI PRC met twice to consider important proposals from their council. In late May they met to approve a proposal that when Rev. G. VanBaren retires from the ministry in August, he be hired on an hourly basis to assist Rev. B. Gritters, Hudsonville's pastor, with his heavy work load. Hudsonville's council anticipated that some of Rev. VanBaren's duties would be to preach occasionally, teach afternoon catechism classes, possibly lead a society, and visit the elderly.

Hudsonville met again in late July to consider five different proposals, the most interesting of which was a proposal to update their video system. Part of this upgrade would consist of two new digital cameras with remote con-

trols, mounting one at the rear of the auditorium and one on the side. It is hoped that the improved quality of these tapes will allow future broadcasts over the local Public Broadcast Station. Since these cameras are digital, it is possible that some day Hudsonville could send its church services directly into the homes of shut-in members or any other interested party anywhere in the world by way of the computer and the Internet.

Work continues on the sanctuary of the Georgetown PRC in Hudsonville, MI. All the exterior brick work is now done, and the much anticipated placing of the steeple on the roof of the building was completed in early July.

Pastor-elect Nathan Brummel and his wife, Paula, planned on moving from Michigan to Dyer, Indiana in mid-July, while they await the next meeting of Classis East early this month to approve his examination and give Cornerstone PRC approval to proceed with his installation as their first pastor. Their address is 2258 Sandcastle Drive, Dyer, Indiana 46311, and

their phone number is 219-865-1108.

The First PRC in Grand Rapids, MI encouraged women in their congregation to join together for four successive Wednesdays in June for a Women's Summer Bible Discussion. Bible lessons were based on John 6:22-40, "Jesus' Sermon on the Bread of Life."

June 27 First also sponsored an enlightening presentation by Mr. Donald VanderKolk concerning the Puritan Reformed Prison Ministry that he has been conducting at the Kent County Correctional Facility the past five years.

In February, 1996, the congregation of the Grace PRC in Standale, MI met to approve the purchase of property for a future building site. Though the property was purchased, those plans for a church home were never realized because Grace was able to purchase an existing church and parsonage from the Grand Valley OCRS. This summer Grace was able to sell that property and apply the receipts from the sale to pay off notes and eliminate their total debt.

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

Mission Activities

The Evangelism Committee of the First PRC in Grand Rapids, MI sponsored a Mission Emphasis meeting on July 18. Jack and Judie Feenstra, who are going to Singapore to help in the work, made a presentation about what that work would involve.

Rev. J. Mahtani, our missionary in Pittsburgh, was able to exchange pulpits recently with Rev. M. VanderWal, pastor of the Covenant PRC in Wyckoff, N.J. Rev. Mahtani also spent a weekend in early August preaching in Fayetteville, NC for a group of Reformed believers, the Fayetteville Reformed Fellowship, who have requested our help as they seek

spiritual direction for their future existence.

Rev. R. Moore and his wife found a suitable home in the area where they will be laboring. Their mailing address is: Private Mail Bag #15, Madina, Ghana, West Africa. Phone is 233-21-51-0353. They began preaching services in their home in mid-July with four people in attendance. At the Bible Study on the following Tuesday, two additional people attended. Now that they are almost fully settled in their house, they anticipate more time to contact others they met on former trips. Continue to pray for the Moores, and all our other missionaries, and take time to write them a note of encouragement.

Minister Activities

Rev. W. Bruinsma declined the call he had been considering from the Loveland, CO PRC.

The council of the Hull, IA PRC presented to their congregation a trio of the Revs. B. Gritters, Dale Kuiper, and K. Koole. In mid-July they extended a call to Rev. B. Gritters.

Food for Thought

"Understanding is the reward of faith. Therefore seek not to understand that thou mayest believe, but believe that thou mayest understand."

— St. Augustine □

ANNOUNCEMENTS

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On September 18, 1999, our parents and grandparents,

LEON and VICKI GRIESS, will celebrate their 30th wedding anniversary. We thank our parents for their many years of godly instruction, and pray that our heavenly Father will continue to uphold them and bless them in the remainder of their pilgrimage here on earth as husband and wife. "Blessed is every one that feareth the Lord; that walketh in his ways" (Psalm 128:1).

✿ Shon and Brenda Griess

Jesse and Amber

✿ Julie Wilkerson

Brianna

✿ David and Christi Stains

Bradi, Brittany, and Samantha

✿ Craig and Tiffany Poortinga

Alexis

✿ 2 in glory

Loveland, Colorado

TEACHER NEEDED

Hope Protestant Reformed Christian School is in need of a Protestant Reformed music/band instructor for the 2000-2001 school year. For information, please direct inquiries to Mike Lotterman, 1382 Su-Lew, Walker, Michigan 49544 (616) 453-4106 or the administrator, Ron Koole, (616) 453-9717.

REMINDER TO PARENTS OF COLLEGE STUDENTS

If your young adult is going to be away from home while attending college, please inform the *Standard Bearer* Business Office of the address to which we can send the copies of the *SB*.

NOTICE!!

Men's and Ladies' League
September 21, 1999

8 P.M.

First PRC of Holland, Michigan
Speaker:

Rev. Audred Spriensma

Topic:

"The Zeal for Bible Study"

Offering:

Rev. Moore's work in Ghana

MINISTER EMERITUS

Rev. GISE J. VAN BAREN

will become an emeritus minister, the Lord willing, September 1, 1999.

The Loveland consistory and congregation are thankful to our covenant God for His sustaining mercies in providing the Protestant Reformed Churches with the faithful preaching and ministry of Rev. VanBaren. He has served our churches for forty-three years and has been the beloved pastor of the Loveland church for the last five years.

Our prayer is that the Lord will continue to bless and be with Rev. VanBaren and his wife Clara as they return to the Hudsonville congregation.

The Loveland congregation is planning to have a farewell program the evening of August 27, 1999.

"For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who commanded the light to shine in the darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (II Corinthians 4:5, 6).

Larry Nelson, Clerk

**RESOLUTION
OF SYMPATHY**

The congregation and consistory of the Loveland PRC extends its sympathy to Mr. John Heys and his wife and family in the recent death of his sister,

MRS. JOYCE NIEMEYER.

May God grant grace and strength to sustain them in this time of grief. May their assurance be that all these things work together for good to them that love God (Rom. 8:28).

Mr. Larry Nelson, Clerk

NOTICE!!!

The Annual RFPA Meeting will be held in Hope PRC (Walker) on September 30 at 8 P.M. Rev. W. Bruinsma will speak. Also, election of new board members will be held from a nomination of Cal Kalsbeek, John Kalsbeek, Jr., David Kamps, Joel Minderhoud, Jon Rutgers, Tom Schipper, Gord Terpstra, Matt Van Overloop. Members and non-members, young and old, men and women are invited to attend this meeting.

**SEMINARY
CONVOCATION**

The PR Seminary will hold its Convocation on September 7 at 7:30 P.M. in Southwest PRC. Prof. H. Hanko will give the address. Please mark your calendars and plan to attend.



The 75th Anniversary Committee is pleased to announce the progress being made on the upcoming 75th Anniversary Celebration. The 75th Anniversary is scheduled for June 19-23, 2000 and is going to be held on the campus of Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

The celebration is being set up with many spiritual activities. The children will start their day at breakfast with their fami-

lies and then off to Children's Bible School. This includes singing, stories, and interactive discussion and crafts. The adults will meet after breakfast and have discussions and sectionals which will include information regarding various missionary fields and activities of the Protestant Reformed Churches. The theme for the Celebration will be *Living Out of Our Heritage*, based on Psalm 16:5, 6. The evening meetings will begin on Tuesday, with Rev. Jason Kortering speaking on "A Beautiful Heritage" and continue on Wednesday evening with Prof. David Engelsma speaking on "A Present Necessity." The final message will be delivered by Rev. Carl Haak on Thursday evening and will be on "A Sure Light for the Future."

Along with the spiritual activities there will be many recreational activities. The activities for the adults on the field day will include organized competition in 16" coed softball and coed volleyball. For the children there will also be monitored events, such as soccer and relay races. Besides the monitored events there are many unstructured events which will include horseshoes, frisbee golf, closest to the pin, crazy putting, and many more.

The Family Fun Day will include fun activities like: Moonwalk, Kids Inflatable Maze, Kids Caterpillar, Bungee Run, Giant Slide, a Rock Climbing Wall, and many other activities. The pool will be open every afternoon for your family's enjoyment. Some of the leisure activities will include a Church Tour of Historical Buildings, an Organ Recital, contributing and helping with items to send to Myanmar, story time, nature walks, trips to the local museums (VanAndel and Gerald R. Ford), a trip to Frederik Meijer Gardens, golf, and time enjoying company of new friends.

One of the best benefits of the celebration may be the good Christian fellowship that will be enjoyed with believers from throughout God's creation, including, the Lord willing, from Singapore, Australia, and other parts of the world. We hope that the 120-page book of the Protestant Reformed Churches and video of the week will capture the wonderful experience of the Celebration, but being a part of the event will be the experience that individuals will talk about for years to come.

The Celebration is set up to have something for everyone. That is why we recommend setting this week aside with your family and taking the opportunity to grow spiritually with fellow believers. Through this we pray that God may strengthen our churches for His work in the future and that we may truly celebrate, *Living Out of Our Heritage*.

The 75th Anniversary Committee