

# THE *November 15, 2003* STANDARD BEARER

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

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Volume 80 ◆ Number 4



# David's Joy of Gratitude

*Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, and put your trust in the LORD.*

*There be many that say, Who will shew us any good? LORD, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us.*

*Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased.*

Psalm 4:5-7

**I**n but a little while, on the fourth Thursday of November, the citizens of the United States will celebrate Thanksgiving Day. Most will not experience the true joy of gratitude, because this is reserved only for those who belong to their faithful Savior Jesus Christ. David in this text shows us that even in the midst of tribulation there is joy, comfort, and gratitude. Charles Spurgeon said of this psalm that here we have "another choice flower from the garden of affliction. Happy is it for us that David was tried, or

probably we should never have heard these sweet sonnets of faith."

The occasion for the writing of this psalm was that David was in exile after having been driven from his throne by Absalom. The men who were with David came to him and asked him, saying, "Who will show us any good?" They did not understand the nature or purpose of this persecution and banishment. To them, good consisted only in their returning to Jerusalem, driving out the revolutionaries, and restoring David, their leader, to his rightful position of king. Once David was firmly reestablished on the throne, they would be assured of regaining the lucrative positions that they had once held in the kingdom. Before the exile there was a time when "their corn and wine increased," meaning that they enjoyed the riches and bounties of this life. But now those luxuries were no more. Now they had to scrape for subsistence. In addition, they lived in constant fear of being attacked by Absalom and losing their life. To them, nothing appeared to be good. Therefore the

question, "Who will show us any good?" What they meant was, "Who will lead us back so we can enjoy the things we had before?" Their basic problem was that they were materialists, as are many professing Christians today, who see good only in enjoyment of things of this world and in that which pleases the flesh. If these things are taken away, then the joy is gone and there is no reason for gratitude.

However, this was not the case with David. He expresses profound joy in the God of his salvation, even though all things apparently testified that God had forsaken him. Even though "corn and wine" and riches of life are gone, yet he is confident. For him there is a joy that no circumstances in life, however averse, can take away. It is a joy that cannot be compared to the pleasure found in the things of this life. David has the joy and gladness of heart that fills the whole being, for from the heart are the issues of life. David possesses an entirely different world and life view than his men, for he possesses a joy that is not bound up in the plea-

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asures of the earth. What makes David unspeakably happy is the assurance that "the countenance of the Lord his God is upon him." If the face of the Lord were not upon him, he would be miserable, even if his coffers overflowed with corn and wine. However, with coffers empty, with persecution, war, starvation, and death staring him in the face, he has gladness in his heart in the knowledge that God's face is upon him. Likewise, only then can we have true gratitude.

The countenance or face of the Lord! What does that mean? Negatively, it is not the same thing as saying that God sees, for, of course, God sees all things. All things are naked and open unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do. God also sees the ungodly and their wicked deeds and reveals to them His righteous and holy wrath. He sends His judgments upon them, and this does not create gladness in their hearts.

Positively, the face or countenance of the Lord is a figurative expression that means "the self-revelation of God." That is also true of us. By our faces are we identified, and on them can be read the experiences of the soul, whether we are happy, sad, anxious, victorious, etc. What is true of us is much more true of God. Thus, when the text speaks of the "light" of God's countenance it denotes the revelation of God in His grace. In contrast, darkness would mean wrath. An example of this in the Bible is the account of the Israelites leaving Egypt. God placed between the Israelites and the Egyptians a cloud that was fiery bright to His people, but dark to the Egyptians. David is asking that the Lord look upon him in the brightness of His grace. With respect to God's face, there are only two possibilities, either it is against one or it is upon one. There is no half turning of the face with God. It is not true that His face is all the way upon His people and just a little bit upon the ungodly. With

the wicked, God is angry all the day. His face is against them, His curse is in their house, and He shows them no fellowship or favor. He turns against them to destroy them in His own appointed time.

Now we can begin to understand the prayer of David a little better. It means that David, conscious of his own sin, which had brought about his present miserable circumstances, pleads with God for a covering. That covering is the face of God, which is the self-revelation of God Himself in grace, the face of God revealed in Jesus Christ, the Savior. David experiences the need of a Mediator and Redeemer to make reconciliation between himself and God. This covering, this Mediator, is Christ. Christ is the propitiation for our sins. He reveals to us the fullness of the love, mercy, grace, compassion, and goodness of God. With that light upon us, all is well and we have joy and peace and gladness in our hearts, even "though the earth is removed, and the mountains are carried into the midst of the sea." Under that covering "God is our eternal refuge and strength." That affords the joy of true gratitude.

This joy is transcendent. The extent of our gratitude must never be determined by seeing how large is the list of nice things we enjoy in life. It is not a question of how much "corn and wine" we possess. If this were true, then we but imitate the world when we base our joy on these things. Even if you make a long list of things to be grateful for, to be honest you would have to make a list twice as long of things to be ungrateful for. The result would be that we would be more ungrateful than grateful.

The Christian's joy transcends the things of this world. He gives thanks "in all things." There is nothing for which he is ungrateful. The reason for this apparently impossible attitude is that the Christian experiences the light of God's face, so that nothing is really harm-

ful or detrimental to him. All things, under the sovereign counsel of God, work for his good.

The believer has Christ, and in Christ possesses all things. Thus the Word of God: "Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours" (I Cor. 3:22). Plus we have the word of Christ in the beatitudes, "the meek shall inherit the earth" (Matt. 5:5). Therefore, all things in heaven, on earth, and under the earth — principalities, dominions, powers, man and beast, angels and devils, sin and grace — all things serve the glory of the body of Christ, the church, you and me, loved and chosen and redeemed by God.

Will you seek a temporary, relative, and insignificant joy in a few earthly treasures? Or do you rejoice in the knowledge that God has prepared for you an eternal glory and that He uses all things of this present time to prepare you for that place of glory? There are wars, economic hardships, moral and spiritual decline, sickness, pain, suffering, and death. Do these interrupt your giving of thanks? It did not for David. In the midst of calamities he says, "Trust in the Lord." He is thankful, realizing that gratitude is not based on man's accomplishments but on the recreative and redemptive work of the Lord.

That was David's joy. He was not concerned about getting his throne back and filling his coffers with "corn and wine." Those were selfish interests. What about God's interests? "Is God pleased with me? Is God on my side? Has God forgiven me my iniquity and cleansed me from my sin? Has God received me in His love and given me His salvation? In the confidence of these blessings, David was also sure that all things would be well with him. The joy in his heart was far richer than his earthly kingdom, for he knew that God cared for him. This joy he inspires




in the men that follow him by enjoining them to "offer unto God the sacrifices of righteousness."

That is necessary for us to show gratitude. Our sacrifice must be a righteous one. It means that we do not put ourselves first. That is the perversion of all right and basically the corruption of our present world. Man is first. His desires and wants must be satisfied. The result is unrighteousness. A righteous sacrifice means that God, who alone is Righteous, is first in all things. All things are done according to His standard.

The result is a broken and contrite heart in which God has delight. That is the sacrifice of righteousness in which true gratitude is expressed. It is not a sacrifice brought to make us righteous, but one in which the righteousness that God has given us is expressed in the form of gratitude and praise. At that point we can say with the psalmist: "I will both lay me down in peace and sleep; for thou Lord, only makest me dwell in safety."

Now we can be happy. Outward circumstances cannot alter this. In the midst of a world of

unrest, trouble, fear, and ever mounting tensions, we rest in the God of our salvation. Casting our care upon Him, we know He cares for us. Thanks then be to God. Thanks for His unspeakable gift, for His love and mercy, for His truth, and for all things, for He is good and there is none besides Him. In that gratitude alone do we find joy that can never be taken away. And when the cup of salvation's joy runs over, the praises of true gratitude resound unto the everlasting glory of our God. 

## Editorial

# Appalling Apostasy in the Netherlands

**M**embers of the Protestant Reformed Churches (PRC) have a lively interest in developments of the Reformed churches in the Netherlands. From these churches the grandparents or great grandparents of many of us came when they emigrated to the United States. Some of us have close relatives in these churches. More importantly, the PRC have the truth of the Reformed faith through the work of the Holy Spirit in the Dutch Reformed churches in the past.

The present is a time of fearful, almost unrelieved apostasy in the Reformed churches in the Netherlands. Twenty years ago, I could meet in the Netherlands with three leading Dutch Reformed theologians. They represented three of the soundest Reformed churches or organizations contending for the Reformed faith. At the end of our conversation, I asked each of them,

"What is the state of the Reformed faith in the Netherlands today?" Although none knew the response of the others, all gave essentially the same answer without hesitation: "*Het wordt donker*" ("It is getting dark"). Today the darkness is deeper, much deeper.

The outstanding instance of the deep darkness of departure from the Reformed faith is the merger of the *Nederlandse Hervormde kerk* (Netherlands Reformed Church—NHK), the *Gereformeerde kerken in Nederland* (Reformed Churches in the Netherlands—GKN), and a Lutheran church, *Evangelisch-Lutherse Kerk in het Koninkrijk der Nederland*—Evangelical-Lutheran Church in the Kingdom of the Netherlands—ELK). The merger (the Dutch speak of "*fusie*," that is, fusion) will result in a new church that will be called *Protestantse kerk van Nederland* (PKN).

The three churches made a pre-

liminary decision to merge this past June. The final decision will be taken in December of this year. The merger will be the culmination of a long process of uniting known as "*Samen-op-Weg*" ("Together-on-the-Way").

With the final decision in December 2003, the NHK, the GKN, and the ELK will be no more. Our interest is the two Reformed churches. The NHK is the continuation, institutionally, of the Reformed church formed in the crucible of the fire of persecution in the Netherlands in the second half of the sixteenth century. This was the church that hosted the synod of Dordt in the first part of the seventeenth century and that drew up and adopted the Canons of Dordt.

The GKN is the denomination of those who separated from the NHK in 1886 under the leadership of Abraham Kuyper and of many of those who had separated from



the NHK earlier, in 1834. Both groups broke with the NHK on account of the unfaithfulness and hierarchy of the NHK.

The new church—the PKN—will not have the Reformed confessions as its basis. It will not be a Reformed church even in name and pretense. By its own official statements, it will be a pluralistic church (Dutch: “*plurale kerk*”). It will be open to many, if not all, conflicting theological viewpoints.

Genuinely Reformed men and women, even entire Reformed congregations, are welcome in the new church. They may maintain the doctrines set forth in the Reformed confessions. But they may maintain them only as their own opinions regarding the truth. The Reformed congregations and believers in the PKN may not confess the Reformed doctrines as the revealed truth of God. Reformed members of the new church must recognize, tolerate, and respect the contrary opinions of all the others in the church.

By official, authoritative decision, the new church will tolerate and embrace both the truth and the lie. It will tolerate the truth (for the time being) on the condition that the truth confesses itself to be mere human opinion and on the condition that the truth itself tolerates the lie. The new church will embrace the lie.

In a powerful defense of their refusal and inability to go along with the merger, five ministers in the NHK give as “the fundamental objection against the fusion [merger]”

that we are not able to accept the pluralistic character of the church—in which truth and lies alike have rights and we must recognize and respect each other. Thus, both by decree and in fact the Reformed nature of the church is abandoned (*Vragen naar de weg: een verantwoording in vraag en antwoord van het niet mee kunnen naar de PKN* [“Questions about the Way: A Justification in Question and An-

swer of Not Being Able to Go Along into the PKN”], by Rev. K. Klopstra, Rev. A. Kot, Rev. B. M. Meuleman, Rev. J. H. C. Olie, and Rev. H. Zweistra. Den Haag: Koninklijke Bibliotheek, 2003, p. 37; all quotations in this editorial from this booklet are my translation of the Dutch).

Earlier in this booklet, “Questions about the Way,” the five Dutch Reformed ministers had demonstrated that the pluralism of the new church is due to its refusal to base itself on Scripture as interpreted by the Reformed confessions.

By the merger of the two Reformed churches in the PKN, the apostasy of the NHK and the GKN is full and final. In fact, the two churches have been pluralistic churches for a long time, tolerating and approving teachings and practices opposed to the Reformed faith. By the merger, the two churches make their apostasy a matter of their own official declaration. The gravestone, with its fitting epitaph, is placed upon the corpses. The corpses themselves write the epitaph and put the gravestone in place.

A church that despises sound doctrine invariably corrupts itself ethically as well. The new church in the Netherlands, made up in large part of the former NHK and GKN, will have an article in the ordinances, or rules, of its church order authorizing consistories to bless homosexual unions in the congregations.

Article 4 [of the ordinances of the PKN] declares the possibility that the consistory—after deliberation in the congregation—blesses other relationships of life [alternative life styles] than the marriage of two persons as a covenant of love and faithfulness before the face of God (“Questions about the Way,” p. 24).

The typically clever Dutch theologians speak of “blessing” (Dutch: “*zegenen*”) homosexual unions, whereas marriage between a man and a woman is to be “consecrated” (Dutch: “*inzegenen*”).

Behold! The church of Dordt, churches of the *Afscheiding*, and the churches of the *Doleantie*: a false church! adulterous paramour of the man of sin!

Perhaps we are too far removed by history and geography to weep. But who does not grieve?

Nevertheless, God preserves a remnant. The five ministers in the NHK who wrote the booklet, “Questions about the Way,” will not go along with the merger. As a matter of conscience, for the honor of God, they will maintain churches that are “exclusively Reformed” in confession and walk. They promise to be faithful to the Word of God as set forth in the Reformed con-

fessions regardless of the cost. They recognize that the cost will be high. Presumably, their congregations will stand with them. The five ministers call on others in the NHK to reject the merger.

Evidently, the faithful are few. Only five ministers in the huge NHK sign their names to the booklet exposing and condemning the apostasy of the merger. I have it on good authority that many of the ministers in the conservative grouping in the NHK, the *Gereformeerde Bond* (Reformed Alliance), are now willing to go along with the merger and become members of the PKN.

Are there none in the GKN who take a stand for the Reformed faith and speak out at this critical moment?

That the faithful in the NHK and perhaps in the GKN are few comes as no surprise. Always the people of God are a remnant (Isaiah 1:8, 9; Romans 11:5). With reference to these last days, of

*The corpses themselves write the epitaph and put the gravestone in place.*



which apostasy must be a prominent feature according to II Thessalonians 2:3, our Lord asked whether He will find faith on the earth when He returns (Luke 18:8). Besides, the spiritual condition of both churches has been so corrupt both as regards doctrine and life for so long that it is a wonder anyone remains who fears God.

Let us pray for our brothers and sisters in the Netherlands, whom God has wonderfully preserved, that God will strengthen them to their difficult, costly calling on behalf of the dear Reformed church and truth in the Netherlands. They are called to form the church anew on the basis of the Reformed confessions and church order.

It will be an important part of their calling that they repent of their sins and the sins of their fathers. For many years, the godly in the NHK have in fact lived just as the PKN officially prescribes. They have tolerated lies and immorality. The leaders in the movement to merge the churches in the PKN throw this in their face. "Why now," they ask the five ministers, "do you object to a church that is pluralistic when for years you have willingly lived in the pluralistic NHK?"

Besides, the NHK persecuted the saints of the *Afscheiding* of 1834

and of the *Doleantie* of 1886 because of their confession of and discipleship after Jesus Christ. All the members of the NHK are corporately responsible for this persecution of God's people.

But God is gracious. He will forgive these heinous sins, if those who now want to be faithful to God repent of them.

The deep darkness now falling upon the Reformed churches in the Netherlands is not restricted to the NHK and the GKN. The *Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken* (Christian Reformed Churches [in the Netherlands]) harbor in their bosom the very same unbelieving criticism of Holy Scripture that destroyed both the NHK and the GKN. This criticism of Scripture is public.

By its doctrine of a conditional covenant with all the children of godly parents, which involves a justification of all the infants, the *Gereformeerde kerken in Nederland* ("vrijgemaakt") (Reformed Churches in the Netherlands ["liberated"]) fatally compromise the Reformed doctrines of election and the perseverance of saints. Recent synods of the "liberated" churches have cut the churches' Sunday loose from the fourth commandment, thus effectively destroying Sabbath observance; revised the marriage form to remove mention of the husband's headship and the wife's duty to submit to the authority of the husband;

relaxed the stand on marriage and divorce, to allow those divorced on unbiblical grounds and even guilty parties who remarry to be members of the churches; and flooded the songbooks used in public worship with "evangelical," that is, unreformed, hymns.

The winds of false doctrine are blowing powerfully in the Reformed churches in the Netherlands, as throughout Europe. The spirit of the age—the spirit of the ungodly world, which is antichrist—proves well-nigh irresistible.

We do not imagine for a moment that the PRC are immune.

In the apostasy of the Reformed churches in the Netherlands is a loud, necessary warning to us—to every minister, every elder, and every member who loves God and His truth: "Hold the traditions which ye have been taught" (II Thess. 2:15).

Hold the traditions in light of a work that God is doing in the churches in these last days: sending many a strong delusion, that they should believe a lie, so that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness (II Thess. 2:11, 12).

This is what is appalling about the apostasy in the Netherlands.

— DJE 

## Letters

### ■ Hard Stands

Thank you for your useful work *Common Grace Revisited*, originally a series of editorials in the *Standard Bearer* (March 15, 2002 – December 1, 2002). I am a member of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and have struggled with the doctrine of common grace ever since I read A.W. Pink's book *The Attributes of God*. I am especially grateful for your work in light of

the desire of many within the church to blur the line between the church and the world. I am especially impressed with (or depressed by) the quotations of Mouw and Smedes at the end, which show where amazingly undiscerning thought on the part of theologians will take us. I hope that your work moves the church to recover the truth of grace as the unmerited favor of God toward His elect.

Also, the editorial in the sample issue of the *Standard Bearer* brought forth some points which were refreshing to hear. I have sometimes felt that the confessional stand of the Protestant Reformed Churches was perhaps overly rigid. I wondered if the preaching would end up as an exegesis of the catechism rather than the Word of God. I was therefore really pleased to read of Rev. Hoeksema's insis-

tence upon the freedom of the preacher and your candid assessment of the sometimes stiffnecked response on the part of the congregants.

I also appreciate the role of the *Standard Bearer* in keeping the ecclesiastical windows open to admit the breeze of the Holy Spirit.

I heartily appreciate, however, the insistence of your editorial that with that liberty we strive to build on the work of those who went before. New and fresh must simply be our view or development of the same well proven old truth.

Thank you for your willingness to take hard stands.

William J. Gilbert  
Pasa Robles, CA

## ■ Emphasis on Responsibility

I have read Rev. Kortering's article on "Mission Preaching in the Established Church" (*Standard Bearer*, June 2003).

On page 395, he says, "...whom God wills to save will hear what is necessary to respond properly and be saved." Could you explain in detail what you mean by this statement? Is the proper response of the unconverted a prerequisite to his salvation?

Secondly, what do you mean to express by, "So also those who are not willing to embrace the true faith because they do not want the responsibility that it requires will know that they are not right with God"? (p. 396). How does a person's willingness or unwillingness to accept the responsibility of the true faith impact his or her salvation? In fact, what do you mean by the word "responsibility"?

In these articles, heavy emphasis is laid upon the responsibility of both the Christian and non-Christian alike to repent and believe. Are we to make any distinction between the two? If we are, what is the difference?

Herman D. Boonstra  
Hull, IA

## RESPONSE:

I want to express my appreciation to Mr. Boonstra for his interest in the *Standard Bearer* and more particularly in the subject of the preaching of the gospel and a proper response to it.

He makes reference to two quotations within the body of my *Standard Bearer* article.

The first quotation is taken from the early part of the article. Let me quote the entire sentence. "When this is done regularly (when the local church includes a call to repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ in its preaching, jk), as it ought, then any non-Christian, unconverted person whom God may place under such preaching and wills to save, will hear what is necessary to respond properly and be saved."

The first request is to explain in detail what I meant by this statement.

God saves non-Christians through the preaching of the gospel. He does this by the message brought forth, which includes the call to repent and believe. This is done both in the mission field and in the home church. For this reason, if God is pleased to bring into our worship service here in America a non-Christian, and the pastor sounds forth the call that sinners must repent and believe in the Lord Jesus, this non-Christian will hear in the gospel that which is necessary for him to become a Christian. One becomes a Christian by repentance of sin and faith in God and in His Son, Jesus. The preaching forms the bridge between God and man to accomplish this great wonder.

The outcome of this encounter is God's work. That is why we mentioned, "whom God may place under such preaching and wills to save." It is truly amazing how God brings His elect in contact with the preaching and works His work of salvation through such preaching. God is sovereign in all of this. This is evident in the vision of the

Macedonian man to Paul (Acts 16:9ff.). God wanted Paul to go to Macedonia because there, waiting for him, was the Philippian jailor. That is not all; God also works His will through the preaching so that it accomplishes His purpose. The great truth of sovereign grace establishes the blessedness of the outcome. God draws men unto Himself to hear the preaching, but God also works salvation in such a person whom He wills to save. For this reason, the answer to your second question is no, the response of the unconverted is not a prerequisite for his salvation. That would make faith conditional upon the will of man. Rather, the act of repenting from sin and believing is the God-established way in which a man is saved. Repentance and faith are the means whereby the sinner appropriates Christ unto himself and by which he enjoys the blessings of salvation. That, according to Ephesians 2:1-10, is God's great gift.

This leads to the second quotation, taken from the article a bit later. "The point is that if there is a person sitting in church who is not right with God because he is walking in sin and making excuses for it, he will not feel comfortable while sitting under the preaching of the gospel. So also those who are not willing to embrace the true faith because they do not want the responsibility that it requires will know that they are not right with God. The preaching will expose to themselves their sinful response." You ask for an explanation.

Here we are dealing with the person who is sitting under the preaching of the gospel. There are only two ways in which one can sit *under* the word preached. It is either faith or unbelief. True, there are many who may struggle for some time to come to terms with the message of the gospel and in the process be confused or seeking, yet before God it comes down to faith or unbelief. This is true because the power of the gospel is



twofold, a savor of life unto life or of death unto death (II Cor. 1:14-17). For those who persist in their unbelief, the preaching of the gospel does not allow them to remain in some indifferent or ignorant state. The truth set forth in the preaching is not declared as if man may do with it whatever he pleases. Rather, it comes in such a way that man has a duty to repent and believe. There is only one correct way to respond to the gospel and that is God's way. Because of this, the message of the gospel includes not only a call to repent and believe, but also warnings of judgment for those who persist in unbelief. Hence, a person who is not right with God, who does not sincerely repent from his sins and embrace Jesus as the only way of forgiveness and peace with God, must go home a condemned man. He has scorned and mocked the sacred call of God unto salvation.

One reason why some reject the gospel is that they are "not willing to embrace the true faith because they do not want the responsibility that it requires." I use the word "responsibility" in the sense of "duty." Among the greatest hindrances of people becoming Christians is the change God commands of converts. Holy living is not a luxury that perhaps some Christians enjoy. It is implicit in faith itself. Faith without works is dead (James 2:26). A working faith is the believer's duty, which he owes to his heavenly Father out of love and thankfulness for his salvation. Many there are who might be interested in Christianity and the Reformed faith if they could only get away from God's holy ways.

This answers your question, "How does a person's willingness or unwillingness to accept the responsibility of the true faith impact his or her salvation?" Unwillingness leaves one in the state of guilt and condemned before God; willingness opens the doors of heaven for forgiveness of sins and reconciliation with God.

Finally, you have concern with the emphasis upon responsibility. I can best summarize it this way, God's sovereignty does not negate man's responsibility (here it is used in the sense of accountability). If we use the word responsibility as man's ability to respond to the gospel, then of course the natural man has no ability to respond, it must be given him from above. Jesus eloquently said, "No man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father" (John 6:65). This is the rock of truth that makes all salvation possible. If it was up to man to fulfill some condition, no one would be saved. The marvelous thing about the gospel encounter is that here God in His sovereign way deals with man who is accountable before Him. Jesus made that plain in His thunderous words of condemnation to the Jews, "It shall be more tolerable in the day of judgment for Sodom and Gomorrah than for *you*" (Matt. 11:24). The reason is obvious: the men of Capernaum heard Jesus preach. They are accountable for this. Those who reject the gospel will suffer more in hell than Sodom, which was burnt with fire and brimstone in this life. If you ask, how can God hold man accountable for that which he cannot perform, Paul answered that in Romans 9:19ff.

From a more positive point of view, the narrative of Paul's encounter with the Philippian jailor is noteworthy. God spoke through earthquake and judgment. The jailor was desperate, and upon hearing from Paul that the prisoners were all there, he fell on his knees and asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" (Acts 16:30). Paul did not say to him, wait a minute, you have your theology wrong. You should not ask, what must I do. You can't do anything. No, that question was stirred in his heart by the Holy Spirit to prepare him for the good news of salvation. Thus Paul brought to him the call of the gospel, "Believe on the Lord

Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." This is how God works salvation in the hearts of men. He calls them to do what they cannot do in themselves. The necessary grace He supplies in order that, in the end, all glory is unto God, the great God of our salvation.

— Rev. J. Kortering

## ■ On Target

I complement you on the special, Reformation Day issue of the *Standard Bearer* (Oct. 15, 2003). I found the articles on Calvin very edifying. I hope that there will be more on Calvin's life and work in future issues.

I found especially the article on predestination by Rev. Charles Terpstra to be on target. Much has been made of the fact that predestination in Calvin's theology is placed in the category of ecclesiology by those who wish a "kinder and gentler" view of that doctrine and the allied doctrines of election and reprobation. Actually, they wish to obscure the Reformer's, and the Bible's, teaching of these truths and have a faith that is neither outright Arminian, and thus Pelagian, nor outright Calvinism, an impossible quest. Terpstra tackles this right on, clearly affirming that Calvin's placing predestination within the locus of ecclesiology makes no difference from placing it within theology proper. I myself, while a student at Western Theological Seminary, was taught that there was a substantive difference in Calvin's teaching on predestination from that of his successors in Geneva, Beza, and later Turretin, largely on this basis. I could never see a substantive difference. Thanks to the *Standard Bearer* for affirming Calvin's doctrine of predestination.

Charles Fles  
Muskegon, MI





# Committing the Truth to Faithful Men (1)\*

*Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.*

*And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.*

II Timothy 2:1, 2

**T**his text speaks of the task both of the professors and of the students. What the apostle says here to Timothy he says to the professors in the seminary. What you have “heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.” And those faithful men are the students of the seminary.

The apostle is nearing the end of his ministry and life when he writes this letter. He is concerned that his spiritual son Timothy, a young minister, remember what he has been taught: the gospel of God’s sovereign grace in Christ Jesus. That truth must be preserved by Timothy, the young preacher in Ephesus. If that is to happen, then Timothy must commit what he has been taught to faithful men. These faithful men are the future ministers of the gospel. They must be not only faithful but also able to teach others.

All of this is highly necessary. In this way, chiefly by means of the preaching of the gospel (to borrow the language of the Heidelberg Catechism in answer 54), “the Son of God, from the beginning to the end of the world, gathers and defends and preserves unto Himself a church chosen to everlasting life.” God is pleased to save His elect in Christ by means of the preaching of the sacred Word, the preaching of faithful men who are able to teach others. Hence, it is essential that the truth be committed to these faithful, able men.

That is possible not because of our own strength, not because of Timothy’s or our own superior abilities, and not because of anything at all in us (it may safely be said that no preacher ever saved one soul). It is possible only by being strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

What is more, because it is possible only by the grace that is in Christ Jesus, it is absolutely certain that the truth of the gospel will be committed to faithful men and they will be able to teach others also, so that that true gospel of Christ is preserved in the generations of believers.

We call your attention, then, to the text as it speaks to us of committing the truth to faithful men.

## Committing that truth to whom

According to the text, that truth is to be committed to faithful men who shall be able to teach others also. These must be *faithful* men,

men full of faith, men who are, therefore, trustworthy, reliable — men whom the people of God in the church know to be men of faith, men upon whom the people of God in the churches can depend faithfully to do the work of the ministry.

These men, too, obviously, must be able to teach others. They must have the abilities, the gifts, to teach others. One of the necessary gifts of the office of bishop mentioned in I Timothy 3 as well as in the context of our text is that he be apt to teach. To these must be committed the things that Timothy heard from the holy apostle among many witnesses.

Now there are certain essential spiritual gifts that characterize these faithful men — gifts, you understand, apart from which a man cannot be considered faithful.

The first is spirituality, or genuine piety. A faithful man is a child of God. It is true, sad to say, there are hypocrites in the ministry. God even uses false prophets occasionally (like Balaam) to bless His people. Two things, however, may be said about this. First, these hypocrites never last. Sooner or later, but inevitably, they are exposed and they either leave the ministry or must be suspended and deposed from that holy office. Secondly, these are not the rule or norm. They are the exception.

Ministers must be spiritual, pious, godly men — men saved by grace through faith, God’s gift; men in whose hearts burns the love of

*Prof. Decker is professor of Practical Theology in the Protestant Reformed Seminary.*

*\*The text of the sermon preached at the combined seminary convocation/installation service (for Prof. Barrett L. Gritters) on September 4, 2003.*

God in Jesus Christ; men who love God with their whole being and manifest that love of God to the neighbor; men who love God's people and who love God's church and who love God's cause; men who have, as one preacher put it, "a fascination with the Bible"; and men who live exemplary, godly lives.

A second gift is humility. There is no room whatsoever for pride in the ministry. Pride, the Scriptures say, goes before a fall. That is especially true in the office of the minister. Self-seeking pride, selfishness, the seeking of the praise of men — all of these are abominable sins among God's people and especially among ministers of the Word. If you seminarians want the praise of men and the honor and fame, do not pursue the ministry. Faithful men are humble men.

Like the apostle, they are, literally, slaves of God and of His church. They know the truth of what the writer J.J. VanOostersee wrote in his *Practical Theology*, "The flock does not exist for the pastor but the pastor for the flock." They must give their very lives in the service of God's church.

That means faithful men are of necessity men of prayer. They know that all that they are and all that they have are of God. They know, these faithful men, that they cannot make or preach one sermon, perform one pastoral task, visit one person who is sick, comfort one of God's sorrowing saints, apart from God's grace. They pray without ceasing for the grace of God and the Holy Spirit to enable them to be faithful, humble men, able thus to teach others.

In addition, faithful men are men of sympathetic understanding. Jesus, our great and merciful High Priest, is, according to Hebrews 4 (the last part of the chapter), touched with the feeling of our infirmities, tempted in all points like as we, yet without sin. That is why you and I can go to God's throne

of grace and find mercy and obtain grace to help in all our needs.

Ministers of the gospel, the servants of Jesus Christ, must be in this regard Christ-like. They must emulate their Master. They must know God's people — know their needs, know their struggles, their joy, their affliction, their sorrow. In other words, faithful men must literally feel with God's people, understand them so as to be able to bring God's Word to their needs. They must weep with those who weep and rejoice with those who rejoice. If you are going to do that, you need to live with God's people. You must be given to hospitality, according to I Timothy 3:2. A faithful minister and his wife do not shut themselves in the parsonage and have as little to do with the people of God as possible. No, they live with the saints and they fellowship with the saints so as to know them and to know their needs.

Faithful men — spiritual, humble, sympathetic men — are also men of spiritual courage or boldness. This same apostle exhorted the church at Ephesus to pray for all the saints, "and for me, ...that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel." That must be the prayer of every faithful minister.

I am always struck by that. When you read the history of the work of the apostle Paul in the book of Acts and when you read his epistles, you cannot help but be impressed that Paul was not only a faithful man, but very bold in his preaching and teaching, afraid of no one, unashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ, knowing it to be the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth, the Jew first but also the Greek. He could not wait to preach in Rome, even where he was imprisoned and likely put to death. What was the secret of Paul in that regard? He was a man of prayer!

The minister needs boldness to

preach and teach the truth of the gospel that declares on every page of sacred Scripture that we are by nature totally depraved sinners who are unable to do any good at all and are inclined to all evil except we are regenerated by the grace of God — the truth that salvation is all by the grace of the sovereign God in Christ to His own glory. That takes boldness! Especially today. People do not want to be told about their sins and their sinful nature. It destroys their self-esteem, you see. Preaching must connect with people in such a way as to make them feel good and to attract them and to tell them of all their wonderful deeds and how they can minister and do great things for the Lord. But to preach the truth of the gospel of God's sovereign grace takes courage and boldness. Ministers, in the real sense of the word, are in the vanguard, the front line of the battle of faith. That is precisely why Paul tells Timothy in the very next breath after the exhortation of our text to "endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ."

Faithful men must be able to teach others also. Apt to teach. They must have that ability. And that, too, must come from God. Christ gave pastors and teachers to the church. Thus the relationship in Ephesians 4 is this, as is plain from the context, especially what follows in Ephesians 4:11, that one shepherds the flock by means of teaching the flock. That does not refer just to preaching or catechism teaching. In all his labors, publicly and from house to house, the minister, like the holy apostle, must shun not to declare to the people of God the *whole* counsel of God. He has to teach.

That means the minister needs the ability to study. That, too, is in the context: Study to show thyself a workman that needeth not to be ashamed; rightly dividing the word of truth. Faithful men must be able to teach others chiefly by means of the preaching of the gos-



pel. A minister needs the ability, therefore, to read and understand the Scriptures, to think and to organize his thoughts clearly and logically. He needs a broad background in the history of civilization, in philosophy and literature, in the original languages of the Bible (a liberal arts background). In addition, he needs to know the original languages of the Bible and be able to expound from the original languages of the Scriptures. He needs to know the doctrines of the Word of God as summed and set forth in the confessions. He needs to know the history of those doctrines. He needs to know the history of the church. He needs to be instructed in practical matters concerning the polity of the churches and the preaching and catechetical instruction and missions and all the rest. And all of that he must make

his own so that he is able to explain the Word of God to God's people and to show them how that Word of God applies to their lives.

That takes hours and hours of hard work — work bathed in prayer. That is the only way to make a good sermon. Fifteen to twenty hours per sermon per week — at least for a beginning preacher. That is thirty-four hours, besides all the other aspects of the work. The bulk of the minister's time must be spent in the study. Yes, he is on call and when called he must go. But he needs time to prepare for the pulpit.

He must have the gift of public speaking. His chief task is to preach the Word of God twice per Lord's Day as well as in special services. And that preaching must be lively. God will have His people taught, not by dumb images, the catechism instructs us, but by the

lively preaching of the Word! And the minister must teach the children and youth of the church in that special aspect of the preaching of the Word we call catechism instruction. These gifts, too, must come from God.

We have classes in homiletics, of course — the art and science of preaching — how to construct and how to deliver a good sermon. That is one of the most important (if not *the* most important) course Rev. Gritters will be teaching, God willing, soon. We teach catechetics — how to teach catechism classes — another course Rev. Gritters will be teaching. But a man, you see, needs that gift from God. The seminary classes only help him develop what he already has been given from the Lord and to use those gifts properly.

... to be continued. 

Annual Report

Mr. David Langerak

## 2003 Annual RFPA Secretary's Report

Friends and Members of the Association,

**T**onight marks the completion of the 79<sup>th</sup> year of producing the *Standard Bearer* and the 36<sup>th</sup> year of book publishing for the Reformed Free Publishing Association. We report to you the organization's principal activities that have occurred throughout this year.

Eight years ago this association merged the permanent book publishing arm (PCPPRL) with the RFPA, creating one organization and one board publishing both the *Standard Bearer* and books. Today

the work of the board and its committees is a balance between these two endeavors. Four board members work closely with our book manager in the planning, preparation, and production of every new book and reprint. Four board members work with both business managers to develop and implement advertising, marketing, and promoting of the *SB* and books. Three board members are responsible for the planning and oversight of all day-to-day operations of the RFPA through the business managers. The board president divides his time between the activities of all three committees.

### Book Publishing

The year has been another busy and productive one for book pub-

lishing. It can take several years for a new book to develop from an idea to publication. This year three new books were finished and printed: Volume 3 of *Unfolding Covenant History*, our series on Old Testament History; *Sin & Grace*, Revs. Hoeksema and Danhof's refutation of common grace; and *Common Grace Revisited*, the first in the *Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth* series. *Studies in I Peter*, by Rev. Cornelius Hanko, was released as well. We plan to release one new study guide per year if good group Bible study material is available. In addition, *Saved by Grace* and *Who-soever Will* were revised and reprinted to replace sold-out inventory.

Book club members are critical to our book publishing success.

*Mr. Langerak is a member of Hope Protestant Reformed Church in Walker, Michigan and retired secretary of the RFPA.*

Because of their willingness to purchase every new book (at 35% off the regular price), we are able to pay the initial production costs and to produce more new books. We are very pleased to see the number of book club members steadily increasing each year, so that we can report having 1,020 members at this time. Thank you, loyal book club members! Thanks also to our book club agents who have been instrumental in this increase. We ask you to encourage family members or friends to build their library with good Reformed literature by joining the RFPFA book club.

Several book projects are in various stages of completion. This coming year we plan to publish two more books in the *Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth* series, on the topics of Reformed worship and providence. We are on track to release the fourth volume in the *Unfolding Covenant History* series, this one covering the wilderness wanderings and the conquest of Canaan. In the area of educational material, art curriculum books for grades kindergarten through sixth are being prepared. This curriculum, originally developed by Connie Meyer for our Protestant Reformed schools, has been well received by the teachers who have used it in their classrooms. The RFPFA publications will make this valuable educational resource available to a broader market of schools and homes. Another book being worked on is a compilation of 240 Reformed doctrines, each explained briefly by Rev. Ronald Hanko. This book will be a useful tool for instruction in the home and preparation for catechism. Some reprints being revised for future publication are *Calvin's Calvinism*; Rev. Herman Hoeksema's *Reformed Dogmatics*; and *We and Our Children and Mysteries of the Kingdom* by Prof. Hanko.

There are those who discover our writings and request the board's permission to translate them into their native tongue. The

Reformation Society associated with the Evangelical Reformed Churches in Russia recently published a Russian translation of the first part of *Voice of Our Fathers*, which treats Head 1 of the Canons of Dordt. Pastor Jan Sicula of the Slovak Republic has translated into Slovak and published Prof. Engelsma's *Marriage, the Mystery of Christ and the Church*.

#### **Standard Bearer and Books Sales and Promotion**

Book sales this past year were good, at 8,026 volumes sold, down 8% compared to last year. 358 new customers purchased books this year, 124 of whom agreed to become book club members. *Standard Bearer* subscriptions remained steady at 2,648 subscribers, down 53 subscribers compared to this time last year. The fact that our literature is sharp and uncompromising in setting forth the truth and refuting the lie severely limits our market, especially in this age of apostasy and compromise. Nevertheless, the message we proclaim is the everlasting truth of God's Word. Therefore we are working harder than ever to promote both the books and the *Standard Bearer* magazine.

A number of successful promotional activities continued this year: publishing the semi-annual *Update* newsletter, sending new books for review in religious periodicals, and offering to PRC consistories free one-year subscriptions to the *SB* for their newly wedded couples and new members from outside the PRC.

In addition, many new activities were implemented. This year your board carried out an aggressive advertising program through *World* magazine, the nation's fourth largest weekly news magazine, with 125,000 paid subscribers. Several ¼ page ads, attractively designed in color, were placed in the books' showcase section. Two ads, specifically promoting the *SB* by offering a free copy upon request,

resulted in 91 requests and 11 new subscriptions. A multi-book ad designed to promote the RFPFA organization in general offered free shipping on all Internet orders and directed interested persons to the website for more information on our publications. Look for this ad to appear again in the October 4 and November 8 issues of *World*, just in time for Christmas ordering. Our website customer survey results indicate that many are finding us through these ads.

Our website continues to be a sales and promotional tool for the RFPFA. People throughout the world are finding rfpa.org through our *World* ads and various Internet search engines. We are nearing the point of releasing an enhanced version of the website. The many benefits with this new version are largely behind-the-scenes features that will allow RFPFA staff, who have limited computer skills, to keep the site current and fresh by adding books, offering special promotions, and making changes to the on-line catalog. Also, in the development stages is a plan to add all the *SB* archives on the website along with a search engine and an index. Not only will this make available to a worldwide audience this valuable study resource, but also it will enhance our site, and bring increased awareness of our publications available for purchase online.

Currently about 20% of book sales are to bookstores and book distributors. Getting more of our books sold through this distribution channel continues to be of great interest to the board. With this in mind, the board maintained its membership in the Christian Bookseller's Association (CBA) and sent two board members to observe the annual CBA convention in Indianapolis in February. Based on their report, the board decided to apply for a booth at the 2004 International CBA Convention to be held June 28-July 1 in Atlanta, Georgia. Although the costs for



this venture could reach \$6,500, we believe this is a necessary and effective way to get our books into bookstores throughout the world. Our staff will begin working on an updated edition of the publications catalog to be released by spring 2004. Prior to the convention, we will mail catalogs and invitations to the CBA member bookstores inviting buyers to meet us at the RFPA booth.

Book club members and *SB* subscribers received *Common Grace Revisited* free to promote the new series and to express our appreciation for their continued support. Evangelism societies that want to make use of the book in their work are able to buy copies at cost. In addition, the Engelsma/Mouw debate provided a unique opportunity to promote this book, as well as our other publications. Many individuals were introduced to the RFPA, numerous book catalogs and introductory *SB*s were distributed, and over 40 books were sold.

The introductory issue of the *Standard Bearer* is now available from the *SB* office at no cost to all who desire to use it in witnessing. This special issue was designed to be given to those unfamiliar with the magazine and introduce them to its content. A copy and an introductory letter were sent to all *SB* subscribers and PR evangelism societies.

### Operations

Operationally, we continue to experience financial stability for both *Standard Bearer* and book publishing. This is attributed to the overwhelming financial support we continue to receive through church collections and individual gifts. This year, gifts totaling \$44,000 were given to the *Standard Bearer* and \$44,000 to RFPA books. These generous gifts we will use for publishing additional works and promoting our material this coming year.

Several changes have taken place this year. Due to his de-

manding work as an elder in Grandville PRC, then vacant of a pastor, Tom Bodbyl reluctantly resigned his board membership. As spelled out in the constitution, the board proceeded to replace him by appointing Jon Rutgers to fill Tom's term, which ends this year.

A change occurred in the book publishing office when Suet Yin, wife of seminarian Paul Goh, returned to Singapore following Paul's graduation in June. We thank her for her faithful labors on behalf of the RFPA as a volunteer during their stay here. Last October, Paula Kamps was hired to work part-time to invoice and package all book orders as well as to assist in numerous other office tasks. Mindy Bergman was hired to help edit our books in preparation for printing.

Next year we plan to add more staff. Due to the large amount of promotional work that needs to be done, the board recently approved advertising for a part-time person or persons to work with the MIE committee in the advertising and promotion of the *SB* and books.


This year Professor Engelsma informed the *Standard Bearer* editorial staff and the RFPA board that he desires to be relieved as editor beginning October 1, 2004. He has advised the *SB* staff to appoint a committee to find a man who will take over the editorship at that time. We express our sincere appreciation to him for his diligent labors for the past 15 years. Evident in each of his editorials is his love of and uncompromising commitment to our distinctive Reformed faith, which he has faithfully defended and developed as editor-in-chief.

For many years the Theological School Committee of the PRC has graciously provided accommodations in the seminary for our operation. However, this year the TSC requested that the book division relocate in the next one to two years so that this space in the seminary basement can be used for

seminary and denominational needs. The timing for this is right for the RFPA since the book division has outgrown its present warehouse and office space in the seminary basement, and the need for space continues to increase as we add titles to our catalog. To work towards this, the board has directed the finance committee to develop a proposal for the RFPA to acquire its own building. Once approved by the board, we intend to present a proposal for your approval at a special association meeting sometime this coming year.

We say thank you to those whose faithful labors have contributed to the publication and distribution of our magazine and books this past year. These include our writers, business managers, department editors, secretaries, proofreaders, and volunteers. With you we confess that to labor as Christ's servants in this work is a great blessing.

We close with an encouraging quote from a reviewer of the book *Righteous by Faith Alone*. He writes: "Like all the publications of the RFPA this book is excellently produced, and [a] good value for [the] money. Those who invest in a copy will, I believe, come to treasure it as a choice blessing from the Lord."

As we begin a new year of witnessing to the Reformed truth, we pray for grace to continue faithful and unwavering in the work, and that God will continue to use the RFPA for the building up of His kingdom and the glory of His name. 

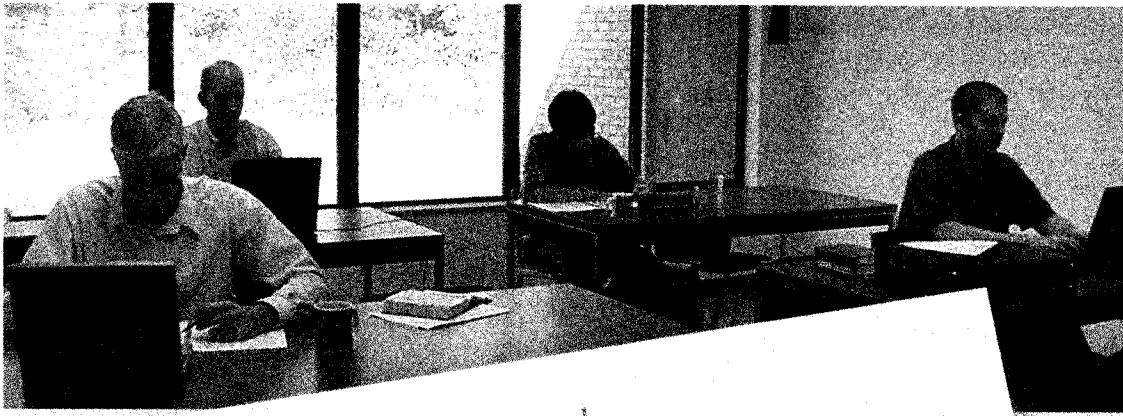
### A Word Fitly Spoken

#### When I Stand Before the Throne

When I stand before the throne  
Dressed in beauty not my own;  
When I see Thee as Thou art,  
Love Thee with unsinning heart;  
Then Lord shall I fully know —  
Not 'till then — how much I owe.

Anon.





## Protestant Reformed Theological Seminary

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Robert D. Decker, D.D.  
Professor of Practical Theology  
and Pastoral Theology  
decker@prt.org

September 11, 2003

Beloved in the Lord Jesus Christ:

If my calculations are correct, the seminary doors were opened for the 78<sup>th</sup> time on August 25, 2003. That was for registration, a chapel service, and initial assignments for the five students enrolled for the 2003-'04 school year.

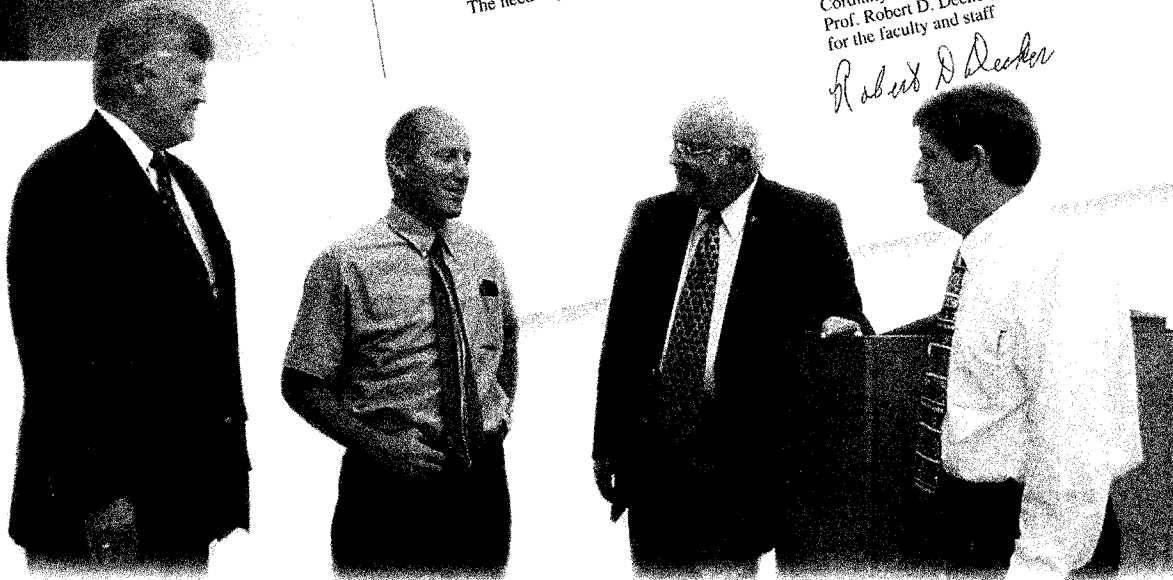
The seminary community welcomed Nathan Langerak, the only first-year student. Mr. Langerak was born and brought up in the Hope Protestant Reformed Church in Walker, MI. He and his wife, Carrie, are members of Trinity Protestant Reformed Church in Hudsonville, MI. The two second-year students are Andrew Lanning and Clayton Spronk. Mr. Lanning, his wife, Stephanie, and their child are members of the Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church. Mr. Spronk, his wife, Allison, and their three children are originally from the Hull Protestant Reformed Church in Hull, IA. Currently they are members of the Faith Protestant Reformed Church in Jenison, MI. The third-year students are Dennis Lee and John Marcus. Mr. Lee, his wife, Foong Ling, and their two children attend the Georgetown Protestant Reformed Church in Georgetown Township, MI. They are members of First Evangelical Reformed Church in Singapore. Brother Lee is preparing for the ministry in the Evangelical Reformed Churches in Singapore. Mr. Marcus, his wife, Amy, and their six children are members of Byron Center Protestant Reformed Church.

Present for the first time on opening day as professor-elect was Rev. Barrett Gritters, whom the synod appointed to succeed Prof. Decker. The installation service for Rev. Gritters and the convocation were combined and took place on September 4, 2003 under the supervision of the Hudsonville PRC consistory. Undersigned conducted the service, preaching on II Timothy 2:1-2. The Rev. Dale H. Kuiper, president of the Theological School Committee, read the Form of Installation. Currently Prof. Gritters is studying full-time for the Master of Theology degree (ThM) at Calvin Theological Seminary.

Please remember us in your prayers as we take up the labors of another seminary year. Ask that God will give us who teach the necessary grace to "commit the truth to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also" (II Tim. 2:2). Ask the Lord of the harvest to call faithful, able men to prepare to be pastors in the churches and missionaries. The need is great!

Cordially in Christ,  
Prof. Robert D. Decker, rector  
for the faculty and staff

*Robert D. Decker*







### Installation of New Seminary Professor by Rev. Dale Kuyper

*Truly God is good to Israel!*

This truth was brought home to the six hundred saints who filled the sanctuary of the Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church to worship God and witness the installation of Rev. Barrett Gritters into the office of professor of theology on September 4, 2003.

Prof. R.D. Decker, who will retire in two years and whose faculty position Prof. Gritters will occupy, preached the Word of God as found in II Timothy 2:1-2 under the theme "Committing the Truth to Faithful Men," holding before us what must be committed, unto whom this must be committed, and how this committing is possible. Then the president of the Theological School Committee, the undersigned, read the Form for Installation and asked the necessary questions of our eighth seminary professor.

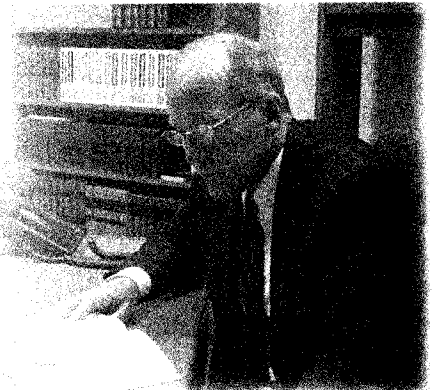
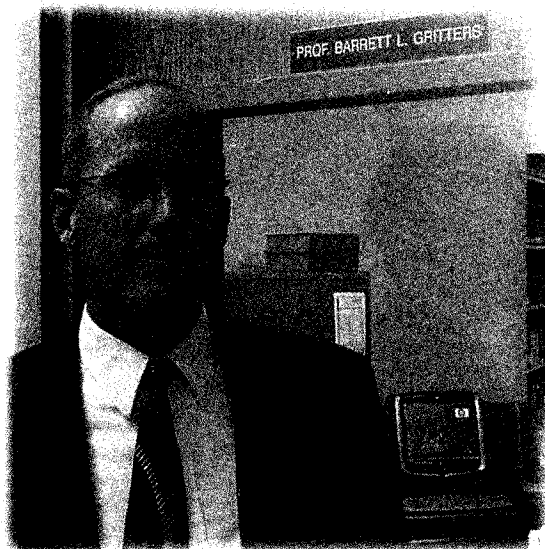
Prof. Gritters' title is Professor of Practical Theology. He will teach such courses as Church Polity, Homiletics (Sermon Preparation), Missions, Poimenics (Soul Care), and Exegesis. He will also participate, along with his two colleagues, in that important work of guiding student preaching.

In order to better this teaching, our new professor will be working toward the ThM degree at Calvin Seminary. At present he is taking the required course work for this degree. Next year he plans to write the thesis and begin teaching a course or two. The following or third year should see him teaching a full course load. This will provide for an orderly transition in the work, and allow Prof. Decker to become emeritus after thirty-two years of teaching.

The Gritters have purchased a home just to the north of Hudsonville and plan to move about the middle of October. Our prayer for the brother, his wife, and children is that God richly bless them in this new phase of their life in the kingdom and church of Christ.

So the training of young men for the ministry, in our churches and in other denominations, continues, uninterrupted, since 1924.

*God is good to Israel indeed!*



# Sanctification and Good Works

**T**he subject of good works is often considered under the heading of sanctification. Article 24 of the Belgic Confession, for example, is entitled "Of Man's Sanctification and Good Works." When God sanctifies us, He causes us willingly to perform good works. In fact, if God did not sanctify us, we would be completely unable to do good works. It is only by the sanctifying grace of God that we are able to begin to perform the works that are pleasing to our God.

This truth concerning the inseparable relationship between sanctification and good works is commonly denied. Most teach that sanctification is not necessary for a man to perform good works. It is the position of many, that the natural man outside of Christ is able to do much good. Thus they deny the truth concerning what good works are and concerning what is required for a man to perform them.

## What Works Are Truly Good

We believers are performing good works whenever we are doing that which God commands us to do. It is easy to fall into the error of thinking that good works are only those for which we receive praise, or for which we might receive praise if someone knew about them. But we are doing good works whenever we are doing the work of the Lord, which means

performing the work that God has called us to do. One of the main words for work in the Old Testament has as its root idea "doing that which one is sent to do." Whenever we are doing what God has sent us to do, we are doing what is referred to in Scripture as "the work of the Lord" (I Cor. 15:58). Such works are referred to in Scripture as good works. Whenever we are faithfully performing the duties of our station and calling, whether in the home, the school, or in a workplace outside the home, we are doing good works, the works that God has sent us to do.

This means that it is our calling to perform good works constantly, without ceasing or ever taking a break. We are either doing good works or we are sinning. There is nothing in between. It is very important that we grasp and confess this truth. Sometimes those who are taught this truth will object to it. They may point out something that they know believers frequently do, and then say about that activity, "Now, I would not refer to that as a good work. But I also do not believe that it is a sin." The fact is, however, that it is either one or the other. If it was done by faith, according to the law of God, and to His glory, then it was a good work. If it was not, then it was a sin.

Those who truly hold to the Heidelberg Catechism confess from the heart that good works are:

*Only those which proceed from a true faith, are performed according to the law of God, and to His glory; and*

*not such as are founded on our imaginations or the institutions of men.*  
(Answer 91)

For a work to be good it must be done according to the law of God and to His glory. If a work was not done according to the law of God, then it could not have been done to God's glory. The reverse is also true. If it was not done to God's glory, then it could not have been done according to the law of God, for God commands us to do all things to the glory of His holy name.

For a work to be good it must proceed from a true faith, which means it must be done by someone who is trusting in God for the grace to perform the good work. If the person who performed a certain work does not even have a true faith, then it is certain that whatever he did was a sin. This is the explicit teaching of Scripture, when it says that "whatsoever is not of faith is sin" (Rom. 14:23). When this passage speaks of "whatsoever is not of faith," it is referring to any thought, word, or deed that does not arise "out of faith." The phrase "of faith" literally means "out of faith." Only those thoughts, words, and deeds that come forth out of faith are good. All other activity is sin.

## Sanctification Necessary to Perform Good Works

It is obvious, then, that only those who have been engrafted into Christ by faith, and who have the life of Christ within them, are able to perform good works. It is God's gracious act of sanctification that



causes us willingly to perform these works. When God sanctifies us, He delivers us from the dominion of sin and causes us more and more to walk by faith, performing works that are done according to God's law. He gives to us the desire to please not ourselves, but the God who has saved us, so that we long to glorify not our own name, but His.

The relationship between what we are and what works we perform is often illustrated in Scripture by the relationship between a tree and its fruit. We read of this, for example, in Luke 6:43-45:

- 43) For a good tree bringeth not forth corrupt fruit; neither doth a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.  
44) For every tree is known by his own fruit. For of thorns men do not gather figs, nor of a bramble bush gather they grapes.  
45) A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh.

An unbeliever is a corrupt tree, and a corrupt tree can produce only corrupt fruit. A believer still has a depraved nature, out of which arises only evil. But in the new man the believer has become a good tree, and is able to perform only that which is good. Now, out of the good treasure of his good, regenerated heart, he is able to bring forth thoughts, words, and deeds that truly glorify the God who has saved him.

The theory of common grace, however, denies this truth. According to this theory, there is another grace besides sanctifying grace, and this grace of God is given to those outside of the body of Christ. This grace is said to restrain sin in the very nature of man, so that he is not as bad as he otherwise would be. They go on to say that by the restraining power of this grace, the unbeliever is able

to perform some good works — works, they say, that although they are not “spiritually good” are nevertheless “naturally good.”

False teachings often involve the confusing of two things that must be kept distinct, or the inventing of a distinction when none exists. The latter is clearly done by those who maintain common grace. Since Scripture and the Catechism so clearly state that a work must proceed from a true faith to be a good work, they invent a distinction between spiritual good and natural good. Then, when Romans 14:23 or Answer 91 of the Catechism is brought to them, they will say, “Here Scripture and our confessions are referring to works that are spiritually good. It is true that an unbeliever cannot do these. But he can do works that are naturally good.” But if man by nature is a corrupt tree, then all his fruit is corrupt. There are no “naturally good works” that arise out of the nature of sinful man. To teach otherwise is to deny the truth of total depravity.

In addition, we must not overlook the beginning of this ninety-first answer. It says that good works are “only those” which are described in this answer. Here we explicitly deny that any other works can rightly be referred to as good. Yet, even though this is so clearly set forth in Scripture and our confessions, there are many in “Reformed” churches who maintain that there are some good works besides those described in Answer 91.

Those who hold to the theory of common grace claim that only their teaching gives glory to God. “It is obvious to all,” they say, “that unbelieving man can do much good. He can willingly help those in need, even giving his life for another person on some occasions. Now, when we see this, we must not give unbelieving man the glory for it. We must give God the glory for it, by maintaining that these unbelievers are able to do this good

not of themselves, but because of the common grace of God that has been given to them.” So the argument often goes. But this thinking arises out of the sinful reasoning of man, and is based on the false teaching that the natural man can do something that is good. They claim it is “obvious” that he can. But the Scriptures say that he cannot.

How then do we explain the works of unbelievers that outwardly may appear to be good? These are works done not out of a love for God, but either out of a love for oneself or out of a fear of the punishment for sin. This again is the explicit teaching of our confessions. In Article 24 of the Belgic Confession, we state that we believe that without a true faith, unbelieving men “would never do anything out of a love for God, but only out of self-love or fear of damnation.” Even if they give their life to save another person, they do it out of self-love or fear of damnation, and thus it is not a good work, but a sin.

Only those being sanctified are able to do good works. They are the only ones who have the law of God written in their hearts, which is necessary for someone to obey from the heart. God says to us, “the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it” (Deut. 30:14). If it were not in our heart, we would not be able to keep it from the heart. It is only those who are sanctified that have this law written within their new heart, so that they love that law and desire to keep it.


### **Preaching on Sanctification and Good Works**

I end this article with a few words about preaching on this glorious work of God. Some people describe man-centered preaching as preaching that is too much about sanctification and not enough about justification. But it is not only justification, but also sanctifi-

cation, that is not being sufficiently preached by those who place all or most of the emphasis on the calling of man. To hear about sanctification in the preaching is centrally to hear about what God is graciously doing within us, rather than what we are called to do. Oh, to be sure, when the truth of sanctification is preached, God's people are also exhorted to keep the com-

mandments of God. There is no question about that. But God's work is central in preaching that is truly God-centered. Although God-centered preaching includes the strict preaching of God's commandments (Lord's Day 44), it does so while declaring that our act of doing good works is not a condition that we must fulfill, but a gift

that God graciously works within us.

Such preaching does not lead God's people to walk in sin. Rather, it causes them to be more thankful, and to walk in obedience. Such preaching empowers them actively to repent and believe, knowing all along that it is the work of the Spirit producing this obedience within them. 

*In His Fear*

*Rev. Daniel Kleyn*

## Love for the Church (2)

**H**aving considered in our previous article the calling to love the church, we now consider some of the possible strengths of the church, strengths God has given her and that serve to motivate us in our love for her.

The strengths of the church are not earthly things.

At times we are inclined to think they are. For example, we are tempted to view the costliness and grandeur of our church building as a strength. In contrast to that, the congregation that has a small and rundown building lacks something. Or we are tempted to view the size of our congregation or denomination as a strength. And again, the small congregation, with just a handful of families, is considered insignificant and weak. Or we are tempted to consider other earthly things as strengths, such as the wealth of a congregation, or the makeup of our membership, or the friendliness of our people.

The trouble with considering these and similar earthly factors as strengths is that such things are so

changeable. A wealthy church could very easily lose everything it has and become poor. A poor church could become rich. A small church could change by becoming large. A large church could quickly become small. Thus if earthly things determine a church's strength, sometimes she might be strong, but very quickly she might become weak. These things cannot serve, therefore, as the basis of our love for the church. If they do, then most of the time we will find the church difficult to love and we will not want much to do with her.

The strengths we are to observe are spiritual. Psalm 48:12, 13 calls us to observe the towers and bulwarks and palaces of Zion. As that applies to us in the New Testament, the strengths of the church are her spiritual towers, bulwarks, and palaces. Those are the things that matter. They are to be the fundamental reasons for us to love the church.

If God is pleased to make a church strong, one of her towers of strength will be that she has the Word of God, the Bible. In fact, this is the most important strength she could have. The Word of God is the church's greatest strength.

We realize, of course, that it is not enough for a church simply to

have the Bible. Most churches do. But not all churches believe the Bible is the Word of God. They do not believe the Bible is, word for word, what God says. For a church to be strong she must believe the Bible is the inspired and infallible Word of God. Then she will have, not simply the Bible, but the truth of the Bible. Without the truth a church is weak. With it, she is strong.

This can be understood if we consider, for example, the truth of the sovereignty of God. That truth is most certainly a tower of strength and a bulwark that provides defense.

To have this truth is to believe that salvation is from beginning to end the work of God. It is to believe that God eternally chose His people. It is to believe that He sent His Son to make the full payment for their sins so that His wrath would be fully satisfied and so that we might spend eternity in glory. It is to believe that He works irresistibly by His Word and Spirit to save us from the power and control of sin. The truth that God does all this is a tower of strength. Take it away, and the church is defenseless against the inroads of the heresy that makes salvation the work of man. Then our salvation is not

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only doubtful, but impossible. If God did not do for us all that He does in Jesus Christ, we could never and would never be saved. His sovereignty in salvation is a precious and comforting truth that makes our salvation sure. That truth is a bulwark of the church.

The same is true of the sovereignty of God in all that happens. Take that away, and the church is weak. Take that away, and God's people have no comfort when troubles come. Instead, they will be thrown into despair. Having that truth, however, the church and saints of God can face hardships and trials in life knowing that all is well, for all is determined and controlled by the mighty hand of God for their eternal good.

When God gives these truths, and all the body of His truth, to His church, she will be strong. The truth makes God's people strong in what they believe, and strong in how they live. It also gives the church the strength to defend herself against the devil as he attempts to weaken her through introducing errors in doctrine and life.

If God has given His truth to the church of which you are a member, and has preserved that truth in your midst, you have reason to love the church, and to love her dearly.

Another tower of strength that God gives His church is the Reformed confessions. This is a strength that is closely connected to the Scriptures, for the confessions assist us in our understanding of the Word of God. They are the product of the Spirit of Truth, whom Christ promised to give His church in order to lead her into the truth.

Many today are doing away with the confessions. An example of this is the fact that Heidelberg Catechism preaching is being abandoned, as well as Heidelberg Catechism teaching in the catechism classes. Along with this comes a neglect of the other Reformed creeds. This is serious, for it is in effect a denial of the Spirit's work of lead-

ing the church into the truth. It is also serious because it results in ignorance of the truth. Many today do not know the doctrines of the Scriptures. At the most they have but a superficial understanding of doctrine. They are not all that sure what such truths as predestination, the atonement, justification, sanctification, and so on, really are.

The Reformed creeds are a precious gift of God to His church. It is true that they are subservient to the Bible. But they are based on the Word of God and are therefore of much value in giving strength to the church. They provide her with a systematized summary of the truth. They are an invaluable tool for teaching the truth of Scripture to both young and old. They guide and direct us in our understanding of the Word of God. And they serve as a mighty bulwark to defend the church against error.

If God has given your church the Reformed confessions, He has blessed your church. You have reason to love her, and to love her dearly.

There are many other strengths that God is pleased to give His church. These also serve as encouragement for us to love her. There is the faithful preaching of the Word, which is the chief means of grace and gives us spiritual nourishment. There are the faithful men of God that Christ places in His church to serve as officebearers who represent Him as prophet, priest, and king in His church. There are the fellow believers God gives you in a congregation, fellow saints who believe what you believe and who help and encourage you in your Christian life. And there are many other things, besides. On account of all these God-given strengths, the thankful child of God loves the church of Christ.


It is very beneficial and important for us to notice the church's many strengths.

A consistory needs to do that. Often the work of the consistory is negative. In fact, it can seem at

times that nearly all their work is so. They must discipline the wayward. They must address the problem of poor attendance. They have to deal with worldliness amongst the members. They must ever seek to maintain unity within the congregation. They need often to deal with complaints about how things are done. On account of all these things, the consistory members become discouraged. They do not always see the fruit they would like to see. They become weary in well-doing. For that reason they need to walk about Zion and consider her bulwarks and towers. They must take the time to notice the strengths God has been pleased to give His church.

The same is necessary for every member in a congregation. We tend to see only the negatives. They are often very obvious. We see those weakness in ourselves, in other members, and in the church as a whole. As we dwell on them, those things tend to obscure what the church really is and thus lead to discouragement. We need to look with the eyes of faith and see what God has given the church and what God has made her to be. That will encourage us and will help us grow in our appreciation to God for His church.

As you take note of the ways in which God has blessed and strengthened the church of which you are a member, be sure to acknowledge that it is all of grace that the church has the strengths that she does. While others are dismantling the church's defenses, God is pleased to maintain them in your midst. He provides bulwarks that defend the church against her enemies. Because of what He has done and given, the church is beautiful and mighty and strong. She is certainly a worthy object of our love. Therefore we love her.

[Next time we hope to consider some of the practical ways in which we are to show that we love the church.] 

# Moïse Amyraut and Amyraldianism (1)

## Introduction

**S**hortly after Dordt a heresy arose which cast a long shadow over subsequent history of doctrine. It originated and was found primarily in France, but it spread to England, where it had great influence. It is a heresy with which much of the church is burdened even today. It is the heresy of Amyraldianism, with its special emphasis on a universal grace found in the preaching of the gospel, in which God expresses His desire to save all who hear the gospel. It is known today as God's gracious and well-meant gospel offer. It is worth our while to pay some attention to this heresy, for it is not only pervasive, but also forms a part of the historical background of the Protestant Reformed Churches. The well-meant gospel offer is not an invention of modern times. It has a long history.

## The Life of Amyraut

Moïse Amyraut was born in Bourgueil, Anjou, France in 1596. He came from an influential Protestant family, which enabled him to receive an excellent education in France's leading schools. After first studying law, he turned his studies to theology after reading Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. This is interesting, because his later heresies were con-

sciously directed against Calvin's teachings on the particularity of grace — interesting, because many defenders of the gracious well-meant gospel offer appeal to Calvin in support of their views. Amyraut knew better and consciously rejected Calvin's views to develop his own version of a gracious offer of the gospel to all men.

Having turned to theology, Amyraut studied in the University of Saumur under John Cameron. Amyraut's views and heresies ought not really be called Amyraldianism, because everything he later taught came from his teacher and mentor. The two became much attached to each other. The University of Saumur was gifted with able professors and attracted students from all over Europe, though especially from Switzerland. Having thoroughly imbibed the teachings of his master, Amyraut became preacher in the Reformed church of Saint-Aignan. But his stay in Saint-Aignan was brief, for he was called in 1626 to become professor in Saumur, his alma mater, to succeed a staunchly Reformed man by the name of Jean Daillé, although Daillé later became more open to Amyraut's views. Amyraut proved to be as popular as his mentor, if not more so. His position of prominence in the Reformed Churches of France led to his appointment by the Synod of Clarenton to bring various requests of the Reformed Churches of France to the attention of Louis XIII. Even in court he made a good impression.

In 1633 he became professor of

theology in Saumur along with two outstanding seventeenth century theologians, J. Louis Cappel and Joshua De la Place. His skill as a teacher and his pleasing personality won wide acclaim throughout Europe and raised the school in Saumur to a glory that it had never before had. It was also the forum for which he was waiting, and he used it with skill to promote his views.

In general, Amyraut had as his motive the reconciliation between Lutheranism and Calvinism, but he attempted to achieve his goal by means of a serious compromise of Calvin's teachings. He was well aware of the fact that Lutheranism had adopted a synergism that described the work of salvation as a cooperative venture between God and man. He knew this was totally incompatible with Calvin's emphasis on sovereign and particular grace in the work of salvation. If reconciliation was to take place, Calvinism had to be modified; and this he set out to do.

Although the French Reformed Churches had been weakened by persecution and the flight of many Huguenots, there were still men who stood strong in defense of an uncompromised Calvinism. It must also be remembered that the events that surrounded the public propagation of Amyraut's heresy took place but a short time after the decisions of the great Synod of Dordt. The Synod met in 1618-'19; the first objections to Amyraut's teachings were filed with the synod of the French Reformed Churches in 1637, less than ten years later. What Dordt had decided was well

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known in France, and the strong statements of biblical truth regarding predestination and sovereign grace were widely published. In fact, although a delegate from France was forbidden by the king to be present at Dordt, nevertheless he had followed the proceedings closely and had contributed many ideas and objections to the Arminian position when the Canons were being formulated.

An influential and well-known French theologian named Du Moulin, along with some others, brought charges against Amyraut's teachings to the Synod of Alençon, which met in 1637. It was a measure of the weakness of the French Reformed Churches that the Synod was unable to condemn Amyraut — in spite of the objections to his views brought by the church's most gifted and prestigious theologians. Amyraut was acquitted of heresy.

This was not the end of the matter, for Amyraut's opponents continued to seek an official condemnation of his views. But nothing availed. The Synod of Charenton in 1644 reaffirmed the decisions of Alençon, and, while the Synod of Loudun in 1659 condemned his views, something that at last appeared to be a victory for the orthodox, the same synod, strangely and inconsistently, appointed Amyraut to the extremely important task of revising the Church Order. No censure, only encouragement — such are the strange ways of synods that are afraid to stand unequivocally for the truth.

Amyraut died in 1664. Perhaps his death brought a sigh of relief to the French churches, for with his death the controversy over his views also died.

### **Amyraut's Views**

The views of Moïse Amyraut are strange. They have been called *hypothetical universalism*. Their strangeness, however, is not due to their novelty, but to their obvious contradictory ideas.

Amyraut was a good student. It is almost certain that he was aware of the bitter controversies that had raged between Augustine, the bishop of Hippo, and the Pelagians, and later between Augustine and the Semi-Pelagians, back in the fifth century. These controversies had raged in the church even after Augustine's death and had only finally been settled at the time of Gottschalk, that courageous defender of Augustine's views who had rotted in prison for his faith. Rome had adopted a Pelagian position.

Although the views of the Semi-Pelagians, and the obvious reasons why Rome adopted this heresy, are subjects into which we cannot enter in this article, we can mention that among those views defended by the opponents of Augustine were: a general love of God for all men; a general grace given to all flowing from God's universal love; a universal atonement made by Christ, which extended to all men; and a universal appeal in the gospel from God to all men expressing His desire to save them. Rome ultimately opted for this heresy, so contrary to Augustine's views, in the interests of preserving its own heretical position of the merit of good works.

Those who defend the gracious well-meant offer of the gospel in our day ought to be aware of the fact that they are the purveyors of ancient heresies, that they enter into conflict with Augustine when they teach their views, and that they side with Rome and its doctrine of the meritorious value of good works. Even the same texts were appealed to in those days, as the defenders of the well-meant offer use today, notably I Timothy 2:4 and Matthew 23:37. Any student of church history knows this. Amyraut presented a position that is so much like the inconsistent and contradictory position of those who try to maintain a well-meant gospel offer and still be Reformed that one shakes his head in disbelief

that some proponents of this heresy can come up with the same notions and present them as Reformed truth.


The chief propositions of Amyraut were these. 1) God's grace is universal in the sense that God desires the happiness and blessing of all men — provided they will accept His overtures of love. 2) None can be saved without believing in Christ. 3) God does not refuse to any man the ability to believe, but God does not give to every man His assisting grace, which improves a man's ability to believe. 4) None can receive this assistance to believe without the Holy Spirit, whom God is not bound to give to anyone, and, indeed, gives only to the elect. 5) Christ died for all men, a teaching which Amyraut insisted was the view of Calvin — as many, wrongly, do also today. 6) The universal grace that God shows to all men is insufficient to save them, because it is an objective grace, which offers salvation to all men on condition of repentance and faith, while subjective grace changes the heart.

In other words, Amyraut believed in universal grace and particular grace; in universal atonement and particular atonement; in an offer of salvation to all men and a work of the Spirit only in some; in a will of God to save all and a will of God to save the elect; in the necessity of the work of the Spirit to be saved and the ability of man to fulfill the condition of faith. It is like a man walking with one leg on the sidewalk and the other in the gutter. He limps, staggers from the sidewalk to the gutter and back again, and halts between the two opinions whether the sidewalk or the gutter is the better place to be. He drifts rapidly back and forth between Calvinism and Semi-Pelagianism and does so in the name of being Reformed. He accepts contradiction as desirable and finds delight in antagonistic doctrines that no one can understand.

Spiritually this is impossible, of

course. The inevitable result is a drift into a totally Pelagian and Arminian position, and an abandonment of even a semblance of being Reformed. The spiritual reason for this is defined by the Lord

in the words: "He that is not for me is against me." One cannot sit long on a theological fence, tottering between an orthodox position and a Pelagian one. He soon falls off the fence on the wrong side.

I say this because Amyraldianism became a curse to the churches that were influenced by it. That takes us back to John Cameron, Moïse Amyraut's teacher. 

## News From Our Churches

Mr. Benjamin Wigger

### Seminary Activities

**T**hursday morning, October 2, eleven catechism students (8th - 11th grade, 8 young men and 3 young ladies) of Trinity PRC in Hudsonville, MI, along with their pastor, Rev. R. Kleyn, visited our seminary. These students had the day off from school because of the annual teachers' convention. The students and Rev. Kleyn got to the seminary around 9 A.M. Rev. Kleyn began the visit by giving them a tour of the seminary building and premises, followed by a visit to a couple of professors in their offices. Then at 9:45 they joined the professors and students for the daily period of devotions for 10 minutes and then had morning coffee with them for 15 minutes. After this they all sat in on two hours of classes. In the first hour, 4 visited Prof. R. Decker's NT History class, and the other 7 sat through an hour of Hebrew grammar with Prof. D. Engelsma. He was lecturing on the Hebrew prepositions and conjunctions and how these are joined to the different Hebrew nouns. The students will remember forever the Hebrew word for the preposition "from." Prof. Engelsma even threatened to ask them should he bump into them sometime in the future. After this they all sat through an hour of Dogmatics with Prof. Engelsma lecturing on Christology and the Divinity of Christ. This class ended around noon, and then the professors treated their guests to pizza for lunch. While

sitting and eating with the professors and the students, Rev. Kleyn had opportunity to tell the young people about some of his days in the seminary, and his experiences in "practice preaching," and some of the fun he and his classmates had back then. Both the professors and students at the seminary appreciated Trinity's visit very much, even complaining (a little) that not enough of our church members make an effort to visit the seminary. They liked the exposure. According to Rev. Kleyn, Trinity was treated royally, the professors even making an effort in the lectures to compensate a little for their younger audience. All of the young people enjoyed the morning thoroughly and left with a greater appreciation for what goes into the preparation of ministers, both on the part of professors and students. Rev. Kleyn is planning sometime in the future to try to do the same for interested adults in his congregation who have expressed a desire for it. Rev. Kleyn concludes his note to me by adding three things he hoped to accomplish in this visit: 1) to help these young people know what we are praying for when we pray for our seminary; 2) to encourage the professors and seminary students; and 3) perhaps, if the Lord wills, to perk the interest of some of the young men to consider more seriously the gospel ministry. Rev. Kleyn and those 11 young people from Trinity would recommend such an outing to any and all members of our churches.

School and Northwest Iowa PR Christian School in Doon, hosted the 49<sup>th</sup> annual Teachers Convention October 2 and 3 at Hull PR Christian School. There were two speeches given that were open to the public. The first was the convention's keynote address, given by Rev. D. Kleyn, Thursday morning, October 2 at Hull PR Church entitled, "Laborers Made Steadfast in the Lord," and the second given that evening in our Doon PR Church by Rev. R. Smit entitled, "Be Steadfast in Watching."

The evening of October 9, Prof. R. Dykstra spoke at the annual fall PTA meeting of Hope PR Christian School in Grand Rapids, MI. He spoke on the theme, "Two Different Covenants, Two Different Schools," a subject which considered how the covenant view that is maintained will necessarily affect the school.

An outing for band students of Heritage Christian School in Hudsonville, MI was planned for Saturday, October 18. Plans called for a bus trip to a Central Michigan University Marching Band performance, with a football game included before and after half time.

### Minister Activities

**R**ev. W. Bruinsma has declined the call he received to serve as the next pastor of the Hudsonville, MI PRC. Rev. R. Miersma has been led by our Lord to accept the call extended to him to serve our churches as missionary to Ghana, West Africa, along with Rev. W. Bekkering. The council of Faith PRC in Jenison, MI presented a duo of Rev. A. Brummel and Rev. S.

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

### School Activities

**O**ur two PR Christian schools in Iowa, Hull PR Christian



Key to their congregation for a call to serve as their next pastor.


### Congregation Activities

**T**he Cornerstone PRC in St. John, IN sponsored, in their church on October 7, a video presentation of the debate that was recently held in Grand Rapids, MI between Dr. R. Mouw and Prof. D. Engelsma on the question of common grace. Cornerstone PRC also recently started a "Women's Coffee Break." These meetings are scheduled for the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday morn-

ings of each month and will study the book "Nurturing a Heart of Humility," a study of Mary by Elizabeth George.

### Evangelism Activities

**F**riday evening, October 17, and then again on Saturday morning, October 18, a good number of visitors gathered in the auditorium of Trinity PRC in Hudsonville, MI to be part of a marriage seminar entitled "Godly Living in Marriage," sponsored by the Evangelism Committee of Trinity. This

conference, by coincidence, was held during "Marriage Protection Week," October 12-18, as designated by President George W. Bush. Friday Prof. B. Gritters spoke on "Priorities in Marriage," followed by Rev. W. Bruinsma speaking on "Resolving Conflict in Marriage." On Saturday morning Rev. R. VanOverloop spoke first on "The Man's Role as Husband and Father," followed by Rev. J. Slopsema speaking on "The Woman's Role as Wife and Mother." 

## Announcements

### NOTICE

With great thanksgiving and happiness, the Kalamazoo PRC congratulates

#### REV. WILBUR BRUINSMA

for completing twenty-five years of faithful service to God as a minister of the Word of God. We pray that God will continue to strengthen and sustain him for many years to come. "The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord and he delighteth in his way" (Psalm 37:32).

Consistory and Congregation  
of Kalamazoo PRC

His wife, Mary

His children and grandchildren:

Brad and Trisha Bruinsma

Kari, Skyler, Emma

Ryan and Heather Mowery

Tori, Ian, Trenton

Ed and Mandy Tolsma

Megan

Lydia

### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Council of Hudsonville PRC expresses Christian sympathy to fellow officebearers Elder Don VanOverloop and Deacon Greg VanOverloop in the passing to glory of Greg's mother,

#### MRS. JUNE VAN OVERLOOP.

The Lord comforts us with His Word: "Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth. The Lord of hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah" (Psalm 46: 10-11).

Nort Brower, Vice President  
Ralph VanderVeen, Clerk

### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Men's Society of the Hudsonville PRC expresses Christian sympathy to member Mr. Tom Spriensma in the recent passing of his sister,

#### CATHERINE SMIT,

and a couple of weeks later in the passing of her beloved husband,

#### ROELOF SMIT,

in the Netherlands.

We also express our Christian sympathy to our member Mr. Gordon VanOverloop in the recent passing of his beloved wife,

#### JUNE VAN OVERLOOP,

on Saturday, September 27, at the age of 74.

May the families find their comfort in the words of John 11:23-26, "Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again. Martha saith unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day. Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me, shall never die. Believest thou this?"

Erv Kortering, Secretary

### REMINDER:

Heritage Christian High School in South Holland, IL is now in its 3<sup>rd</sup> year of operation, teaching a full course load as a four-year high school. As we plan for the 2004-2005 school year, we ask qualified Protestant Reformed teachers to consider our need of one additional staff member. Interested individuals, please contact our Administrator, Ralph Medema, at (708) 339-1733 [Ralph.medema@heritagechs.org] or Education Committee Chairman, Andy Birkett, at (708) 895-8214 [andy@preferredwindowanddoor.com].

### YEARBOOK CHANGE

New address and phone number for Prof. B. Gritters:

6593 36<sup>th</sup> Ave.

Hudsonville, MI 49426

(616) 669-6552

### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Adult Bible Society of Faith PRC express their Christian sympathy to Jim VanOverloop and children in the loss of his mother,

#### MRS. JUNE VAN OVERLOOP.

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

Fred Hanko, Pres.

Judy VanBaren, Sec.

### WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

With joy we announce that on November 1, our parents,

#### AL and ALICE KAPTEIN,

celebrated their 30<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary. We are thankful to have parents who walk in the truth and who lovingly raised us according to His will and ways. We pray for God's blessing on their marriage in the years to come. "O continue thy lovingkindness unto them that know thee; and thy righteousness to the upright in heart" (Psalm 36:10).

- ❖ Tom and Jana Kaptein
- ❖ Brent and Michelle Kuiper Klayton
- ❖ Terry and Pamela Kaptein Emily, Madeline
- ❖ Todd Kaptein
- ❖ Melinda and Melissa Kaptein

Zeeland, Michigan



## *Directory of Churches, Protestant Reformed*

### NEW JERSEY:

**Covenant P.R. Church**  
283 Squawbrook Rd.  
Wyckoff, NJ 07481  
Services: 10:00 & 6:00  
Pastor: Rev. D. Overway  
Pastor's Phone: (201) 848-4191

### MICHIGAN:

**Byron Center P.R. Church**  
1945 84th St.  
Byron Center, MI 49315  
Services: 9:30 & 5:00  
Pastor: Rev.  
Pastor's Phone: (616) 878-3255

**Faith P.R. Church**  
7194 20th Ave.  
Jenison, MI 49428  
Services: 9:30 & 6:00  
Pastor: Rev.  
Pastor's Phone: (616) 457-5848

**First P.R. Church (Grand Rapids)**  
2800 Michigan St. N.E.  
Grand Rapids, MI 49506  
Services: 9:30 & 6:00  
Pastor: Rev. J. Slopesma  
Pastor's Phone: (616) 247-0638

**First P.R. Church (Holland)**  
3641 104th Ave.  
Zeeland, MI 49464  
Services: 9:30 & 6:00  
Pastor: Rev. C. Terpstra  
Pastor's Phone: (616) 748-7921

**Georgetown P.R. Church**  
7146 48th Ave.  
Hudsonville, MI 49426  
Services: 9:30 & 5:00  
Pastor: Rev. R. VanOverloop  
Pastor's Phone: (616) 662-0257

**Grace P.R. Church**  
O-11225 8th Ave.  
Grand Rapids, MI 49544  
Services: 9:30 & 7:00  
Pastor: Rev. M. Dick  
Pastor's Phone: (616) 791-4204

**Grandville P.R. Church**  
4320 40th St.  
Grandville, MI 49418  
Services: 9:30 & 6:00  
Pastor: Rev. K. Koole  
Pastor's Phone: (616) 538-6176

**Hope P.R. Church (Walker)**  
1580 Ferndale S.W.  
Walker, MI 49544  
Services: 9:30 & 6:00  
Pastor: Rev. J. Laning  
Pastor's Phone: (616) 453-1936

### MICHIGAN (cont.):

**Hudsonville P.R. Church**  
5101 Beechtree Ave.  
Hudsonville, MI 49426  
Services: 9:30 & 6:00  
Pastor: Rev.  
Pastor's Phone: (616) 669-5380

**Kalamazoo P.R. Church**  
4515 Green Acres Dr.  
Kalamazoo, MI 49009  
Services: 9:30 & 6:00  
Pastor: Rev. W. Bruinsma  
Pastor's Phone: (269) 349-5202

**Southeast P.R. Church**  
1535 Cambridge S.E.  
Grand Rapids, MI 49506  
Services: 9:30 & 5:00  
Pastor: Rev. William Langerak  
Pastor's Phone: (616) 475-0996

**Southwest P.R. Church**  
4875 Ivanrest Ave.  
Grandville, MI 49418  
Services: 9:30 & 6:00  
Pastor: Rev. R. Cammenga  
Pastor's Phone: (616) 532-4846

**Trinity P.R. Church**  
3409 VanBuren  
Hudsonville, MI 49426  
Services: 9:30 & 6:00  
Pastor: Rev. R. Kleyn  
Pastor's Phone: (616) 669-7025

### INDIANA:

**Cornerstone P.R. Church**  
13251 W. 109th Ave.  
St. John, Indiana 46373  
Services: 9:00 & 5:00  
Pastor: Rev. N. Brummel  
Pastor's Phone: (219) 365-6892

### ILLINOIS:

**Bethel P.R. Church**  
115 Prat Blvd.  
Roselle, IL 60172  
Services: 9:30 & 5:00  
Pastor: Rev. C. Haak  
Pastor's Phone: (847) 524-4676

**Peace P.R. Church**  
18423 Stony Island Ave.  
Lansing, Illinois  
Services: 9:30 & 6:00  
Pastor: Rev. S. Houck  
Pastor's Phone: (708) 895-7974

**South Holland P.R. Church**  
16511 South Park Ave.  
South Holland, IL 60473  
Services: 9:30 & 6:00  
Pastor: Rev. A. Brummel  
Pastor's Phone: (708) 339-3717

### WISCONSIN:

**Randolph P.R. Church**  
229 Hammond St.  
Randolph, WI 53956  
Services: 9:30 & 2:00  
Pastor: Rev. Doug Kuiper  
Pastor's Phone: (920) 326-5642

### IOWA:

**Doon P.R. Church**  
408 6th Ave.  
Doon, IA 51235  
Services: 9:30 & 2:00  
Pastor: Rev. R. Smit  
Pastor's Phone: (712) 726-3382

**Hull P.R. Church**  
1006 Hayes Ave.  
Hull, IA 51239  
Services: 9:30 & 6:00 (Apr-Sept)  
9:30 & 2:00 (Oct-Mar)  
Pastor: Rev. S. Key  
Pastor's Phone: (712) 439-1326

### MINNESOTA:

**Edgerton P.R. Church**  
311 Maple St.  
Edgerton, MN 56128  
Services: 9:30 & 6:00  
Pastor: Rev. D. Kleyn  
Pastor's Phone: (507) 442-4441

### COLORADO:

**Loveland P.R. Church**  
709 E. 57th St.  
Loveland, CO 80537  
Services: 9:30 & 6:00 (Aug-May)  
9:30 & 7:00 (June-July)  
Pastor: Rev. G. Eriks  
Pastor's Phone: (970) 667-9481

### CALIFORNIA:

**Hope P.R. Church**  
1307 E. Brockton Ave.  
Redlands, CA 92374  
Services: 10:00 & 6:00  
Pastor: Rev. M. VanderWal  
Pastor's Phone: (909) 792-6776

### WASHINGTON:

**Lynden P.R. Church**  
315 North Park Dr.  
Lynden, WA 98364  
Services: 10:00 & 6:00  
Pastor: Rev. R. Hanko  
Pastor's Phone: (360) 354-4337

### CANADA:

**First P.R. Church (Edmonton)**  
15911 107A Ave.  
Edmonton, Alberta, Canada  
Services: 10:00 & 3:00  
Pastor: Rev. M. DeVries  
Pastor's Phone: (780) 489-6470

**Immanuel P.R. Church (Lacombe)**  
1 Sunset Way  
Lacombe, AB, Canada  
Services: 10:00 & 3:30  
Pastor: Rev.  
Pastor's Phone: (403) 782-5444

### HOME MISSIONS:

**Pittsburgh, PA**  
Rev. J. Mahtani  
Phone: (412) 371-2299  
**Spokane, WA**  
Rev. T. Miersma  
Phone: (509) 926-0372