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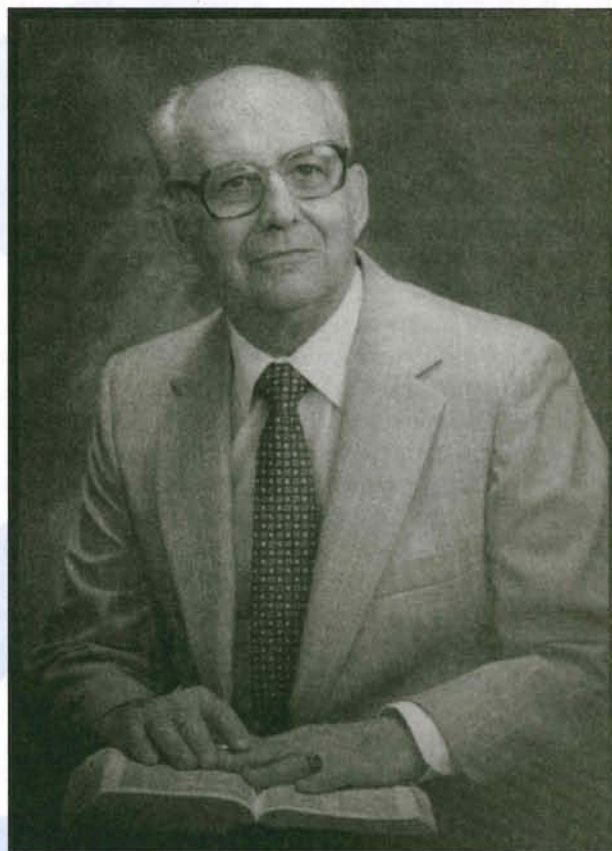
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Again Bound To Thank God For You

"But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ."

II Thessalonians 2:13,14

Paul knew something about the people to whom he was writing. He knew that the people in the Christian church in Thessalonica were elect! And he knew that they were loved of God!

That the Christians were elect and loved of God stands in marked contrast to those who belong to the kingdom of Antichrist. Paul had just been inspired to write about Antichrist, his kingdom, and those who follow him. The power and the kingdom of Antichrist would

be the reason why the citizens of the kingdom of Christ cry out in terror — so great, so terrible, and so terrifying would his power and kingdom be.

Paul has taken time to describe the citizens of the kingdom of Antichrist. The most terrible of descriptions is given of them. We are told that they are not given by God the love of the truth (through which they would be saved), and as a result they are deceived to believe the lie (and thus perish everlastingly). They are given by God strong delusion, and as a result they are damned both for not believing the truth and for having pleasure in unrighteousness.

Now, over against this description of the citizens of Antichrist's kingdom, we have a statement of most glorious confidence made concerning the citizens of Christ's kingdom. They will not believe the lie; they will believe the truth. They will not have pleasure in unrighteousness; they will be sanctified by the Spirit. They do not have to worry about perishing or being deceived by the great Deceiver. Instead of being shaken in

mind and troubled (verse 2), they have every reason to thank God, even as the apostle thanks God for them.

♦♦♦ ♦♦♦ ♦♦♦

This is the second time Paul thanks the Lord for the Thessalonians. The first time was because their faith grew exceedingly and their love for one another abounded (1:3). Now he thanks God for them again. This time Paul gives two more reasons why he (and those with him) thank God for them. It is the consideration of those reasons which compelled Paul to thank God. That is what he means when he says that he feels "bound" to thank God for them. He is compelled within himself every time he thinks about these reasons.

The first reason God is to be thanked for the Thessalonian Christians is because of His love for them. They are "beloved of the Lord." There is no greater reason to thank God than that He loved undeserving humans. It is an amazing, on-going miracle that the perfectly holy God would love sinners. And yet there is no greater way to

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know the amazing nature of love than that it is extended to those who do not deserve it. When the reason for the love cannot be found in the object, then it must be found in the subject, in God Himself. We do not know the reason behind God's love, except that it displays the riches of the glory of His grace. His fore-love for them is the reason why He chose them in election (Rom. 8:29). And there is no greater evidence of His love for them than that He sent His only begotten Son to die for them while they were yet sinners (Rom. 5:8). His love for them is so powerful that nothing can ever separate them from it (Rom. 8: 35-39). Paul is compelled to thank God for the fact that the Thessalonian believers are loved of God. Does not God's love compel you to thank Him? Ceaselessly?

The second reason for thanks to God is the truth of election. When was the last time you thanked God for election? Paul was inwardly compelled to thank God for the fact that God had elected the Thessalonian believers. This election means that God took them unto Himself in order that they might be His own unique possession. This election is the sovereign work of God according to which He unconditionally chose certain persons to be His personal possession in Christ. That personal possession makes for the most intimate of relationships, the covenant.

This work of election God did "from the beginning." This refers to the time "before the foundation of the world," according to Ephesians 1:4. "The beginning" was when there was only God (Gen. 1:1 and John 1:1). There are three clear implications which may be drawn from the fact that election took place in the beginning. The first is that election was unconditional, that is, it was something God did before anyone did anything good or evil. It was before anyone was. The second im-

plication is that everything God did and will do in creation since then is with a view to His having taken His people before. Everything God is doing since then is in the service of His election of His people. And the third implication is that the confidence which believers have concerning their salvation rests only in God's taking them into Christ. We may say, "I am chosen of God and precious, and though the world casts me out, I will not fear, for I belong to Jesus from eternity and to eternity."

When God elected the Thessalonians and us it was not for nothing, nor for only the possibility of salvation, but it is unto actual salvation. We are chosen "to salvation." Salvation is an all-comprehensive word for God's work of lifting a man from sin and death and bringing him into His kingdom. It is deliverance from the greatest misery and evil. It is safety in a state of freedom from misery and in a state of eternal blessedness. This salvation is entirely the work of God in Jesus, who is "Jehovah salvation." While salvation is determined to be the goal for every elect, it is accomplished in the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Therefore election is unto certain salvation.

The only fitting response for the knowledge of election is thanks. Thanks is due unto God now and always for saving us and for making that salvation secure. We cannot do anything for God anyway. All we can do is take the words of thanksgiving on our lips. We can and must always thank Him for giving to us the ability to believe, thus distinguishing us from those who do not believe. We can and must always thank Him for giving us the ability to want to be holy, thus distinguishing us from those who have pleasure in unrighteousness.



The giving of thanks to God for election must not be done rashly. We must not just say about people

that they are elect. There must be evidence of divine election and love. Before we can thank God for election we must see this evidence. The evidence of God's love for the Thessalonians and of His eternal election of them is something which is easily seen. The evidence is that the elect and beloved of God believe the truth and manifest the sanctification of the Spirit.

Sanctification is God's work of setting us more and more free from the power of sin, so we more and more desire God and His glory. It is the work of the Spirit of Jesus Christ within regenerated and justified elect sinners whereby they are made holy. On one hand, they increasingly know their sins and sinfulness, and as a result they more and more hate and flee from them. On the other hand, they have an increasing joy of heart in God, and as a result they more and more love and fear God and delight in His Word and more and more strive to live according to God's will in all good works. When the Spirit, who is holy, works within an elect sinner, then there is an internal holiness and a spiritual renewal. Divine election shows itself in a growing in holy thinking and living.

The point of the apostle is that sanctification is the sphere into which *all* the elect are saved. Those whom God has elected to salvation cannot say that because they are elected to salvation they may live in sin. No elect, saved person is outside the sphere of sanctification. The Spirit who saves also sanctifies. Instead of their life being characterized by pleasure in unrighteousness, it is characterized by the desire for and a striving after holy living.

Additionally, *all* who are elected to salvation will believe the truth. They will believe the truth of the gospel. This is taught in Acts 13:48. There we learn that "as many as were ordained to eternal life believed." The elect are always given the ability to believe the

truth. Belief of the truth is the activity of making the truth one's own, of learning it more and more, of entering into its depths more and more, of embracing it and loving it more and more. Faith believes that God is and that He rewards them that seek Him. Faith embraces Jesus, relies on Him, and hopes in Him without fear or doubt as the only and as the complete Savior. While God gives strong delusion to unbelievers so that they believe the lie, He gives to His elect the grace to believe.

God called the Thessalonians to faith the same way He calls believers of the twenty-first century to faith — by the preaching of the gospel. For the Thessalonians it was through Paul and his colleagues in the ministry that the preaching of the gospel came. The gospel is God's address concerning Christ and forgiveness and a command to believe. The gospel is God Himself calling to repentance, and to faith, and to a coming to Christ. It is through the preaching of the pure doctrines of the gospel that believers hear Christ saying, "Follow Me! Follow Me by believing the truth unto a personal certainty

that your sins are forgiven you."




The result of divine election is the "obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ." This glory is divine glory. It is the reflection or radiation of God's infinite perfections. We know that this is what this glory must be because it is not "a" glory or "our own" glory, but Christ's glory.

Imagine that. We share in the glory "of our Lord Jesus Christ." Jesus, in His human nature, had and has this glory. First, He has this glory because He is the fullness of the Godhead bodily (Col. 2:9), which means that all of God's virtues are in Christ. While Jesus was on earth, this glory was for the most part hidden, though every once in a while it would flash out when He performed a miracle or spoke as no man ever spoke. But when Jesus was exalted in His resurrection and ascension into heaven, the glory shines from Him for all in heaven to see.

Because those chosen to salvation are so intimately united to their Lord Jesus Christ, they share

in His glory. The highest realization of our salvation is that we possess the glory of Christ. The elect possess this glory first in regeneration, when they become partakers of the divine nature (II Pet. 1:4). They possess that glory finally in their own position in heaven and according to their own (God-given) capacity. In heaven all the saints together will reflect the one glory of Christ.

While some humans are damned to be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power (1:9), every single elect believer is given reason to be assured that he will share in Christ's glory.

It is all because of the sovereign God who saves from the beginning to the end. That is why all thanks must be given to Him. That is why Paul begins our text by saying that he is bound, or compelled, to give thanks to God always for the people of God. Look at those who believe the truth and walk in sanctification, and thank God always for them. Look at your fellow-believers and magnify the Lord with them. 

Editorial

The Kingdom of God (4)

"Who ... hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son"

Colossians 1:13

The kingdom of God is spiritual. It is spiritual rule, or government. It affords spiritual benefits. It creates and occupies a spiritual territory. It reflects a spiritual glory. It creates a spiritual citizenry.

It is not fantastic, imaginary,

and ghostly, like C. S. Lewis' Narnia, or J. R. R. Tolkien's middle earth, or J. K. Rowling's Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. It is a real kingdom. It is present in the world, exercising its tremendous power, creating and empowering its citizens, advancing and enlarging with invincible force, destroying the weapons and defenses of its enemies. So real is the kingdom of God to us who have been

translated into it by being begotten from above, so that we now have the spiritual sight of faith to see it, that the kingdom of God is the solid, substantial reality, whereas all earthly kingdoms are frail, fleeting shadows.

Oh yes, the kingdom of God is reality, but it is spiritual reality. Spiritual does not mean unreal. Spiritual means unreal only to the unspiritual—the materialist, the

natural man (I Cor. 2:9-16). Spiritual describes the kind of reality. There is a physical reality, for example, the United States of America. There is a spiritual reality, namely, the kingdom of God.

We do not doubt spiritual reality, do we? We do not esteem spiritual reality less than the physical and earthly, do we? We have not become crass Darwinian materialists, have we? Why, as Christians, our ultimate hope is a spiritual body in a perfectly, exclusively spiritual world, according to I Corinthians 15:44-49:

It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit. Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.

The Spirituality of the Kingdom

As spiritual, the kingdom of God is the creation of the Spirit of Jesus Christ. Nebuchadnezzar created Babylon; Franklin, Jefferson, Washington, and others created the United States; Hitler created Nazi Germany. The Spirit of Christ created the kingdom of God.

The kingdom of God is spiritual, in the second place, in that its life and power are the life and power of the risen, exalted Jesus Christ. In His resurrection, Jesus has passed into a new life and has received hitherto unknown power, the highest life and greatest power that man can possess and wield: immortal, eternal life! life-giving, death-overcoming, irresistible power!

This is the teaching of the apostle in I Corinthians 15:42ff.

There is a spiritual body: the body of the risen Jesus Christ. The last Adam—Jesus Christ—was made a “quickeningspirit.” Jesus Christ and everything about Him is spiritual. Now the kingdom of God in the world is simply the life and power of the risen Jesus Christ in history. Since Jesus is spiritual, so is, and must be (and cannot but be), His kingdom. In the language of I Corinthians 15, the kingdom is not “natural,” is not “earthly.”

So much is it true that the kingdom of God is not earthly, that the Bible describes it as heavenly. This is its nature, its quality. This is the kind of kingdom it is. The kingdom of God is the heavenly life and power of Jesus Christ breaking into our world. There is first a beachhead in Palestine. Then, over the years the kingdom expands throughout the whole world, until finally in the Day of Christ, by the wonder of the second coming, the life and power of Christ renew the entire creation as the kingdom of God.

There is something mysterious about the kingdom of God, therefore. Of course, there is. We are familiar with earthly kingdoms: the will to earthly, political power; the lust for earthly glory; earthly force terrifying or enthralling the citizens; the enjoyment of earthly peace and prosperity. But this spiritual kingdom is new and different.

Nevertheless, Scripture reveals something of the spiritual kingdom, and we who have been translated into it experience the beginnings of its life and power. The kingdom is characterized by truth, and the truth is the Word of God—the gospel of inspired Scripture, including the law. The kingdom is characterized by righteousness, and righteousness is the justification of the sinner by faith alone, followed by a life of obedience to the law of God. The kingdom is characterized by peace, and peace is a tranquil, harmonious relation with God by the pardon of sins and

in the way of walking with Him in holiness. The kingdom is characterized by service, and the service is confessing the Lordship of Jesus Christ and doing His will. The kingdom is characterized by prosperity, and the prosperity is the riches of salvation.

Scripture on the Spirituality of the Kingdom

Scripture teaches that the kingdom is spiritual. Writing to the saints at Colosse in the middle of the first century A.D., when there certainly was no earthly, visible, political Christian kingdom, the apostle declared that every one who is born again and believes the gospel has thereby been transferred into the kingdom of the Son of God’s love, that is, into the Messianic kingdom of God (Col. 1:13). On the one hand, this demolishes the notion that the kingdom of Christ is a future, millennial, Jewish state and world-power. On the other hand, it likewise demolishes all earthly conceptions of the kingdom. If we who believe the gospel are now in the kingdom (and Colossians 1:13 assures us that we are), the kingdom is present and spiritual. If Paul and the Colossian Christians were already in the kingdom of Christ (and Colossians 1:13 says that they were), the kingdom of Christ broke into the world on the day of Pentecost as a spiritual kingdom.

Then, there is Jesus’ word to Pilate in John 18:36, a word that is absolutely crucial to the right understanding of the kingdom: “My kingdom is not of this world.” To be sure, Jesus described the *origin* of His kingdom. He *is* king. Make no mistake about it. He *has* a kingdom: “My kingdom.” This kingdom, however, does not originate in this world. It originates from heaven. But the origin determines its *nature*. It is not *this-worldly*, but *other-worldly*. It is heavenly.

The proof is plain and abundant. First, it stands in the nature of the case. That which comes from

heaven, specifically, from God through the crucified and risen Christ in the Spirit of Christ, must be as heavenly as its source.

Second, the heavenly nature of the kingdom is indicated by the implication that Jesus drew from the heavenly origin of His kingdom: His servants do not fight. The servants do not fight to defend their king from death. They do not fight to promote the kingdom. They do not use physical force, or the threat of it, to extend or maintain the kingdom. Jesus referred to the prohibition against physical force that He had given to Peter in the garden: "Put up thy sword into the sheath" (John 18:10, 11). This is a law concerning the defense and promotion of the kingdom until the end of this age. Unmistakably, it describes the kingdom as spiritual. Being spiritual, the kingdom of God can only be promoted and defended by spiritual means. This spiritual means is the Word of God (II Cor. 10:3-5).

Third, that Jesus' description of the origin of His kingdom was also the description of its heavenly nature is proved from Jesus' statement in John 18:37 that He establishes and promotes His kingdom

by bearing witness to the truth. The kingdom of God is the oddest kingdom that ever there was. Winston Churchill once remarked about all earthly kingdoms in wartime that "the first casualty of war is truth." Although the kingdom of God is always at war in history, it employs only the truth for its defense and advancement. This is clear testimony by Christ that His kingdom is heavenly.

Fourth, there is proof of the heavenly nature of the kingdom of God in the conclusion that Pilate came to on the basis of Jesus' word in verse 36, "My kingdom is not of this world." Pilate concluded that the kingdom of Jesus was no threat to Rome as the Jewish leaders had made it out to be—a threat by plots of sedition, by physical force, by revolution. "I find in him no fault" was the verdict of the representative of Rome, who had an eagle-eye for rival kings and kingdoms (John 18:38).

The heavenly *origin* of the kingdom of God, taught by Jesus in John 18:33-40, determines its heavenly *nature*. This was the understanding of the Scottish Presbyterian, James Bannerman.

Christ seeks to disabuse the mind of Pilate, in regard to the nature of His Church, of the idea that it might be like any of the powers of this world, established or upheld by force; He tells him that it is spiritual in its nature and authority, and therefore not liable to become an object of jealousy to the state, as trenching upon its authority or jurisdiction (*The Church of Christ*, Edinburgh, 1974, vol. 2, p. 163).

The virtual definition of the kingdom of God in Romans 14:17 proves the kingdom to be spiritual, not physical: "The kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." These spiritual realities are what the kingdom essentially is. The kingdom of God is not anything earthly whatever.

The spirituality of the kingdom of God is offensive to multitudes today. That many stumble over the spiritual nature of the kingdom of God grieves us. But it does not surprise us. Exactly this was the offense of the kingship and kingdom of the Messiah to the Jews of Jesus' own day.

... to be continued. 

— DJE

Letters

■ Tithing

In his article, "Financial Stewardship" (*Standard Bearer*, Feb. 15, 2001), Rev. Kleyn makes statements concerning tithing which I believe are incorrect. He states that the New Testament Scriptures mention tithing in three places in the gospel accounts, each in a negative way, and that the only other mention of tithing in Hebrews 7 speaks of it as something that belongs to the Old Testament. I would like to show that neither of these is true.

Rev. Kleyn mentions Matthew

23:23 and Luke 11:42, which are similar passages in which Christ pronounces woe upon the Pharisees for their hypocrisy. For the Pharisees were diligent about tithing of their herbs, but they were ignoring the more important matters of the law concerning justice and mercy. They were concerned with external appearances but inside they were as dead men, rotting and putrid. Then in the last phrase of both of these passages, our Lord says, "These ought ye to have done and not to leave the other undone," meaning that it was

good and proper that they tithe of their herbs, but they ought to have done the other also. Tithing is not spoken of in a negative way, but rather is spoken of as something that they ought to have done. The problem was not with the tithe but with the Pharisees and the fact that they gave lip service to God, but their hearts were far from Him. This same analysis holds true for the passage referred to in Luke 18:10. It was not the giving of tithes that was the problem, but rather that the Pharisee came before the Lord in pride and the ar-

rogance of his own righteousness, whereas the publican, knowing his sin, came to God looking for mercy and forgiveness.

Rev. Kleyn also looks at Hebrews 7 and concludes that this chapter shows that tithing is something that belongs to the Old Testament and by implication not to the New Testament. Now I will grant that this chapter in Hebrews definitely shows that the Old Testament saints practiced tithing before the giving of the Law, but this does not demonstrate or prove that it is wrong for the new Testament believer. I assume that when making this statement Rev. Kleyn was referring to verse 18, "For there is verily a disannulling of the commandment going before for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof." For him to say that this shows that tithing is no longer incumbent upon the New Testament believer because it was part of that law that was disannulled is not correct. The example that is here given, Abraham's giving a tithe to Melchisedec, occurred 400 years before the giving of that law that was disannulled. Paul makes the point in Galatians 3:17 that the covenant that was confirmed before of God in Christ to Abraham cannot be annulled by the law which came 430 years later. Does not the same logic apply to the tithe, which was practiced by the church before the giving of the law? In fact, is it not even reasonable that since Abraham, the father of all believers, gave tithes to Melchisedec, who is a type of Christ, that we ought to be tithing? At the very least, I believe that we must conclude that we cannot say that tithing was abolished with the law since it predated the giving of the law. That the practice of tithing was known before the giving of the law is also shown by the fact that Jacob, after having God speak to him in a dream at Bethel, makes a vow that if God will prosper him in his way, so that he returns in peace to his father's house, then the

Lord will be his God. As part of that vow, he states that he will surely give one tenth unto the Lord (Gen. 28:22).

I hope that I have at least demonstrated that the grounds upon which Rev. Kleyn made his statement concerning tithing are wrong, and that if he wishes to hold his position, he must do so on some other basis. I would like to add further that the positive principles that Rev. Kleyn puts forth for the New Testament believer are in no way contradicted by the principle of tithing. The tithe is proportionate and, therefore, follows the principle of "giving as God has prospered us." Tithing ought to be done cheerfully, out of a love for God, as an expression of gratitude because all that we have is from Him. Neither do we limit ourselves to a tenth. But as those that have received a more abundant revelation of the grace and mercy of God than the Old Testament saints, the tithe becomes a good place for us to start.

Alan Meurer
Bartlett, IL

RESPONSE:

The reason I believe tithing is referred to negatively in the gospel accounts is because it is mentioned in connection with Christ's criticism of the Pharisees. It is true that Christ does not condemn tithing. But the fact that He mentions it while speaking to and about the Pharisees certainly puts it in a negative light. And even if it could be argued that these references are not negative, the fact remains that this instruction properly belongs to the Old Testament era. Freedom from the Old Testament ordinances did not take place until after the death and resurrection of

Christ and the pouring out of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost.

The fact that tithing predated the giving of the law at Sinai does not mean it was not part of the law that was fulfilled by the Lord Jesus Christ. Besides, the command to tithe was actually included in the laws given at Sinai (see Lev. 27 and Deut. 14).

While it may be true that the tithe can serve as a guide in giving to the causes of God's kingdom, the New Testament principle of giving is that we do so as God has prospered us (I Cor. 16:2). This principle has not been added to the Old Testament law of tithing, but replaces it. Through Christ Jesus we have been freed from bondage to the Old Testament laws. Let us "stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage" (Gal. 5:1).

— (Rev.) Daniel Kleyn 

All Things Are Ours

Each blade of grass, dew-crowned in early morn,
Each fragrant flow'r, in perfect beauty dressed,
Each stalk of ripened wheat, each ear of corn,
All growing things with which the land is blest:
All things are ours!

The trees, the rivers, lakes and seas,
The mighty mountains, ev'ry beast and bird,
The howling wind, the gentle breeze,
Each work created by His pow'rful word:
All things are ours!

The silver and gold, the knowledge we hold,
All things are ours, and we belong to Him
Who formed for us, the sheep within His fold,
This universe, that we may dwell therein:
All things are ours!

Let's praise His holy name with ev'ry breath
Until, still glorifying Him who set us free,
He calls us home, through instrument of death,
And then in heav'n we'll praise Him perfectly:
All things are ours!

"For all things are yours; and ye are Christ's;
and Christ is God's."

Thelma Westra

Reflection on the Ministry of Rev. Lubbers*

I have been asked to make a few remarks on the ministry of Rev. Lubbers from the vantage point of being his pastor.

I have known Rev. Lubbers in more capacities than his pastor.

I knew Rev. Lubbers as I grew up in the Protestant Reformed Churches. He was one of the older ministers of the denomination that my generation came to respect. Rev. Lubbers' name was mentioned along with such ministers as Revs. Schipper, Veldman, Hanko, Heys, and Harbach. The Lord has now taken all these men to glory with the exception of Rev. Hanko.

When I entered into the ministry in 1974 I came to know Rev. Lubbers as a colleague in the ministry. As I began my first charge in Edgerton, MN Rev. Lubbers was finishing his ministry in Pella, IA. We didn't have much opportunity to work together. I do, however, remember a very enjoyable week traveling through the western states with Rev. Lubbers as we did church visitation together.

When I came to First Church I became Rev. Lubbers' pastor. During the five and one half years I have served as his pastor, I came to know and love Rev. Lubbers in a way not possible before.

Rev. Slopsema is pastor of First Protestant Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

* This is a transcript of remarks made by Rev. Slopsema at the funeral of Rev. Lubbers on April 16, 2001.

A number of things stand out in my mind as I reflect on Rev. Lubbers and his ministry.

First, Rev. Lubbers was himself a pastor. He had a pastor's heart. He loved the people of God and was very effective in bringing the Word of God to them in their need. Everyone knew this about Rev. Lubbers. Many stories are still told by grateful parishioners who were helped by Rev. Lubbers' labors.

Rev. Lubbers was also a man of song. Rev. Lubbers loved to sing the songs of Zion. He often brought these songs to his parishioners in his pastoral work. I remember well the 1966 Young People's Convention. There was about a half hour lull before lunch, with most of us sitting on a hillside. Here came Rev. Lubbers with a Psalter. He led us in an impromptu sing-along and carried us along with his enthusiasm until lunch time.

Rev. Lubbers was also a theologian. He loved to exegete the Scriptures. This reflected itself in his preaching. The earlier issues of the *Standard Bearer* are full of his exegesis. Some of this material has been published in book form. Although Rev. Lubbers retired from the ministry in 1977, he never retired from exegeting the Scriptures. Often when I would visit Rev. Lubbers in his room at Raybrook, I would find him dressed up with white shirt and tie, sitting at his desk working with the Greek and Hebrew Scriptures. My pastoral visit would consist in discussing his exegesis. This made him extremely happy. For he knew that

Rev. James Slopsema

what he had gleaned from Scripture would never be preached or published. But at least he could share it with me. And I was happy too. For I enjoyed his "golden nuggets," as he called them.

Rev. Lubbers also liked to critique my sermons. My sermon topics are published in a Saturday ad that First Church runs in the *Grand Rapids Press*. It became obvious that Rev. Lubbers would spend Saturdays making his own sermons on these passages. He would then catch me after church or phone me on Monday to tell me what I missed or how I could have developed this or that concept a little differently. And often he would stop with a concerned look on his face, "You're not offended, are you?" "No, Rev. Lubbers," I would assure him, "I'm not offended. Who could be offended at you?" Then with a sense of relief he would continue his critique.




Rev. and Mrs. George C. Lubbers

Finally, I remember Rev. Lubbers as a grateful man. This was impressed upon me at the classis in which Rev. Lubbers applied for emeritation. In his farewell to classis Rev. Lubbers concluded his remarks by saying, "Mr. Chairman, there is one thing I have

learned in the ministry. The Lord didn't need me." Then he choked up. With tears running down his cheeks Rev. Lubbers finished, "The Lord didn't need me; but He saw fit to use me." Obviously the Lord had humbled Rev. Lubbers through

many difficult experiences and made him very grateful to be used of the Lord as a minister of the gospel.

We too are grateful to the Lord for calling Rev. Lubbers to the ministry and blessing us and our churches through his work. 

The Distinctly Reformed Doctrine of the Covenant As Applied To Missions (2)

Prof. Robert Decker

In the previous issue we outlined the doctrine of God's everlasting covenant. We took note of the fact that the covenant is not an alliance. We also concluded that the covenant does not consist of God's promise, a condition, and a blessing or penalty. Rather, the Bible teaches that the covenant is the bond of friendship and fellowship which God establishes between Himself and believers and their children in their generations (Gen. 17:7; Ps. 25:14; Acts 2:39; James 2:23). This covenant is established, maintained, and realized by God in Christ through the Holy Spirit. We also paid careful attention to the truth that the covenant is not established by God with all the children of believers. It was established with Isaac, but not with Ishmael (Gen. 17). The covenant was established with Jacob, but not with Esau (Gen. 25:21-23). To put it another way, God's covenant is not established

with "the children of the flesh," but "the children of the promise are counted for the seed." The children of the promise are the seed of Abraham, which ultimately is Christ and all who are in Him by faith, i.e., they are the elect in Christ Jesus, the "even as many as the Lord our God shall call" of Acts 2:39 (cf. also Rom. 9 and Gal. 3:14-29).

The all-important question now becomes, how are the elect in Christ brought into the covenant and church of God? The answer to this question is the point at which the distinctively Reformed doctrine of the covenant must be applied to missions!

Christ brings the elect into the covenant. Not only are the members of the covenant chosen in Christ before the foundations of the world, and not only are these chosen ones redeemed by Jesus' atoning death on the cross, and not only are they made alive by the power of Christ's resurrection from the dead (Eph. 1 and 2), but the elect are also gathered by Christ out of the nations into the covenant and church.

Scripture teaches in John 10 that Jesus is the Good Shepherd who lays down His life for the sheep and gathers them into the one fold. Jesus knows those sheep. The sheep hear Jesus' voice and they follow Him. To them the Savior gives eternal life. The sheep will never perish, for no one is able to pluck them out of Jesus' hand, nor out of His Father's hand. This wonderful truth is reflected beautifully in the Heidelberg Catechism, question 54, where the Reformed believer confesses what he believes concerning the one, holy, catholic church: "That the Son of God, from the beginning to the end of the world, gathers, defends, and preserves to Himself by His Spirit and Word, out of the whole human race, a church chosen to everlasting life, agreeing in true faith; and that I am, and for ever shall remain, a living member thereof." Christ gathers the church! He does so by His Spirit and Word.

Christ gathers His elect by a preacher who is sent. "Sent" must be understood in the sense of what we call the lawful call of Christ through the church to the special

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office of the ministry of the Word (cf. *The Church Order of the Protestant Reformed Churches*, Articles 3 and 4 especially, but also 5-20). The elect, the sheep, with whom God establishes His covenant must hear the voice of Christ, the Good Shepherd. Only when they hear Jesus' voice are they enabled to know Christ and to follow Him into life eternal. This is precisely what Jesus taught us in John 10:27-28, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life...."

Christ's sheep hear His voice by means of a preacher who is sent. They do not merely hear about Jesus, they hear Jesus. Romans 10:13-15 makes this plain, "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him whom they have not heard?* and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach except they be sent?" In order to call upon the name of the Lord and be saved, one needs to believe in Christ; in order to believe in Christ one needs to hear Christ; and in order to hear Christ, one needs a preacher who is sent.

One finds this same truth in Ephesians 4. After instructing us that the crucified, risen, and exalted Christ gave pastors and teachers to the church for the building up of the body of Christ (vv. 11-16), the inspired apostle exhorts us not to walk as other Gentiles walk in the vanity of their mind (vv. 17-20). We have not so learned Christ, "If so be that ye have heard him, and been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus" (vv. 20-21). Notice that the passage teaches that we hear Christ and are taught by Christ. This happens through the office of the pastor and teacher which Christ gives to the church.

Further, this great truth determines the only proper way to preach the Word. The inspired

and, therefore, infallible Word of God, the only and absolute rule for the doctrine and life of the church, must be faithfully expounded by the preacher. All preaching must be exegetically based. The content of every sermon, to put it a slightly different way, must be nothing more or less than the Word of God in the particular text on which the pastor preaches. When the preacher thus expounds the Word of God, the voice of Christ is heard by God's people.

This is why the Scriptures teach in I Corinthians 1:21, "...it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." And this is also why Jesus told the church (as represented by the apostles) just before He ascended into glory, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16:15, 16).

Chiefly by means of the preaching of the Word, God's everlasting covenant of grace and friendship with His elect in Christ is maintained and realized from the beginning to the end of the world.

Let no one fail to understand that this is the work of the sovereign God from beginning to end. God elects His people in Christ from all eternity. God in His sovereign love sent His only begotten Son into the world to lay down His life on the cross for those elect and to take it again in His resurrection from the dead. God through Christ poured out His Spirit into the church. God regenerates the elect. God through Christ and by means of the preaching of the Word brings the elect to faith towards the Lord Jesus and repentance towards God. In this way the church is gathered out of the nations. This is what missions is all about, the gathering of the elect out of the nations into the covenant and church of God. By means of the preaching of the Word the gathered church is defended against all her enemies and

is edified and is preserved unto everlasting life.

What is more, the gathering, defense, and preservation of the church is absolutely certain! This is because it is exclusively God's work. The gathering of the elect into the covenant, preserving them in the covenant, and taking them into the perfection of the glory of God's presence is not partly God's work and partly ours. The gathering of the church is not contingent in any way on man's contribution, however small that might be. God does not need man to fulfill the condition of believing or accepting an offer to realize the covenant. God does not depend on the fickle will of man. It is God's work. Still more, that covenant itself is everlasting (cf. Gen. 17:7)! The covenant is a never ending, firm, indestructible relationship of friendship!

This means the Protestant Reformed Churches can engage in missions *optimistically*! This is true exactly because of their commitment to the distinctively Reformed truth of the covenant.

There are at least four main aspects of that distinctively Reformed doctrine of the covenant which ought to fire the churches and their members with optimistic zeal for the work of missions:

1. God has His elect people in Christ in every nation. The testimony of Holy Scripture is overwhelming in this regard. The apostle John saw in vision a multitude which no man could number out of all nations standing about God's throne (Rev. 7:9-17)! These must be gathered into the church and covenant fellowship with God in Christ by means of the preaching of the Word to the nations.

2. God's Word is efficacious, effective. Writes the inspired prophet, "So shall my word be that

* The little word "of," which appears in the Authorized Version, does not appear in the original Greek.

goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it" (Is. 55:11). The writer to the Hebrews put it this way, "For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."


3. When we, by God's grace, sincerely preach that powerful Word of God to the nations, the almighty God always causes us to triumph in Christ and makes manifest the savor of His knowledge by us in every place. We are unto God a sweet savor of Christ in them that are saved and in them that perish.

To the one we are a savor of death unto death and to the other the savor of life unto life (I Cor. 2:14-17)!

4. And, what is more, the Christ who calls us and who is pleased thus to gather His elect out of the nations has been exalted to the Father's right hand in glory, "far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come" (Eph. 1:21). Nothing moves, apart from the will of Christ. All things are for God's church. Nothing can separate God's saints from His love in Christ Jesus (Rom. 8:28-39).

Let us get on with the work of missions then! Let us never be discouraged. Let us be zealous and enthusiastic. By means of the

churches' preaching of the gospel in her pulpits and to the nations Christ will build His church and gather His sheep into the fellowship of God. By this means as well, a witness will be left to the nations and the end of all things will come (Matt. 24:14). And when the end of all things comes, the tabernacle of God shall be with His people and He will dwell with them, and God Himself shall be their God (Rev. 21:3, 4). That is the perfection of God's covenant in the new heavens and earth.

That will happen...soon! Not Satan, not the ungodly, not the Antichrist can hinder that mighty work of God and His Christ, accomplished through His Holy Spirit and Word. No, not even the gates of hell! 

Go Ye Into All the World

PRCA Foreign Missions: An Annual Review



Rev. R. Smit

The Foreign Mission Committee (FMC) of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America once again presents to the readers of the *Standard Bearer* an overview of the foreign mission work of our churches since our last report.

The committee is composed of eight members from the Doon, Edgerton, and Hull Protestant Re-

formed Churches. The members from Edgerton are Mr. Allen Brummel and Rev. Daniel Kleyn. The members from Doon are Mr. Jim Hoogendoorn, Rev. Richard Smit, and Mr. Peter VanDenTop. The members from Hull are Rev. Steven Key, Mr. Alvin Kooiker, and Mr. Don VerMeer. We usually meet as a committee about every 5 to 6 weeks to conduct the denominational work of foreign missions.

The Lord has again given us much work to do. The work continues to focus on the mission field in Accra, Ghana, and the investigatory and developmental work in

the Philippines. The work has been enjoyable, particularly from the viewpoint of witnessing those among whom we labor begin to understand and grasp the distinctives of the Reformed faith. Indeed, our churches have a blessed privilege of being used by the Lord in a small part of His harvest.

GHANA

Rev. Richard Moore continues as our foreign missionary on the Ghanaian mission field. His monthly reports and regular newsletters provide a thorough picture of the mission work being carried

Rev. Smit is pastor of the Protestant Reformed Church in Doon, Iowa. He is also secretary of the Foreign Mission Committee.



Ghana Mission Fellowship

out on the field. Rev. Moore continues to preach from the Heidelberg Catechism regularly each Lord's day in the evening services as well as preaching from particular passages of Scripture. Recently, Rev. Moore has preached the following sermons (themes and texts) in the mornings: "Made Near by Christ's Blood" (Eph. 2: 11-13); "Risen According to His Word" (Luke 24: 4-8); "The King Coming in Meekness" (Matt. 21: 1-11); "Christ Made Naked" (John 19:23, 24); "Needed Redemption Divinely Determined" (Ps. 135: 6 & Eph. 1: 7); "Hated Without a Cause" (John 15:25); and, "More Precious Than Gold" (I Pet. 1:7). Usually, the preaching is translated into the language of some of the people who cannot understand the English. Thus, the Word is preached; the seeds are sown by means of our missionary's preaching; and, we wait upon the Lord for the increase.

In connection with the preaching of the Word, Rev. Moore also leads a Bible Study on Tuesday night, leads a Bible Study on Wednesday night in Ashaley Botwe, gives a live radio program on Thursday nights, teaches two catechism classes, and also does pastoral work among the mission fellowship.

Both Bible Studies are currently studying the book of Galatians. The Bible Studies prove to be a good time for our missionary to explain carefully the Scriptures and the Reformed faith as well as to an-

swer the questions and issues of importance to the people. By these means, Rev. Moore is guiding the mission fellowship into a greater understanding of the Reformed faith and practice.

The Thursday night radio program continues to go well. Recent topics of the program were Philippians 2:1-11, forgiving our brother seventy times seven, sovereign salvation, the sovereignty of God and inspiration of Scripture, and the crucifixion of Christ with the two thieves. Some programs have been entirely devoted to answering questions from the listeners concerning previous programs. Rev. Moore has even conducted an open forum program in which listeners could call in and ask their questions. Usually, however, the program consists of a 15-minute speech and a 15-minute segment for questions and answers. Usually during the question and answer segment of the programs, listeners call with their questions.

Rev. Moore conducts two instruction classes with young people and children. The children are taught from the doctrine and Bible history catechism books which are used by our pastors in our local congregations. The Bible history class has been studying from the Old Testament for Juniors book, while the doctrine class has been studying from the Essentials book.

As a result of all this work in Accra for nearly two years, the missionary reports that there is progress among the mission fellow-

ship in understanding the truths of the Reformed faith. The mission group is composed at present of six families who regularly attend. This includes a couple whose marriage was solemnized by Rev. Moore during a worship service in our mission group. Other couples, parts of families, and individuals attend. Regarding those who attend our mission fellowship, the missionary concluded in his annual report that there are the beginnings of a nucleus of men and women for preparing to establish a congregation here in the future.

Some changes have taken place on the mission field in the past few months.

First, the mission fellowship is now meeting in a new building in a new location. The new mission building is located in Ashaley Botwe. According to our missionary, the building is very conducive to all the activities of the fellowship during the week and especially for worship on the Lord's day. The missionary is very thankful for this new change on the mission field since it provides a better place to preach and worship for the mission fellowship.

The second change is the move of the mission home. Currently, the Moores and the missionary assistants are living in Madina, an outlying district of Accra. By the end of April, they will have settled into a new place in Ashaley Botwe. From this house, they will be within walking distance of the new mission building. As a result, the central point of our mission field is now being established in the



New church building

Ashaley Botwe area, another outlying district of Accra. One of the factors for moving the focus of the mission work to Ashaley was the fact that a large majority of the members of the mission fellowship live in Ashaley Botwe area.

The third major change on the field in the past year is the change in our volunteer assistants. Gone from the field are Mr. and Mrs. John Bouma, who spent over a year and a half on the field. John and Judy are members of our Grandville Protestant Reformed Church. We must point out that John was chiefly responsible for the construction of the new mission building in Ashaley Botwe. We thank him for his time and effort in building a new place of worship for our mission fellowship. After serving the missionary, his wife, and the mission group through April, the Boumas felt that it was time to give the work of being assistants to the next volunteers. We heartily thank the Boumas for their service and assistance to the Moores and the mission fellowship.

Since the middle of April, Mr. and Mrs. Arnold Bleyenbergs have lived in Accra. Arnold and Charlotte are members of our Edgerton Protestant Reformed Church. According to early reports, the Bleyenbergs are adjusting well to the culture, climate, and their new role as missionary assistants. They will be helping the Moores to move to Ashaley Botwe at the end of April. Once moved with the Moores to Ashaley Botwe, the Bleyenbergs will make their Ghanaian home in a separate dwelling near the missionary's house. We express our thanks to the Bleyenbergs for their willingness to devote some time in their life to assisting the missionary on the Ghanaian mission field.

The FMC thanks our churches for the faithful support of our missionary assistants through the many offerings that were taken the past year. The cost of the Ghanaian volunteer assistants amounts to

a little over \$20,000 per year. So far the offerings have kept pace with the travel and living expenses of the missionary assistants.

The FMC and Hull council spent time investigating the workload of Rev. R. Moore. A committee of the FMC and Hull council visited the field in November 2000 to see firsthand the amount of work that Rev. Moore does. After discussion and study, the FMC adopted Hull council's recommendation to propose to synod that a second missionary be called to labor in Ghana. The reasons for a second missionary are, first, the workload of Rev. Moore shows that a second missionary is necessary. Second, the fact that Rev. Moore is nearing the age of emeritation makes having a second missionary on the field before he retires wise. To make a transition from one missionary to the next on a mission field of this nature seems to require that the transition be made orderly and before Rev. Moore seeks emeritation. Finally, the scriptural principle of sending missionaries two by two supports the proposal to have two missionaries on the field.

The FMC, upon Hull's recommendation, is also proposing to synod that the second missionary labor as time and opportunity permit in other areas in Accra or in Ghana. Clearly, the important task at hand is to establish the group in Ashaley Botwe as a Reformed congregation. However, the FMC's proposal recognizes that as the Lord leads us, He may grant us an open door to develop the mission work beyond the city and suburbs of Accra. Already by a few occasional visits to outlying villages, Rev. Moore reported that there were possibilities for future work in places beyond the city and suburbs of Accra.

What is interesting to remember about the mission field in Ghana is that it started without any prior group there. This method of foreign mission work, adopted by

synod 1996 when it declared Ghana a mission field, was a new mission method for our churches. From the small beginning of only three in attendance under the preaching on July 11, 1999, the attendance under the preaching of the gospel has now increased greatly, so that a new mission building now adequately accommodates the large attendance under the preaching. Although we do not set our hearts upon numbers, yet our prayer is not only that our missionary may continue to preach the gospel of Christ distinctively, antithetically, and boldly, but also that Christ by His Spirit may continue to gather under the preaching His people unto faith and repentance in our Lord Jesus Christ.

PHILIPPINES

In comparison to the method of mission work in Ghana, the method of the future mission work in the Philippines is different in the Lord's providence. The method which will be used in the Philippines, the Lord willing, is not to start a mission work in the Philippines "from scratch," but rather to work with the present groups in the Philippines whom the Lord has brought into contact with us. This is the same method used on the mission field in Singapore in the '80s.

How long have we known the groups of contacts in the Philippines? With the churches in the Labo area we have had contact for many years. They are mostly from a Baptist background. The pastor and the members of the Bible Fellowship in Cagayan de Oro City have had contact with our churches for many years. Since 1998 we have known a group in Manila which seceded, on the basis of their understanding thus far of the Reformed faith, from a congregation of the World Wide Church of God. Also since 1998 we have worked with a group in Bacolod, who are mostly from a Reformed background. Our work in the Philip-

piners the past year focused on these four areas of labor.

The work in the Philippines was carried out mostly by two delegations, one sent in August 2000 and another in February 2001. Although the FMC carried out correspondence and literature distribution in the Philippines, the bulk of the work was carried out by the two delegations. As before, both of the latest delegations to the Philippines included a member of the FMC. This has provided valuable insights and ready-at-hand information for the FMC during its meetings in Northwest Iowa while deliberating on the future of our work in the Philippines.

The first delegation, which visited on August 9-22, 2000, consisted of Rev. Rodney Miersma, pastor in our Immanuel Protestant Reformed Church, and Rev. Richard Smit, pastor in our Doon Protestant Reformed Church. They spent about two weeks in the Philippines, laboring among contacts in Manila, Bacolod City, Cagayan de Oro City, Daet, Labo, Jose Panganiban, and Capalonga. Topics of the lectures centered in the doctrines of eschatology and on other topics which the contacts specifically requested. Preaching was also provided among the contacts in Labo, Capalonga, and Jose Panganiban on the first Lord's day and in Cagayan de Oro on the second Lord's day.

Rev. Miersma and Rev. Smit,



Lunch-break on day of lectures in Bacolod City.

who had both visited the Philippines on previous delegations, found that there had been developments on the field. Some former contacts were no longer interested in the doctrine and distinctives of the Reformed faith as taught and practiced by our churches. However, others showed a continued desire to grow in the doctrine and distinctives of the Reformed faith as taught by our churches. All of our contacts showed an interest in and a desire for a missionary from our churches to come. As a result of its investigation and developmental work, the delegation concluded that there was full-time mission work for our churches in the Philippines.

Because the first delegation had concluded that there was a need and a desire for a PRC missionary among our contacts in the Philippines, the second delegation was given the mandate to find out

where the missionary would possibly locate and what the nature of the possible missionary's work would be. This mandate was fulfilled by Rev. Wilbur Bruinsma, pastor in our Kalamazoo Protestant Reformed Church, and Rev. Daniel Kleyn, pastor in our Edgerton Protestant Reformed Church.

The brethren were in the Philippines earlier this year for fourteen days, from February 12 to February 26. They spent themselves in their labor, preaching on both Lord's days, giving 11 speeches, and conducting 13 formal and informal meetings with leaders or members of the current groups and with a contact from Surigao City, whom we have known since 1997. The delegation centered its lectures and preaching in the doctrines of the covenant. As other delegations have done, the delegation led open forums in which our contacts were free to ask any pressing questions they might have, or have the delegation provide advice on urgent matters.

The delegation did witness some opposition to our presence in the Philippines. Some of our contacts in Manila and Daet have been told that our churches are hyper-Calvinist. However, this opposition has forced our contacts to judge for themselves whether the charge against us is valid. The opposition seems to have strengthened the resolve of our contacts to stand with our churches in the distinctives of the Reformed faith.



Contacts in Manila from the Berean Church of God (Reformed).

Based upon the several requests for a missionary specifically from our denomination and the positive developments in the Philippines, the delegation concluded in its report to the FMC that there is an urgency to send a missionary to labor in the Philippines.

In light of the work and recommendations of the delegations, and in light of the direction given to the FMC by synod 2000 regarding the Philippines, the FMC is proposing to the coming synod that the Philippines be declared a mission field of our churches. The FMC is proposing the missionary base his labors among the Berean Church of God (Reformed) in Manila, but then also make periodic visits to the Body of Christ Bible Churches (Daet/Labo area), to the fellowship in Cagayan de Oro, and the fellowship in Bacolod City for instruction and preaching. To the FMC and our contacts it is obvious that there is more than enough work for one missionary to do, but the groups in the Philippines have expressed the willingness to do whatever is necessary to share the missionary so that all might benefit from his in-

struction in the Reformed faith.

CONCLUSION

This annual review shows that there is work for our churches to do among peoples of different race, language, and culture. It appears to the FMC that the Lord is granting us another field of foreign mission labor in the Philippines.

It becomes evident that our churches must face some important questions in the coming synod.

Can our denomination properly maintain two foreign mission fields? We have never before in our history had two foreign mission fields under the jurisdiction of the Foreign Mission Committee. Do we have not only the desire to continue to witness of the rich heritage, which God has given us and marked out for us with gracious care, but also the ability and means to fulfill the work on two foreign fields?


Can the churches provide three foreign missionaries: two to Ghana and one to the Philippines? Do we have the ministers to carry out the work? This question of manpower immediately arises in our hearts and minds because of the several

current vacancies in our churches and imminent retirements. How shall we respond to the on-going reality that "the labourers are few" and "the harvest truly is plentiful"?

Do we have the funds to support two foreign mission fields with three foreign missionaries? The FMC knows firsthand that foreign mission work is not free, but requires lots of money. Synod will find that the proposed 2002 budget for foreign missions is noticeably higher than the current year's budget because of the proposals for Ghana and for the Philippines. This increase will most likely require an increase in our synodical assessments. Are the churches willing and able to support this?

These are some of the questions.

For the answers, may we as churches trust in the Lord with all our heart for God's wisdom to be our guide.

The FMC covets your prayers as we labor on behalf of and with our churches for the cause of the Lord's kingdom and covenant in foreign missions. 

Report of the Domestic Mission Committee

Mr. Don Doezeema

"... the purpose [of missions] is to bring to manifestation the body of Christ by bringing into existence the instituted church."

Mr. Doezeema, an elder in Southwest PRC, is the secretary of the Domestic Mission Committee.

Those were the words of Herman Hoeksema. The year was 1932. The Protestant Reformed Churches, then in their infancy, were wrestling with the vexing question of how to do home missions — that is, how to do home missions as a denomina-

tion of churches. The classis (there was but *one* classis in the '30s, hence no synod, till 1940) was deeply conscious of its responsibility to be active in missions. They had therefore appointed a classical Home Mission Committee; but the first efforts of the committee can

probably best be described as tentative, faltering. At its December 1931 meeting, therefore, classis appointed a study committee to give some direction to the work. It was a three-man committee, Rev. Hoeksema being one of the three, and the only one to sign the report that was brought to the next classis. We concluded, therefore, that the report must have come out of his typewriter, so that we could justifiably attribute the above quotation to him. (The report was written, incidentally, in Dutch. For the translation of it, and of the minutes of the meetings of classis, we are indebted to Rev. C. Hanko.)

Hoeksema began by vindicating the Mission Committee. "More than once," he said, "complaints were raised about the labors of the existing [Home Missions] Committee. Yet the reason why this Committee failed to carry out much work lay not in the Committee itself, but rather in the fact that its task could not be said to be well defined.... In appointing this Committee the classis obviously proceeded from the assumption that it would be obvious what was expected of the Committee without further delineation. However, this proved not to be the case."

What had prompted the appointment of the study committee was the uncertainty about mission *methods*. What classis wanted, in other words, was advice on how classis, and how the classical Home Missions Committee, should do missions. And the study committee did not disappoint. They gave concrete, practical suggestions. But characteristically, Rev. Hoeksema began with *principles*. "Your committee," he wrote, "placed itself immediately before the question, what is meant by home missions? We want to answer that question, as to the task of home missions, and only then to answer the question as to the task of the classical committee which will carry out the work."

The influence of Herman

Hoeksema in the shaping of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America was profound and pervasive. It reached into every important aspect of the faith and practice of the denomination. One cannot help but be impressed with that in reading this report. Rev. Hoeksema laid foundations for what the Domestic Mission Committee of the PRC is doing today.

What is the purpose of mission work? Hoeksema begins with this: "the honor of our God and King through the propagation of the truth and the proclamation of His name." To begin with God – that, we say again, was characteristic of Hoeksema. But then he adds this: "In the second place, the purpose is to bring to manifestation the body of Christ by bringing into existence the instituted church." Not, in other words, indiscriminate propagation for the sake of propagation, but preaching and teaching with a view to the organizing of churches.

Now, how to do that. "The committee advises," Hoeksema wrote, "that preliminary work be started toward calling one or more missionaries." That was the beginning of the more practical part of the advice. But even here Hoeksema brought in the underlying principles. "Home mission work," he said, "must proceed from the local church." But, he asked, does that mean that it's improper to speak of *classical* home missions? "We think not," was his answer. "Just as it is possible for autonomous churches, which stand on the same basis of faith and confession, to unite themselves on that basis in one denomination, so also it is possible that these churches work together in the work of missions." The proposed missionary would in fact "be called a classical home missionary, not because he is called and ordained into office by the classis, but because the sphere of his labor is the field of the classical home mission. He is called and ordained by the local

church, whose missionary he is and remains. But his labor is defined and his field determined by the classis, or in deliberation with the classis, while he and his work are financially supported by the classis."

As far as methodology is concerned, the DMC today, and the calling churches and our home missionaries, have gone beyond Hoeksema. They should. For Hoeksema could never have dreamed of websites. But they build on principles he articulated, also in missions. We thank the Lord for that gracious provision.

Eastern Home Missions

Today we have two home missionaries. Rev. Jai Mahtani is our eastern home missionary. It's his task, therefore, to follow up on contacts in the eastern half of the country. With the help of the members of the mission in Pittsburgh he maintains a mailing list of some 750 addresses. He monitors, or helps monitor, the broadcast of the Reformed Witness Hour in two areas, communicating either by telephone or letter with those who respond to the messages. He makes himself available for speaking engagements wherever possible. In fact, as I write these lines, he and Rev. Cammenga, pastor of his calling church, are in Lanham, Maryland to speak at a conference on Reformed Evangelism. On prominent display, there, are PRC pamphlets, RFPA books, and this magazine.

The Domestic Mission Committee is pleased with Rev. Mahtani's energetic use of means available for the propagating of the truth in the eastern states. But what we are especially pleased to see is that, under the blessing of God, our missionary's labors in Pittsburgh are bearing good fruit. That, after all, must be the main focus of his work at this time. Not just zealous propagation of the truth throughout a large geographical area, but the building up of the saints in this particular place with

a view to organizing a church. The Mission Committee and the calling church can testify to the spiritual maturing of the members of the Pittsburgh Mission under the preaching and teaching of Rev. Mahtani. There is in the Mission a knowledge of and love for the truth. And there is numerical growth — thirty to forty in regular attendance, half of them children — not sufficient, of course, to begin thinking already about organization, but reason to be encouraged.

The Pittsburgh Mission, we say, is the *main* focus of attention in the East — not the *only* focus. There is also, now, Fayetteville, North Carolina. What began in Fayetteville as a dream of one man has developed to the point where there is today a small but committed group meeting together each Sunday for worship in their own rented facilities, with a sign in front identifying them as the Protestant Reformed Fellowship of Fayetteville. The facilities include not only a meeting room but a nursery and a kitchen and an office besides. And Rev. Mahtani occupies the office for a week every two months, as he preaches there two Sundays in succession on a bimonthly basis. The DMC tries to arrange for other ministers to go to Fayetteville, each one also for two Sundays at a time during the alternate months, thus providing the group with live preaching half-time, and giving catechetical instruction and leading Bible studies on a somewhat consistent basis. Members of the Fellowship look forward eagerly to the day when half-time can become full-time. And so do we — again, because our purpose is still “to bring to manifestation the body of Christ by bringing into existence the instituted church.”

Western Home Missions

The work in Spokane, Washington is somewhat different, in this respect that Rev. Thomas

Miersma, our western home missionary, labors with a body of believers who already constitute an instituted church. His work, therefore, is not unlike that of Home Missionary George Lubbers, in the '50s, in the Reformed Hope Church of Loveland. The fruit of that work was our Loveland Protestant Reformed Church — which, interestingly, today serves as calling church for the missionary who works with the Sovereign Grace Reformed Church of Spokane.

By e-mail, by telephone, and sometimes by personal visits, Rev. Miersma maintains contacts throughout the western US and Canada. However, as in the East, so in the West, the labors of the missionary are concentrated especially in one place. The Sovereign Grace Reformed Church is small — about equal in numbers to the Pittsburgh Mission. Under the leadership of Rev. Miersma the two elders and one deacon have matured as a Reformed consistory. The congregation continues to develop in their knowledge of the Reformed faith and in their ability to apply it to the practical aspects of life. That they love the truth as it is taught in the Protestant Reformed Churches is the testimony of every delegation that has been there on behalf of the calling church and the Mission Committee. And they, with Rev. Miersma, are zealous in church extension work. By advertising worship services, by holding conferences, and, especially, by witnessing to relatives, friends, and people with whom they have contact, they seek to draw others to that truth. A faithful labor we believe it is — a labor which the Lord of the harvest promises to reward.

Northern Ireland

For the past ten years or so the SB has carried an annual update on the work of the Domestic Mission Committee. And in each of those articles the activities in Northern Ireland had a prominent part. Our churches had a mission-

ary in that field. It was the distinct privilege of the DMC, therefore, to be involved in the oversight of that work, and to be able to report on the positive fruit on Missionary Hanko's diligent labors in the U.K. — fruit, not the least of which was the organization of a church in Ballymena. The formalizing of sister-church relationships last year between that church in Northern Ireland and the Protestant Reformed Churches in America affected the role of the Domestic Mission Committee in the affairs of the Covenant Protestant Reformed Church in Northern Ireland. In fact, the year 2000 marked not the *second* but the *third* phase in our work in Northern Ireland. The transition from the first to the second occurred several years earlier, in 1996.

Perhaps it would be helpful if we would reflect briefly on that development. It was back in 1990 that synod approved “the calling of a missionary to Northern Ireland, locating him in the Larne/Ballymena area, and giving him the calling as well to pursue other contacts in the British Isles.” Hudsonville was appointed calling church at that same synod, and two years later Rev. Hanko accepted their call to serve as our churches' missionary in the British Isles.

By means of mailings, lectures, and preaching, Rev. Hanko developed contacts in various places in the U.K., but the main focus of his labor was on the development of the mission group, the Covenant Reformed Fellowship. Within four years, under the good leadership of Rev. Hanko, the CRF reached the point where the calling church and the DMC were ready to recommend that the Fellowship be organized as a church. Approval was given by synod 1996, and the CRF soon after became the Covenant Protestant Reformed Church in Northern Ireland — an autonomous body, therefore, with their own elected officebearers. No longer were they the *objects* of PRC

mission work in that place, they were *partners* in it, as work continued in the greater U.K.

Autonomy is one thing. Interdependency is another. The former comes with organization and is a worthy goal. The latter, in the view of the CPRC, is to be studiously avoided. Because of their doctrinal affinity with the PRC, the CPRC chose to remain closely associated with us and to continue to benefit from the presence of our missionary in the British Isles. An official relationship was formalized in 2000 when synod gave final approval of the establishment of sister-church relations. That brought another party into the friendly mix — the Contact Committee (the committee through which synod carries on its relationship with other churches). The DMC and Hudsonville continued to supervise the work of our missionary, but official contact between the CPRC NI and the PRC is now through the Contact Committee.

So much for structure. With regard to function, perhaps we could say something yet about how the DMC and the calling churches work together. In keeping with the principle that mission work is carried out, not by *committees*, but by the *church*, it is the council of the calling church that takes the lead in the labors. That means that our western home missionary deals directly with Loveland; our eastern home missionary deals directly with Southwest; and our missionary to the British Isles always dealt directly with Hudsonville. The DMC supervises, approves actions, visits the fields, evaluates, reports to synod; but the hands-on work of the fields falls to the calling churches.

The Hudsonville Consistory, therefore, and the Contact Committee were involved in the unhappy developments of the past year. It was the latter that made the announcement in our churches last December that a breakdown in relationships between Rev. Hanko

and the CPRC had led to a termination of Rev. Hanko's labors there. The Contact Committee, Hudsonville, and the DMC had striven hard, by personal visits, to restore mutual respect and confidence between the parties involved. And we can report that, with the help of the delegations, the two parties made an effort to recover what had been lost. But in the end, the CPRC consistory concluded that the breakdown in relationships between Rev. Hanko and the CPRC was such that it made his position as missionary pastor no longer tenable. Having had firsthand witness of the reality of the rupture, and being convinced that everything that could be done to reverse the process had been done, Hudsonville consistory felt obliged to concur. The Contact Committee and the DMC agreed.

This has been a most painful experience — for our missionary and his family first of all, but also for the CPRC consistory and congregation. On the home front, countless hours were spent by the Contact Committee, the Domestic Mission Committee, and the calling church in their attempt to deal with the difficult situation in a proper way. Through this experience, we have come more fully to appreciate the church-orderly way in which things are, as a matter of course, handled in our denomina-

tion. We are glad for the process, and we take this opportunity also to thank Hudsonville, her pastor and consistory, for their willingness to do the hard work, and for having done it carefully, sensitively, and, we think, correctly.

What does all of this mean for the future of our mission work in the British Isles? At this point, we do not know. The relationship between us and the CPRC NI remains solid. Pulpit supply is being arranged by the Contact Committee. And the congregation looks forward to the time when a son of their church will graduate (the Lord willing, in June) from the Protestant Reformed Seminary. Official contact between the CPRC and the PRC will continue to be through the Contact Committee, not the DMC. The Mission Committee will, however, want to keep in touch with Covenant regarding their outreach. Rev. Hanko worked hard to lay the groundwork for labors in the British Isles outside of Northern Ireland. We cannot thank him enough for that. Whether or not we will have opportunity to build on that foundation remains to be seen. Our prayer is that the Lord will continue to give us open doors, and that He will use for good even those things that seem to us to be serious setbacks. In His hands, we may be sure, all is well.



How Many Times?

How many times, O Lord, must I be tested
To prove that all my love for Thee is true?
How many times must I tread in the valley
To know Thy strength and power will see me through?

How many times? O Lord, I truly know not,
But this I know, that Thou wilt be my Guide;
And when the shadows darken all around me
I feel Thy precious presence at my side.

How many times? O Lord, it does not matter,
For Thou wilt not give more than I can bear;
And someday when the testing days are over
Eternal rest and joy with Thee I'll share.

Annetta Jansen

Thou Shalt Not Kill

Matthew 5:21-26

In these verses the King of the kingdom exercises His office as the expositor of its law. He has come as the fulfillment of the law. He has taught that not one jot or one tittle shall pass from the law till all should be fulfilled. He shall teach and do, and all those of His kingdom shall also teach and do them. That law, as Christ now explains it, is essentially no different from the law as God had originally given it from Mt. Sinai. From its institution, it was meant to reveal the heart—the evil there by nature, as well as the good that must be there.

There is much, however, that needs to be swept away. That law had been buried beneath much dust even from ancient times. We may compare it to the book of the law found in the temple during the reign of Josiah. The law's razor-edge had been dulled by many. As it had been taught and interpreted, it could no longer penetrate to the heart. Like the scribes and Pharisees of Jesus' day, those of ancient time desired to establish their own righteousness, rather than the righteousness of the King. For this reason the dust must be cleared, and the edge must be renewed. That work our Lord takes up.

Deeds and Words

The King begins with the sixth commandment. This is proper for a number of reasons. Christ begins with this as dealing with the neighbor as neighbor. The fifth commandment, as it deals with the subject of authority, occupies something of a middle ground in the two tables. It has regard to God as the one who has instituted all earthly authority, even parents. It has regard to those particular human beings whom God has placed in that authority. But with the sixth commandment, we have the neighbor clearly before us as an equal. The second reason Christ begins with this commandment is that it teaches us the fundamental respect that the citizen of the kingdom must have for the most basic element possessed by men: their lives.

Here we find a principle that cuts to the heart of this commandment: properly esteeming the value of the neighbor's life as neighbor. It is not enough merely to refrain the hand from committing violence against that neighbor. One must seek to live in peace with that neighbor. The King of the kingdom forbids war and contention, and enjoins living in a state of peace and reconciliation with that neighbor.

The first point of emphasis has to do with words. There are especially two words to which Christ attends. They are the words *ra-ca* and *mo-re*. The King James Ver-

sion translates only the latter and merely transliterates the former. This is done only because it is most difficult to find a word-for-word translation of *raca*. It means basically, "empty-headed," or "dull-witted."

The ascription of these words to a person Christ defines as bringing one into a state of judgment and condemnation. The one who says "*Raca!*" to his neighbor is in danger of the council, literally, the Sanhedrin. The one who says "*More*" to his neighbor is in danger of hell fire.

Christ placed these things in parallel to the things said by "them of old time." They said, "Whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment." That is, whosoever killed would be *subject to* or *bound to* condemnation. Thus we see the depth of the law brought out by Christ. Not only does the outward deed of murder itself bring one into such a state of condemnation, but also speaking such words as indicate contempt for the neighbor's life.

How different this was from the exposition of the ancients. They had taught that the activity of murder was the only thing prohibited by the sixth commandment. One might say or think anything. One might harbor in his heart the most hateful lusts. Yet, he would not come under the judgment. This delusion the Lord begins to clear up by identifying certain words with the activity of murder.

Words and the Heart

Yes, a beginning. Murder consists of much more than words and deeds. Understand that Christ does not fully proscribe use of the words "Fool," or "Dimwit," as we might translate them. It might be easy to grasp at this law of Christ, and apply it specifically in these directions. There are two things that prevent us from going this way. The first is that we would be in direct violation of the principle taught by these very things. We cannot simply move from one external point (the deed), to another external point (words), and rest content there. We would be falling out of one sin of legalism into another sin of legalism. We then would never pass beyond the point of externals, to arrive at the center of true righteousness and holiness—the heart of man. We might never commit the act of murder. We might never speak those words to another human being as long as we live. Still, we cannot claim to be free of the guilt of murder.

The second thing that prevents us from going this route is the fact that these same words are used in righteousness and holiness in the Holy Scriptures. Speaking in the Psalms, God ascribes the term fools to all who say that God is nowhere present to avenge their wicked deeds. "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God." Christ used this word, as recorded in Matthew 23:17, 19, ascribing it directly to the scribes and Pharisees.

What must we then say of such terms? There are legitimate and illegitimate ways of employing the words. It depends, therefore, on what lies beneath them, mainly the attitude of the heart. In the heart is the stubborn refusal to count others as significant and important in comparison with the self. One dismisses these persons with such words, as not being worthy of living upon the earth. There is in the heart reproach and contempt for these persons. When these words are spoken out of contemptuous

anger, they are wrong. Understand the two parts of verse 22. The anger and the words form one whole. When these words are used thoughtlessly, without any intention of correcting the one so ignorant, there is the guilt of violating the sixth commandment. "Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment" (Matt. 12:36).

We must go beyond simply equating murder with the particular use of these words. Notice the distinct manner in which these two things are equated. He does not merely state that the use of those words is identical to the violent act of murder. He draws the equivalence by speaking of the punishment of each of these. Those of old time declared, "Whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment." Christ declares, "Whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment."

Reconciliation

In this way we are brought to the grave importance of maintaining peace among brethren. Threatened are judgment and condemnation. In the context of such words as might be spoken from brother to brother, there must be reconciliation worked quickly and carefully. The critical moment Jesus defines as making an offering upon the altar. "If thou bring thy gift to the altar...." We do not believe that this simply has to do with the activity of making a certain sacrifice. Rather, it has to do with the significance of bringing a gift to the altar. As one goes to the altar to present his gift, he is appearing before the very presence of God, the just Judge of all, and the Judge of the heart. Before this God the worshiper offers not just this gift, but he offers himself to God. That offering is the exercise of covenant fellowship with Him.

As one stands before the face of God, there ought to come into his mind the relationships that he

has toward his neighbors. There especially, if his brother has something against him, he must undertake a certain work. So critical is this work that he must immediately leave the altar and his gift, and be reconciled to his brother. The work of reconciliation must be first. Only after he has pursued the matter and brought peace to that relationship may he then return and offer his gift. Otherwise, in the bringing of his gift, he brings upon himself the heavy wrath of God. Neither he nor his gift will be accepted.

Within the context of offering this gift we must properly understand what follows in verses 25 and 26. There are two things that cause us to see this. The first is the relationship of place. One is bringing his gift to that altar. In verses 25 and 26 we see that "thou art in the way with him." The immediacy of leaving one's gift at the altar to be reconciled to his brother is carried over into the word "quickly" in verse 25. We also must bring in here the truth stated in verses 21, 22, "in danger of the judgment."

Verses 25 and 26 do not contain an allegory or a parable. The temptation is to take the things considered in those verses and find a correspondence in the realm of the spiritual. Such a thing we find to be impossible. It might be thought that the devil is the adversary that attempts to bring us under judgment. Such cannot work, for Christ would not be commanding that we agree with the devil! The adversary cannot be representative of the brother against whom one has sinned. For, the brother is not arising against the one speaking so thoughtlessly. The commandment regarding the altar requires the one who has caused the offense to go and be reconciled. Perhaps this adversary is the law generally considered, applying its requirement to the conscience. Even this cannot work. The context demands not the innocence or

the guilt in the conscience, but a right standing before God.

Rather, the main meaning of these two verses is that one must work *quickly* to remove such offences. Wounds caused must not be allowed to fester. One must not be allowed to build up a case against the brother. The desire or intention of working reconciliation can never be enough. It must be accomplished.

It is well that we consider the relationship between this work enjoined by Christ, and the work described in Matthew 18:15-20. There the situation is quite different. There the burden of reconciliation falls to the injured brother. If he is offended, he must work to accomplish reconciliation. What a glorious thing it is, when the offender and the offended meet together in the way of reconciliation. When both desire it, it is sure to take place! Neither must wait for the other to make the first movement.

We see from this that there is a clear distinction between the outward deeds and words of contempt, and murderous thoughts. Both are alike sinful. Both need the gracious word of God's pardon,

and the cleansing power of Christ's blood. Murder in every form, even in the heart, must be dealt with before consecrating anything unto God. But the outward also makes reconciliation with the brother necessary. That reconciliation is part and parcel of reconciliation with God. As we must confess to God our sin, so must we confess to the brother, whenever and wherever it is necessary.

How important is this righteousness of the law, as the King has taught it! We see His fulfillment of the law, and how it covers our misery and sin of murder. We see our need to live in that righteousness, and therefore our need of the sanctifying grace of the King. And, how much we need that Spirit, in order to humble ourselves, to be reconciled with the brother who has ought against us!

Questions for Meditation and Further Study:

1. What is the value of understanding that the prevailing interpretation of the law was "of old time"? How must we guard against the ever-prevailing influence of legalism?

2. In light of this teaching of Christ, consider the importance of these passages from the epistle of James: 3:9,10; 4:1-4; 5:16.

3. How do words especially betray the attitude of one's heart?

4. How does this passage, in connection with Matthew 18:15, forbid any bearing or nursing of grudges? In cases of offense, can either wait for his brother to make the first step toward reconciliation?

5. Does the passage contain a parallel between the steps of verse 22 and the steps of verse 25?

6. Now, if thou rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee ...!

Book Reviews



Man's Relations to God: Traced in the Light of the "Present Truth," by John Kennedy (The James Begg Society, North Wales, 1995) 87pp. (paper). (Reviewed by Prof. Herman Hanko.)

John Kennedy was minister of the Free Church of Scotland in Dingwall, Ross-shire from 1844-1884. The James Begg Society has done the church of Christ a favor in printing this brief work by a noted Free Church pastor from the nineteenth century, because it clearly indicates that the present day Free Church has departed a

great distance from its original doctrinal position.

The author writes what is really a doctrinal treatise, but does so in a manner that the book becomes devotional and demonstrates, by its own example, that sound doctrine can and will feed the hungry soul of the Christian.

The author divides his subject into four parts: man as created, man as fallen, man as evangelized, and man as in Christ. Some of the outstanding doctrines of the Christian faith are treated under these themes. To mention a few: man's federal relation to God as the hu-

man race; total depravity; the sovereignty of gospel preaching; regeneration; justification as a forensic act of God; and adoption unto sons of God in Christ.

In this present world of doctrinal confusion and compromise, this little book comes as a breath of fresh air. It will delight the heart of any Reformed man in its solid presentation of the truth.

The author traces the idea of the fatherhood of God from creation to adoption, but repudiates sharply any idea of a universal fatherhood. He relates soundly the love of God to the universal gos-


pel call (p. 45), insisting that Christ's atoning death did not secure some good for all men, but only all good for some men (p. 52); defends vigorously the particular redemption of the Lord Jesus Christ, and does so over against the Marrow men and their universal-

izing of the atonement. And Kennedy repudiates the whole theology of the offer (pp. 56, 57) and points out its Arminianizing ideas so detrimental to the church.

The book sells for £5 and can be ordered from:

The James Begg Society
c/o Mr. Paul Hayden
67 Ffordd Garnedd
Portdiorwic
Gwynedd

North Wales LL56 4QY

Order it; read it; and be enriched by it. 

News From Our Churches

Mr. Benjamin Wigger

Minister Activities

On Good Friday, April 13, the Lord took one of His servants, the Rev. George Lubbers, through the passage of death to be with Him and the innumerable company of angels and saints in heaven. He was 91 years old. His active ministry began in 1934 when he was ordained as pastor of the Doon, IA PRC. His ministry spanned some 44 years, with pastorates in six of our churches, as well as two mission fields. We extend our sincere Christian sympathy to his family. By God's grace may we all find comfort in the words of Philippians 1:21, "For to me to live is Christ and to die is gain."

Rev. R. VanOverloop, pastor of the Georgetown PRC in Hudsonville, MI, declined the call he had been considering to serve as pastor of the Lynden, WA PRC. Rev. C. Haak, pastor of the Bethel PRC in Roselle, IL, announced on April 8 that he declined the call to serve as minister-on-loan to the Evangelical Reformed Churches of Singapore.

The consistory of the Southwest PRC in Grandville, MI has approved their pastor, Rev. R. Cammenga, teaching New Testament History at the seminary during the 2001-2002 school year while Prof. R. Decker is on sabbatical.

Mission Activities

Recently a warm welcome was extended to Rev. B. Woudenberg by the members of the Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania Mission. They were thankful that he was there to preach for them on Good Friday as well as Resurrection Sunday. Rev. Woudenberg was in Pittsburgh because Rev. J. Mahtani, our missionary there, was in Grandville that weekend giving an update to the council of his calling church, our Southwest PRC. Rev. Mahtani was also able to preach once for Southwest, as well as update the entire congregation after the evening service on his work as Eastern Home Missionary.

As we reported in a past "News," the mission church in Ghana, under the leadership of the missionary, Rev. R. Moore, was able to worship for the first time in the newly constructed church building on April 1. Up to that point the services had been held in the Moores' home. "On Sunday we had over ninety worship with us in the morning and around fifty in the evening. The numbers are not so much different than what we had the last month at the house. But what a difference is the place of worship, and the sound of the singing, and the attentiveness of the people during the preaching. The building serves us very well for the praise of God through the Word, prayers, and song." Our mission in Ghana also sponsored a worship service on Good Friday at 9:00 in the morning. After that service there was a farewell for John and Judy Bouma, who planned on

leaving the Mission after spending a year and a half there assisting the Moores. At the same time, the Mission welcomed their new volunteers, who will be taking the Boumas' place, Arnold and Charlotte Bleyenbergh — members of the Edgerton, MN PRC.

Young People's Activities

The Young People's Society of the First PRC in Grand Rapids, MI once again this year sponsored their annual Spring-Break Skating Party. This year's party was held on April 2 at the Michigan National Ice Center and included ice-skating on one rink and broom ball on the other. Proceeds were for the 2001 Young People's Convention.

Congregation Activities

Various members of the Hudsonville, MI PRC, as well as some others, have now signed a petition to organize a new congregation in Hudsonville. Hudsonville's consistory has approved their request and passed it on to classis, which will consider that request, D.V., on May 9. The heads of more than 30 families, and three individuals, have signed the petition from Hudsonville, while 10 heads of families from other PRCs have also signed. A congregational meeting for Hudsonville has been set for May 7, at which time they will consider a proposal for financial support for the new congregation.

At a recent congregational meeting, several proposals regarding improvements to the church property of the Hope PRC in

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

Redlands, CA were adopted. Additional lighting will be installed in their church parking lot. Repairs will be done to their sound system and new microphones will be purchased. The roof over their walkway will be reconstructed to deal with the constant problem of water leaking.

Several of our church choirs presented their annual spring concerts last month. The choir of the Randolph, WI PRC presented an Easter Cantata on Friday, April 6, while the choir of the Loveland, CO PRC presented a concert following

their evening service on April 15. The choir of the Faith PRC in Jenison, MI also presented a concert on Resurrection Sunday. This concert was the last concert directed by Gerry Kuiper at Faith Church. A reception followed the concert in recognition of Gerry and Bonnie's many years of leadership as director and accompanist.


Sister-Church Activities

Rev. J. Kortering planned to travel to Myanmar (Burma) from April 16 to May 10 to con-

duct seminars with over 40 men from different denominations. They rejoice that in the providence of God the government permits them again to travel to do mission work in that land.

Food For Thought

"Mere moral preaching only tells people how the house ought to be built. Gospel preaching does more, for it actually builds the house."

—Toplady 

Announcements

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On May 21, 2001, our parents,

MR. and MRS. JIM RAU,

will celebrate their 30th wedding anniversary. We their children and grandchildren celebrate with them and thank our heavenly Father for them and for the example they have shown us through their love, guidance, and prayers. May our gracious God continue to bless them and preserve them for many more years!

Psalm 100:4, 5: "Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name. For the Lord is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations."

- * Dan and Carol Boeve
Tyler, Rebecca
- * Kimmy and Cheryl Kooiker
Christina, Brady, Rochelle, Shania
- * Jeff and Kim Scholten
Amber, Brooke
- * Rodney Rau

Jenison, Michigan

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Men's Society of Redlands Hope PRC expresses sympathy to one of our members, Mr. Wayne Buiter, in the death of his father,

MR. BILL BUITER.

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

Pastor Arie denHartog, Pres.
Henry Meelker, Sec'y.

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Men's and Ladies' Society of the First PRC of Holland, Michigan, wishes to express sincerest sympathy to fellow members Mr. & Mrs. Case Lubbers and Mr. & Mrs. Henry Lubbers in the loss of their father and brother, our beloved

REV. GEORGE LUBBERS.

May they take comfort in the promise of the eternal reward which the Lord gives to His faithful servants: "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing" (II Timothy 4:8).

Henry Bierling, President
Fran Doezeema, Secretary

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On May 7, 2001 our parents,

LARRY and DARLENE BERTSCH,

celebrated their 25th wedding anniversary.

We thank God for their covenant instruction and godly example to us their children.

It is our prayer that God will continue to bless them in the years to come. "For the Lord is good, his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations" (Psalm 100:5).

- * Stephen and Rachel Dykstra
- * David
- * Jonathon
- * Jason
- * Patricia

Coopersville, Michigan

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The members of the Young Adults Fellowship of Hope PRC, Redlands express their sincere sympathy to Bill Buiter and Wayne and Michelle Buiter in the loss of their father,

WILLIAM BUITER.

May they find strength and comfort in the Lord in this time of sorrow. "Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; who comforteth us in our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God" (II Corinthians 1:3, 4).

Rev. Arie denHartog, Pres.
Ronda VanVoorthuysen, Sec'y.

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The council and congregation of Faith PRC express their sorrow to our fellow saints and fellow members of our congregation, Mrs. Marion Karsemeyer, Mr. and Mrs. Al Karsemeyer, and Mr. Jim Karsemeyer, at the death of their husband, father, and brother,

ALBERT KARSEMEYER.

"...then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? ... but thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (I Corinthians 15:54, 55, 57).

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The council and congregation of Faith PRC express their sorrow to our fellow saints and fellow members of our congregation, Mrs. Bea Meyer and Mr. and Mrs. Al Kaptein, on the death of their husband and father,

JOE MEYER.

"And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them" (Revelation 14:13).

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Adult Fellowship Society of the Hope PRC of Redlands, CA, express their sincere Christian sympathy to fellow members Bill Buiter and Laurie Jabaay in the loss of their father,

WILLIAM BUITER.

May they and their family be comforted by God's Word and Spirit, "My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever" (Psalm 73:26).

Pastor Arie denHartog, President
Donna Bruinsma, Secretary

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On May 14, 2001 our parents, **HANK and DEB VANDER WAAL**, celebrated 25 years of marriage. We are thankful that God has so richly blessed us with such loving and godly parents who have faithfully taught us in the truths of God's Word. We pray that God may continue to bless and care for them in the years to come. "For the Lord is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations" (Psalm 100:5).

- * Tim and Melanie Draft
- * David
- * Rachel
- * Thomas

Grand Rapids, Michigan

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Holland Men's and Ladies' Society express their sincere Christian sympathy to fellow members Marvin and Florence Haveman and Brent and Wilma Overway in the loss of Mrs. Haveman's sister and aunt of the Overways,

MRS. ARNOLD HAVEMAN.

May their comfort be in this: "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints" (Psalm 116:15).

Henry Bierling, President
Fran Doezeema, Secretary

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On May 5, 2001 our parents, and grandparents,

DONALD and PATHERESA JANE HAAK, celebrated their 40th wedding anniversary. We thank God for them and pray He continues to be with them and bless them.

- * Ted Haak
- * Gary and Rebekah Cihak
- Madeline Jane, Chloe Joy
- Psalm 48:14a "For this God is our God forever and ever."

South Holland, Illinois

CALL TO SYNOD!!

Synod 2000 appointed First Protestant Reformed Church, Grand Rapids, MI the calling church for the 2001 synod.

The consistory hereby notifies our churches that the 2001 synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America will convene, the Lord willing, on Tuesday, June 12, 2001 at 9:00 A.M. in the First Protestant Reformed Church, Grand Rapids, MI.

The Pre-Synodical Service will be held on Monday evening, June 11, at 7:30 P.M. Rev. Gritters, president of the 2000 synod, will preach the sermon. Synodical delegates are requested to meet with the consistory before the service.

Delegates in need of lodging should contact Mr. Pete Adams, 5399 Hall St. S.E., Grand Rapids, MI 49546. Phone: (616) 957-9186.

Consistory of
First Protestant Reformed Church
Pete Adams, Clerk.

(For a review of this 75th Anniversary publication see the June 1, 2000 issue of *The Standard Bearer*)

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