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MEDITATION

A WALK THROUGH THE VALLEY

*"Yea, though I walk through the valley of death,
I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me; Thy
rod and Thy staff they comfort me." Ps. 23:4*

What a contrast to the preceding psalm.

There we hear the terrible cry of the prophet who suffered before the suffering of Jesus.

But we hasten to add that we cannot compare the suffering of David and the suffering of Jesus. David was but a type, and his suffering was but a weak type of the Via Dolorosa of Jesus.

But here all is calm and serene: the prophet knows that God is His Shepherd and that he does not want.

He will also explain it to us: this Shepherd makes him to lie down in green pastures: all his wants and his needs are completely fulfilled.

The great Shepherd of the sheep leadeth His sheep along the quiet waters of everlasting righteousness.

And so his soul is restored from its erstwhile unrest and misery.

And this psalm is strictly theological: God does all that for His own Name's sake! He wants to glorify Himself in His church.

And then it seems that the prophet is thinking of all kinds of arguments that shall be raised against him, such as: how can a man be so calm, serene and at peace in the midst of this world-life? Is it not true that we lie in the midst of death? Are we not miserable sinners, and are we not making our debts greater every day? Are there not devils around us and within us? And how about the wicked that surround us, the power of evil within us?

How can a man ever say: I shall not want! I am at peace! I am completely content?

And so the prophet will give his answer in our text: no, I am not even disturbed when walking through the valley of the shadow of death!

Wonderful testimony!

* * * *

First of all, we must remember that the prophet is not singing only about the day of our death.

That is the explanation of almost all the commentators of this psalm. And many of God's people often quote the verse in this vein. But it is not so.

The prophet does not mean to say: for this life my wants and my needs are completely taken care of, and what concerns my dissolution, even then my Shepherd will take care of me, for "He will go with me in that valley, and there He will comfort me with His rod and His staff."

I agree that the statement as such is true, but this text means more than that. Not only is He with me when I will make that final journey, but He is with me throughout all my life here on earth, and this latter is even on the foreground.

Here is the point: all through our life we are walking through the valley of death, and its shadow is continually upon us.

Of all my commentaries there is but one that agrees with me, but that makes no difference.

Such is indeed the teaching of Scripture throughout, and it is also plain from the text itself, as also the context.

The verses 5 and 6 certainly do not sustain the former view, the view, namely, that this verse refers to our final journey. Because when the prophet has stated the astounding truth that God is with him in the valley of death, he continues and gives testimony *how* God comforts him in the valley. He prepareth a table before me in the presence of his enemies; his head is anointed with oil and his cup runneth over. And, concluding, he testifies that he is assured of the fact that all his days will be spent in the house of God.

But also the text itself does not lend itself to the former explanation.

If this is the last journey, that is, our departure from this earth to the heavenly tabernacle, how shall we then explain the rod and the staff of God unto my comfort?

No, but this walk is our walk here below from the beginning to the end.

* * * *

All Scripture also teaches that we lie in the midst of death; that we die every day; that we carry about with us the body of this death; that a thousand fears and a thousands deaths accompany us on this earth. The Dutch sing of it in the psalms: "Duizend zorgen, duizend dooden, kwellen mijn angstvallig hart!"

Our walk is our life, and then that life as we live it from the heart.

It does not only include our thoughts, words and deeds, but also our secret heart and mind which no one sees but God alone.

And that walk, that life is surrounded and permeated with all manner of death.

And that is so especially when we are regenerated and converted to God.

Then sin awakes like never before. And then the devils begin their wicked work as never before. And also the whole world, inspired by the devil, sets itself against us on every side.

Our whole walk is characterized by death.

And this death is characterized as a valley, a depression.

I want to be in heaven, but I am on the earth.

I want to be in the company of God, Christ, angels and the souls of men made perfect, but I must travel among devils and wicked men.

I want to be holy and undefiled, but of necessity I sin in all I do.

In a word: I want to be absolutely perfect, but I come far short of the glory of God.

Every night when I bow my knees I cry out my sin and my shame to God. O God, be merciful to me the sinner!

The shadow of physical and spiritual death lies hard upon me day and night.

Listen to a saint of the Old Testament: he was lifted up so that he could look and listen to heaven and heaven's inhabitants. His name is Isaiah (Isa. 6).

And when he has seen and heard all the glory of God, he begins to weep. Harken to him: "Then said I, Woe is me!

for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips: for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts."

And thus it was every time when one of us saw the Lord or the perfection of heaven. Think of the shepherds in Bethlehem's fields when Jesus was born. They feared with great fear. Think of John when he saw Jesus on the isle of Patmos: he fell as dead at the feet of Him that spoke to him. Think of Job, of Abraham in his shuddering and trembling, of Habakkuk, and so many more.

It is all because of this shadow of death that lies hard upon every one of us.

And it is a wonder that we can smile at all.

And yet, the prophet says: even though I walk through the valley of this shadow of death *I will fear no evil!*

* * * *

How is that possible?

The answer is given in the text: For Thou art with me!

It is as when the Jewish man was wandering about in Edom. He cried toward Jerusalem: Watchman! What of the night?

And the answer was: The morning has come, and the night!

They always go together for the child of God.

Oh yes, the morning has come in his heart, soul and mind.

It has illuminated him, delivered him from death in principle in the very depths of his heart.

But . . . also the night.

Read Romans 7, and there you see the answer. Especially in the close. The apostle has testified of his life here on earth. There was a will to do good and to be good in the depth of him, but whenever he wanted to perform the good work, evil was present with him. What he hated he did, and what he loved he could not perform. All this caused him to cry out: O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me out of the body of this death?

And the answer in Romans 7 is the same as the answer here: God was with him in all his night of sin and guilt. He thanked God through Jesus Christ his Lord.

And so also here.

David is not afraid in this terrible valley of the shadow of death for the Lord (we would say today: Jesus) was with him in the valley.

And that makes all the difference.

In that dark and gloomy valley the Lord tells him that all is well.

Jesus tells us every day: I have found a ransom for you!

I know that you hate sin and that you languish under it. I know that you hate your life of sin and wickedness and that you fight to the death against it. It is My Own work in you. I know that your greatest joy would be to live without sin. Well, my sheep, you will attain it for sure. I will lead you all through the valley. In fact, I have been through that terrible valley for you Myself, only then it was infinitely worse. In all your afflictions I was afflicted. And I have taken your captivity of death captive, and now it follows Me a captive in My train. It must serve Me and you unto the attainment of highest glory.

* * * *

And so the sheep are safe in this valley.

For Jesus comforts them with His rod and His staff.

This is imagery, of course.

The rod and the staff serves two purposes for the Shepherd.

It is the instrument of discipline for the sheep when they go astray, but it is also the instrument of protection against the wolves of every hue and cry that surround the flock of Christ.

And they comfort the sheep.

For He has told them that all things work together for their eternal welfare.

Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but note the text: no evil shall I fear. That means that although we are hated, we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter, although the blood of many martyrs of Christ soak the earth, *no real evil befalls them*. It is all chastisement and helps them to obtain the holiness of the Lord.

And what shall I more say?

I like to close with a text which has come before my mind's eye ever since I started this little talk. It is found in Proverbs 4, verse 18: "But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day!"

G.V.

THE GOOD SHEPHERD

Whatever ill betides me,
He will restore and bless;
For His Name's sake He guides me
In paths of righteousness.
Thy rod and staff shall cheer me
In death's dark vale and shade,
For Thou wilt then be near me:
I shall not be afraid.

Psalm 23:2

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EDITORIALS

Trouble About Nigeria

For some time we have had reasons to suspect that there was a rather large liberal and modernistic element in the Christian Reformed Church, an element that was broad-minded, which means the same as saying that they do not care about specific Reformed truth. The different papers and magazines that exist apart from the official church papers, like *Torch and Trumpet* and the *Reformed Journal*, the latter rather liberal, the former orthodox, already point in that direction. Another sign that points in the same direction is the attitude some take toward the Christian School. Dr. Daane, for instance, according to the September 1958 issue of *Torch and Trumpet*, takes the position that the Christian schools are too separatistic and that they should seek involvement with American society. When later he was asked whether this purpose could not be more effectively reached by sending the children directly to the public schools and by having the Christian school teachers give instruction in the public schools, he admitted that this might be better.

There are other signs that point in the same direction.

In the Christian Reformed Church there is no agreement even on the most fundamental principles of the Reformed truth.

It is drifting away. And that, too, rather fast.

This is evident from the fact that the liberal element, in Calvin College, teach the evolution theory, as is a well-known fact. What this means for the church is not difficult to estimate. Future leaders of the church, ministers and teachers, are imbued with the ungodly theory of evolution, these in turn teach others in the church, in the catechism classes, the schoolroom, and from the pulpit, and before long the whole church becomes corrupt.

But I was going to write, in the present editorial, especially about the last decision regarding Nigeria, specifically concerning the participation of Synod and the Christian Reformed Church in a certain theological school which is called the Theological College of Northern Nigeria, a school in which men of different denominations and colors may and do give instruction, and in which also Dr. Harry Boer has been teaching in the past and in which he may, according to the decision of the last Christian Reformed Synod, continue to give instruction in the coming year.

Dr. Boer, the reader understands, is a missionary in the Christian Reformed Church. He was very strongly in favor of having the Christian Reformed Church support synodically, also financially, that union seminary in Nigeria.

But let me, first of all, quote the decision of Synod regarding this matter:

"1. Synod continues Dr. Harry Boer as teacher in the TCNN (Theological College of Northern Nigeria, H.H.) under the terms of the 1955 and 1957 decisions of Synod.

"Grounds:

"a. Former Synods have committed the Church up to this point, and we are morally bound to honor this commitment.

"b. The present commitment satisfies the urgency of the situation.

"2. That a study committee be constituted of nine members (in which both the minority and the majority opinions are represented), in consultation with the Nigerian General Conference, to define and clarify certain matters which follow, and that clear-cut recommendations be made to Synod of 1959 on these matters:

"a. The implication of our ordination vows with respect to missionaries who serve in a united theological enterprise.

"b. The relation of the Christian Reformed Church to the TCNN, taking into account our church polity as well as theological distinctiveness.

"c. The relation of the Nigerian General Conference to the TCNN (for example to the appointment of members of the Board of Governors).

"d. The relation of the Benue and Tiv churches to the TCNN.

"e. The relation of the teachings of our Missionary Professor to the distinctive positions and practices held by the Benue and Tiv churches.

"f. The relation of the Missionary Teacher to the Nigerian General Conference (for example supervision of his teaching at TCNN and problems that arise for him at TCNN).

"g. Further investigation of the need for a distinctively Reformed theological training on the Benue and Tiv field.

"Grounds:

"(1) The present recommendation of the Board is somewhat ambiguous. The term 'participate' can be construed in such a way that the Christian Reformed Church becomes one of the sponsoring and operating churches of the TCNN — which would violate the clear statement which Synod gave to Classis Sioux Center. Or this term might have a weaker meaning.

"(2) There are many aspects of this problem that have not been defined, or that have not come to sufficient clarity.

"(3) Several Classes have requested such a study.

"3. That Synod permit special gifts to be solicited for the native church which desires to participate in TCNN and that it be understood that this not further commit the Christian Reformed Church to the TCNN at this time inasmuch as the support is given to the native church and the responsibility for expansion of the TCNN at this time is the responsibility of the native church.

"Grounds:

"a. The Benue church has requested such help.

"b. The Christian Reformed Church has on other occasions allowed the solicitation of gifts without thereby committing itself to the participation in the particular cause concerned.

"4. That this be considered as Synod's answer to the overtures nos. 16, 26, 35, 41, 48, and 52; also Protest No. 4 and the Protest of Rev. J. De Jong."

* * * *

Such, then is the decision of the last Synod of the Christian Reformed Church in regard to the TCNN.

Let us discuss this matter for a bit.

First of all, let me briefly explain to the reader what is the TCNN. It is a theological school or seminary. It is a school, therefore, where the students are instructed not only in matters of faith and doctrine but also in the exposition and preaching of the Word. It is, therefore, very important, not only for the students that are taught there, but also for the church. Just imagine the nature and contents of the subjects that are taught in such a school, subjects such as exegesis or exposition of the Scriptures from the original languages; Old and New Testament History; Dogmatics and the history of Dogma; Catechetics, i.e. the theory and practice of teaching the children and youth of the Church; Church Polity, the theory and practice of governing the Church; Homiletics, the theory and practice of preaching the Word of God, and other subjects. I mention some of these subjects in order that the reader may know not only what is the importance of a seminary, but may also understand the necessity of the teaching in such a school being very definite. It may not be general and vague. How can the explanation of Scripture ever be vague? If it is, it is simply no good. The same is true of dogmatics: it must be based on Scripture and must definitely represent the doctrine of the Church that instituted the seminary.

Now this is not true of the TCNN. Anyone, whether he is Reformed, Lutheran, Anabaptist, Arminian or Baptist, may teach there; it is very liberal. What is the result?

One result is that if each professor teaches his own view, the student becomes necessarily very confused. I do not know how the subjects are arranged in the TCNN and what each professor teaches nor what Dr. Boer teaches there. But suppose that the latter teaches Dogmatics and that, therefore, he presents the Scriptural conception of election and reprobation as would be his calling as a missionary professor of the Christian Reformed Church. And suppose that one of the other professors, an Arminian, teaches exegesis and, in explaining Rom. 9, presents the Arminian view of predestination. Will not the students become utterly confused? Or suppose again that Dr. Boer teaches the Reformed view of the covenant in the line of continued generations and, therefore emphasizes infant baptism; and suppose that another professor, who is a baptist, denies infant baptism. What must the student think. Must he take his own choice? Will he not be confused by such teaching? Or again, suppose that Dr. Boer teaches that the signs in the Lord's supper are only signs and seals, while another, a Lutheran,

emphasizes the real presence of Christ "up and under and with" the bread and wine? Will not the student be confused? And thus we could continue. There is hardly an important doctrine of the Church concerning which there is no difference of opinion. And in order that the teaching may be definite it must not only present the positive conception of the truth as it is found in Scripture, and that too, by a Reformed missionary, in harmony with sound Reformed doctrine; but it must also present that truth antithetically, i.e. in opposition to every error. Then, and then only, will the student receive a clear conception of the truth and become prepared to proclaim it in his preaching.

But there is another conceivable possibility, and I am afraid that an attempt is made in the TCNN to realize this possibility. I say that an attempt is made toward that end, for in reality this is impossible. It is the attempt to avoid all controversy and to prepare the students for some general "evangelistic" work. I do not like that term "evangelism" as it is used in our day. The term itself is beautiful enough. It refers to the "evangel" or the gospel and the preaching of the gospel. But the sense in which it is used of late conveys the impression that some kind of a general gospel is meant in distinction from the proclamation of the whole truth and of definite doctrine. The idea is to save souls. We must bring people to Jesus. We must proclaim a general offer of salvation to all sinners without exception. We must tell people that they certainly can be saved if they only are willing to come to Jesus and accept Him as their Saviour. As we can often hear it over the radio: "Just repeat after me: 'I accept Jesus as my personal Saviour' and you will be saved." In such a gospel sound doctrine has no place. People do not like doctrine: they want the "gospel." Especially the doctrine of predestination, election and reprobation, can have no place in such an "evangel." I call this cheap and corrupt evangelism. And I am afraid that exactly that cheap evangelism is taught at the TCNN.

This stands to reason.

In a school where everybody can teach, it is impossible for everybody to present his own conception of the truth. Then the school would become a house divided against itself. Hence, all controversial subjects must be and are avoided. The result is some vague and good for nothing instruction, some cheap evangelism without any definite doctrine. And since Dr. Boer teaches in the TCNN he must cater to that same spirit.

Perhaps, he likes this. In fact, I have reason to believe that he does.

But if so, he should not be a missionary in a church that professes to be Reformed and that subscribes to the Three Forms of Unity.

For that is nothing short of dishonesty.

More about this next time, D.V.

H.H.

OUR DOCTRINE

THE BOOK OF REVELATION

PART TWO

CHAPTER V

The First Four Trumpets

Revelation 8:7-12

Nevertheless we do not think that this is the only, or that it is even the main idea that is expressed. On the contrary, rather than saying that one-third means the smaller part over against two-thirds that are not affected, I would say that one-third signifies just a little more than the one-fourth that is always affected. You will remember that we explained the meaning of one-fourth in connection with the fourth seal. That fourth horse and its rider traverse the earth and kill one-fourth part of all men. We then said that one-fourth signifies just as many as is in harmony with the history of this dispensation; or, if you please, — to speak concretely, — one-fourth indicates the ordinary death-rate of the world. Four is the number of the world. And one-fourth is that part which is in harmony with the present existence of the world of men. And therefore, one-fourth indicates the ordinary rate in which men die. But the same is true with hail and fire, with storms and upheavals in the sea, with the poisoning of the waters, and with the cooling of the atmosphere. There is always one-fourth part of the earth affected by hail and fire. There is always one-fourth part of the earth and the trees and the grass and all the crops that is destroyed. Every year this happens again. The same is true of the sea. One-fourth of the fishes always die. That is the ordinary number of them. One-fourth of the ships always perish. That is the ordinary number of ships that are destroyed by the ordinary number of storms. There is never a year that no fish die, and there is never a year that no ships are destroyed. One-fourth part of the waters is always struck with the star which is called Wormwood. One-fourth part of them always causes epidemics, so that some die. One-fourth part of the earth is always affected by the lack of sufficient sunshine. In a word, these same things always recur, only according to the measure of this dispensation, one-fourth part of the universe being affected. But as long as this is not increased, the earth does not consider them judgments. There is nothing strange in this. We have become accustomed to this. In general, all the world figures with this part of the crop being destroyed by hail and fire and by cold weather. In general, all the world figures on just so many ships being destroyed on an average, and just so many people dying because of the poisonous waters. But

now, in connection with the first four trumpets, this is increased just a little. Not much, it is true; only the next fraction is taken, instead of one-fourth, one-third. Just a little more hail and fire, just a little more cooling of the atmosphere, just a little more death to the creatures of the sea, just a few more ships destroyed, just a few more people die because of the waters, and just a little more cooling off of the sun. This is meant by the four trumpets. You know the effect of this just-a-little-more: it upsets all the calculations of men. Just a little cooler atmosphere during the summer, and the crops do not ripen. Just a little more hail and fire than usual, and another part of the crop on which men had figured is destroyed. Just a few more storms and disturbances in the sea, and the number of ships on which we depended is greatly lessened. And thus it is with the supply of fish and with the waters of the earth. In a word, by the just-a-little-more of these trumpets Christ controls all the world, and determines absolutely the relations that must ensue so as to complete His kingdom and ultimately destroy the power of the Antichrist. By these very natural causes it is Christ, blowing the trumpets through the seven angels, Who determines the development of the nations and so directs all things that exactly that constellation is called into existence which He desires. It is by controlling these natural phenomena that Christ ultimately will also destroy the Antichrist and the Gog and Magog. In a word, it is Christ Who in this dispensation controls the fate of the nations also through these elements of the universe, Who gives victory and deals defeat, Who sets up and dethrones powers and dominions, and thus controls the history of all the world with a view to the bringing of His own kingdom.

And thus you will also clearly understand the words of our text in relation to all history. All the forces that cause these things come directly from heaven. It indicates that Christ, Who holds the book of the seven seals and opens it seal after seal, also determines crops and crop failure, plenty and lack of everything, and through these all determines the coming of His kingdom. Be not afraid, therefore. These things must surely come to pass. They will come ever more forcefully and plainly. And in them all you may see the judgment that is coming upon the world and the answer to your own prayers. Be not afraid! For even though by these judgments you will undoubtedly be touched as far as your present existence and life in the world is concerned, the spiritual kingdom of Christ is invulnerable and immune from the spiritual point of view. In the midst of these times as they are pictured in the text, the people of God are sealed, and they are sealed securely, that is, spiritually they shall surely conquer. And finally they shall through all these things enter into the economy of things where God shall spread His tabernacle over them, and they shall serve Him in His temple day and night forevermore.

H.H.

A CLOUD OF WITNESSES

The Casting Out Of Ishmael

"But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, . . . What saith the scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son; for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman." — Gal. 4:29, 30

It was Sarah that first insisted that Hagar and Ishmael should be cast out from the camp of Abraham. Psychologically one can conjecture a very natural explanation for this. It was, of course, Sarah herself that prepared the way for the birth of Ishmael. After many years of longing and waiting to bring forth a son unto her husband Abraham, Sarah began to despair and to doubt that she would ever bring forth the son that had been promised them by God. In her state of desperation she devised the plan whereby Abraham was to go in unto her handmaid and bring forth a seed unto them through Hagar. No sooner had this taken place, however, than she began to regret what she had done. To see her handmaid succeed where she had failed, would seem reason enough to move Sarah to jealousy. To see Hagar, before quiet and submissive, lifted up in pride so as to despise her mistress Sarah only aggravated this jealousy. After complaining to Abraham, Sarah began to treat her handmaid harshly, even to the point where Hagar fled from the camp. Nonetheless, upon the command of God, Hagar returned to the camp of Abraham, and Ishmael was born, the first son of Abraham. This birth, at least from Sarah's point of view, did not bring the blessedness to the house of Abraham as had at first been planned; but, rather, the very sight of the child was a thorn in the flesh of Sarah, constantly reminding her that she herself was barren.

The final birth of Isaac in Sarah's old age did not, as might have been hoped, alleviate her jealousy and regret. It only aggravated it the more. Then it became evident that the scheme which resulted in the birth of Ishmael had been unnecessary, and her contempt for him became the greater. Isaac having been born there was no longer any need for Ishmael. These pent-up feelings finally reached their bursting point at the great feast which was held on the day that Isaac was weaned. There she saw Ishmael mocking her son Isaac. That she could not stand and in a rage of jealousy and envy she went to Abraham and told him that Ishmael had to go. "Cast out this bondwoman and her son: for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac." Gen. 21:10.

Following such reasoning some commentators have been led to remark, as Wm. Robertson Nicoll does in *The Expositor's Bible*, "It is one of these cases in which one poor creature, clothed with a little brief authority, stretches it to the utmost in vindictive maltreatment of another. Sarah

happened to be mistress, and, instead of using her position to make those under her happy, she used it for her own convenience, for the gratification of her own spite, and to make those beneath her conscious of her power by their suffering. She happened to be a mother, and instead of bringing her into sympathy with all women and their children, this concentrated her affection with a fierce jealousy on her own child. She breathed freely when Hagar and Ishmael were out of her sight. A smile of satisfied malice betrayed her bitter spirit. No thought of the sufferings to which she had committed a woman who had served her well for years, who had yielded everything to her will, and who had no other natural protector but her, no glimpses of Abraham's saddened face, visited her with any relentings. It mattered not to her what became of the woman and the boy to whom she really owed a more loving and careful regard than to any except Abraham and Isaac."

Such reasoning may all seem to make good sense; it may even appear to be good psychology; but in one thing it sorely lacks, it is not in accord with Scripture.

When we go to Holy Writ so as to gain an understanding of this event we find that Ishmael is called in Galatians 4, "he that was after the flesh," and "the son of the bondwoman." These appellations have their primary reference to the birth of Ishmael. The occasion of his birth was to be found in the weakness and doubt of both Sarah and Abraham. After many years of waiting during which the promised son was not born unto them, they began to doubt that God would ever be able to give to them a son. Therefore in an attempt to evade the necessity of complete reliance upon God, the scheme was devised whereby a son would be brought forth from Hagar rather than from Sarah. This was an act of sin which arose not from faithful reliance upon God and His promises to them, but from their own human imaginations. The fact that Ishmael was born was not out of faith but out of the sinfulness of their flesh.

After the birth of Ishmael, although the child was in a very explicit way conceived and born in sin, Abraham put forth his best effort to raise him as a covenant child. Still there remained in the heart of Abraham a lingering hope that Ishmael might be acceptable to God. With the faithfulness of a covenant father he instructed Ishmael in all of the glorious truths of promise that God had revealed unto him. When the time came that the sacrament of circumcision was instituted as a sign of the covenant promise, Ishmael too was circumcised as a member of the household of Abraham. He was brought up with all of the tender and loving care which every covenant father bestows upon his children. But all was to no avail. Ishmael was "born after the flesh," not only as to his literal birth, but also as to the inner character of his heart. Spiritually he was insensitive to the truth. He cared not for the promises of God. Although faithfully raised within the sphere of the covenant, the inner, spiritual experience of covenant friendship found no place within his heart.

That Ishmael was so spiritually insensitive can be seen also from the narrative of Genesis. Even before Ishmael was born God prophesied to Hagar concerning him, "And he will be a wild man; his hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him; and he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren." Gen. 16:12. Without going into a detailed exposition of this prophecy, we can easily see that this is not such as would be applicable to a covenant child of promise. Concerning Abraham and his spiritual seed it had been said, "And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed." Gen. 12:1, 2. This is quite the opposite from the prophecy concerning Ishmael.

Again we read the prayer of Abraham to God made at the time circumcision was instituted when Ishmael was thirteen years of age, "And Abraham said unto God, O that Ishmael might live before thee!" Gen. 17:18. We referred to this text in our preceding article as an expression of the desire of Abraham that Ishmael might be the son through whom the promise would be realized; but there is also another implication in this petition of Abraham. It contains the heart-cry of a father whose son will not receive his instruction. One of the hardest experiences of spiritual life is that of a father who, after putting forth his greatest effort to raise his child in the truth of the Word of God, finds that his child has no true desire for that Word whatsoever. Many a father has said, and undoubtedly in truth, that he would rather have his son taken away in death than to go through such an experience. With the love of a father for his son, Abraham cried unto God that God would convert the heart of his son. "O that Ishmael might live before thee!" But, as is so often the case, the will of God was other.

Ishmael is, therefore, typical of the child who, although raised within the sphere of the covenant, is a stranger to its true spiritual reality. In Galatians Paul identifies Ishmael as "the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar." Gal. 4:24. Briefly what he has reference to is that such a child, born within the sphere of the covenant which inwardly he despises, finds his life within the covenant an aggravating restraint that drives him farther into the bondage of sin. Such is ever true; it was true of the Scribes, Pharisees and others who lived under the law of Sinai; it was true of Ishmael and Esau who lived four hundred and more years before the law was even spoken from Sinai; it is true of the reprobate that lives within the sphere of the covenant today. The covenant of God does not present a certain "subjective, covenant-grace" to the reprobate within its sphere. Rather it aggravates the sin of such and is a means to their greater condemnation.

That this was true with Ishmael became evident at the feast which was held to celebrate the weaning of Isaac. Ish-

mael's mockery of Isaac was no mere expression of childish jealousy. It must be remembered that Ishmael must have been over sixteen years of age at the time. Thus he was old enough also to understand the importance of Isaac in God's plan of salvation as he had surely been instructed by Abraham. If there had been within him any spiritual sensitivity, Ishmael surely would have rejoiced at the birth and presence of Isaac, for then in that child would rest also his hope of salvation. As it was, we read in Galatians, "But then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit." The mockery of Ishmael was a spiritual persecution whereby he mocked Isaac, not only as a younger brother, but as the heir of the promise of God. It was the deep-seated resentment of a wicked person against the very Word of God.

This deep-seated spiritual hatred Sarah recognized. To ascribe to Sarah the motives of personal jealousy and hatred, is to ignore the essential spiritual character of Sarah. Although at times Sarah may have become weak in her faith, as did also Abraham, and as do all of the children of God, this act of Sarah was a work of strongest faith. She discerned the mockery of Ishmael as no mere childish rivalry but as deep-seated spiritual hatred. Up to that time she had endured the Godless behavior of Ishmael with patience, but as soon as he reached out with his evil influence toward the covenant child Isaac, she would bring the matter to a swift and proper end. Out of concern for the spiritual welfare for her son she insisted that Ishmael be removed from his position of influence over Isaac that could never serve toward any good. That the motivation of Sarah was pure and good follows without question from the fact God upheld her determination without limitation. The hesitancy of Abraham at this point can only mean that he at the time fell behind Sarah in spiritual discernment and faith. He allowed his natural love for Ishmael to obscure what was without question for the good of the covenant seed. But Sarah saw, and spoke in words which later were quoted by Paul as the infallible Word of God Himself, "Nevertheless what saith the scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the free-woman." Gal. 4:30. So would God preserve His Church.

B.W.

IN MEMORIAM

The Ladies' Aid Society, Ruth, of the Hope Protestant Reformed Church, expresses sincere sympathy to its sister member, Mrs. James Elzinga, in the death of her mother,

MRS. JACOBS

May our Father strengthen her in her sorrow. "All things work together for good to them that love God, who are called according to His purpose."

Rev. H. Hanko, President
Mrs. Jay Bomers, Secretary

IN HIS FEAR

Jehovah, The God of Arithmetic

(3)

"O Lord, how manifold are Thy works! in wisdom hast Thou made them all: the earth is full of Thy riches." These are the words of the psalmist in Psalm 104:24. And this is a truth that our children must have constantly held before them in all their education in the natural things of this life. In the geography class there is such an abundant opportunity to do that. And the covenant youth ought never to leave his geography class without that truth being impressed upon him. But we set forth in this series of articles to show also that in the arithmetic class the wisdom of God is so clearly evident and that there is abundant opportunity to call the attention of the covenant child to this fact. What wisdom of God is reflected in the whole world of numbers!

At this time we would call your attention to another matter which this world of numbers reveals to us concerning Jehovah. To the regenerated child of God this world of numbers reveals the absolute righteousness of God. In arithmetic God teaches us how absolutely exact He is in His demands upon us. He is a righteous God. He is light and in Him is no darkness at all. He demands certain things from the creature — and especially from the creature made in His own image. And you can never get away from the fact that these demands are unyieldingly precise when you deal with the system of numbers in their relation to each other as He in His wisdom has made them. Let us consider that fact at this time.

In arithmetic a thing is right or wrong. Two and two is four and not almost four, a little less than four or a little more than four. And when you add two and two and get four your answer is absolutely right. It is not near enough or relatively right. It is absolutely correct. Thus also, when you add forty-nine and fifty-one and have for your sum ninety-nine, your answer is not partly right, nearly correct, close enough. It is absolutely wrong! And the teacher is entirely within his right to count it all wrong.

Arithmetic brooks no mistake anywhere at any time. Take a column of figures and add up these numbers. Though your column is composed of twenty-five numbers and you make a mistake at only one step in the process of addition, your answer will be wrong. Though in twenty-three steps your addition was right, the answer is wrong, completely wrong when you made one error in the whole process. Whether that error was only one number removed from the correct answer or one hundred, your answer is absolutely wrong. And the teacher can give you no more credit for a right answer than the person who was one hundred numbers

out of the way with his answer. In the field of numbers one is right or he is wrong. There is no such thing as relatively correct. And in arithmetic there is no such thing as a partially right answer.

In the geography class you might have part of the answer to a particular question wrong and still get credit for the parts that are right. You might list the main industries of a country correctly and add one industry that is not found at all in this country. You could then be credited for knowing the industries you listed correctly and be counted off a point or two in that answer for the one you added that did not belong there. But add even a fraction to your answer in arithmetic and the whole answer is wrong.

Arithmetic reveals the exactness of God!

Let the child be taught every day and each step of his way how exact God is in His demands upon us. The Ten Commandments brook no more departure from their demands than is to be found in the mathematical process of addition, subtraction, multiplication or division. "Thou shalt have no other gods besides Me" postulates no relative demand. It does not condemn and forbid a host of gods besides Jehovah and call it relative obedience when a man has but one god besides Jehovah. It is an either . . . or matter. When we have a god besides Jehovah we do not have Jehovah anymore as our God. Adam and Eve when they chose to disobey God and eat of the forbidden fruit did not intend to obey God and the devil. They did not intend to have a god besides Jehovah. They chose to have a god instead of Jehovah. For they did not choose to do Jehovah's will and follow Satan's suggestion. They chose to do as Satan advised *instead* of God's will.

And God forbids that we make *any* likeness of Him. Not only some likenesses are forbidden. Each and every one is condemned. And where we make but one in the whole span of our earthly life, we are as guilty and wrong before Him as a child is wrong in his arithmetic problem when at only one point in the process he added, subtracted, divided or multiplied incorrectly in the series of numbers contained in his problem. His law is exact. He demands perfect obedience. And we are not pleasing in His sight unless at every point and at any given moment of our lives we conform perfectly to that law in its inner principle of love to God.

We sometimes speak of big sins and little sins. But we do not find such a distinction in Holy Writ. Scripture speaks of sins being multiplied. Surely one can add to the number of his sins. And the one sin may cause man to suffer more at the hands of the perpetrator of the evil than another. But with God sin is always sin. It is always coming-up with the wrong answer. And it always brands the perpetrator as one worthy of an everlasting punishment. It shall be more tolerable in the day of judgment for Sodom and Gomorrah who never saw the Christ while He performed His ministry in word accompanied by miracles than for the godless Jews who did see these miracles and did hear Him preach the words of everlasting life. Yet both are consigned to an everlasting

torment in hell. Both have erred. The lives of both were the wrong answer to what God demands of us in His holy law. The degree of punishment will vary; but God does not say of Sodom and Gomorrah that they were relatively correct and therefore receive a small share of blessedness and glory. With God it is either . . . or! As exact as He has made the world of numbers, so exact does He deal with the works of men.

How could it be otherwise?

Jehovah is a righteous God. What we see and learn in the field of arithmetic is eternal in Him. In Him there is no error. He is truth. In Him there is nothing but exactness and absolute righteousness. For there is no righteousness except that which is absolute. And so righteous is Jehovah that the thought of doing unrighteously cannot be entertained in His mind. Nothing can persuade Him to call anything right but that which is according to His standards right and good.

And therefore when He saves us from our unrighteousness He does so in a righteous way. He saves us in the way of perfect arithmetic. O, indeed, there is perfect arithmetic at the cross! For God pours out upon His Son the full vial of His wrath against our sin. He knows all the sins committed. His arithmetic is perfect and His bookkeeping without flaw. He knows our every sin and the sum of all the sins of His people from Adam till the last elect that is born and reborn before the day of Christ at the end of the ages. And whether He is computing the sins we have committed; or whether He is computing the last ounce of punishment for which those sins call, His arithmetic is perfect. And Christ drinks the very last drop in the cup which the Father has given Him to drink for our redemption. The very last farthing is brought to the Father in payment for our deliverance from the power of sin and death. And the Son hanging upon His cross, suffering the pangs of hell for our sins, adds the figures up till with triumph He can cry out, "It is finished!"

No sin was overlooked by the Father there at the cross. No single sin was overlooked amongst the millions upon millions that the children of God have committed from Paradise to the parousia. But in His everlasting grace a penalty was brought and endured equal to that load of guilt, so that when the last degree of suffering was borne there was a perfect balance; and the debt of the Church was "Paid in Full!" "There is therefore now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus," Romans 8:1a.

Jehovah has not minimized one sin. He has not erased or changed the figures to make the problem easier to execute. He saves us in a righteous way without violating the principles of truth which He displays in His world of numbers. Instead arithmetic shows us, because it is designed and created by Him, that salvation can and will come only by the cross. The fact of our fall and the fact of His absolute righteousness as well as His unchangeable promise to save

and glorify His fallen Church adds up to the cross. That already is Genesis 3:15, the mother promise. It adds up! The seed of the serpent must bruise the heel of The Seed of the woman! God's arithmetic adds up to that cross and demands it. Without it there will be no crushing of the head of the seed of the serpent, no victory for the Church.

But let us not corrupt the truth of that cross!

Let us hold fast to the fact that to be a fraction off in your answer in arithmetic is to be as wrong as to be ten points off. Let us also refrain from all that haughty wickedness that challenges the word of Him Who gave His life as a ransom for our sins. He knew what He was talking about when He added all things up and declared that "It is finished." Let us not claim to be wiser than He and teach men that He was able only to make us 99 and 99/100ths pure and that you and I have to add that 1/100th part before the 99 and 99/100ths can become ours. Arminianism is even mathematically corrupt and in error! If the work of Christ is not complete so that He does not accomplish all we need for our salvation, He fails to produce the right answer. Even as a wire that reaches from the power plant to the last hair-breadth up to the bulb will carry no current into that bulb to light it up, so a saviour who realizes only 99 and 99/100ths of that salvation is really no saviour. Unless Christ is also the One Who through His Holy Spirit, and upon the basis of the righteousness which He merited for us on the cross, implants within us the will to be saved, He fails as our saviour. The teacher may not add the one point which the child through inaccurate addition dropped from his answer. The child's answer is still wrong. The teacher who adds it is the only one whose answer is correct. And if we are the one to add the will to be saved which Christ fails to work in us, not He but we are the ones upon whose work our salvation is made sure.

Not so!

Jehovah, the God of arithmetic is exact in His demands upon mankind and saves us by the exact arithmetic of the cross. He comes up with the right answer, the whole of our need, and not only justifies us but also works in us both to will and to do according to His good pleasure.

J.A.H.

NOTICE: ACTS OF SYNOD

The Acts of the 1958 Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches of America are now available. Obtain your copy either from the minister or clerk of your church or send your order to undersigned. The price is \$1.00.

Rev. G. Vanden Berg, Stated Clerk
9402 South 53rd Court
Oak Lawn, Illinois

Contending For The Faith

The Church and the Sacraments

VIEWS DURING THE THIRD PERIOD (750-1517 A.D.)

THE SUPREMACY OF THE POPE

THE DECLINE OF THE PAPACY AND THE AVIGNON EXILE.

A. D. 1294-1377.

Later in the fourteenth century the Regular Observance grew again to considerable proportions, and in the beginning of the fifteenth century its fame was revived by the flaming preachers Bernardino of Sienna and John of Capistrano. The peace of the Franciscan order continued to be the concern of pope after pope until, in 1517, Leo X terminated the struggle of three centuries by formally recognizing two distinct societies within the Franciscan body. The moderate wing was placed under the Master-General of the Conventual Minorite Brothers, and was confirmed in the right to hold property. The strict or Observant wing was placed under a Minister-General of the Whole Order of St. Francis. The latter takes precedence in processions and at other great functions, and holds his office for six years.

If the Spiritual Franciscans had been capable of taking secret delight in an adversary's misfortunes, they would have had occasion for it in the widely spread charge that John was a heretic. At any rate, he came as near being a heretic as a pope can be. His heresy concerned the nature of the beatific vision after death. In a sermon on All Souls', 1331, he announced that the blessed dead do not see God until the general resurrection. In at least two more sermons he repeated this utterance. John, who was much given to theologizing, Ockam declared to be wholly ignorant in theology. This schoolman, Cesena, and others pronounced the view heretical. John imprisoned an English Dominican who preached against him, and so certain was he of his case that he sent the Franciscan general, Gerardus Odonis, to Paris to get the opinion of the university.

The King, Philip VI, took a warm interest in the subject, opposed the pope, and called a council of theologians at Vincennes to give its opinion. It decided that ever since the Lord descended into hades and released souls from that abode, the righteous have at death immediately entered upon the vision of the divine essence of the Trinity. Among the supporters of this decision was Nicolas of Lyra. When official announcement of the decision reached the pope, he summoned a council at Avignon and set before it passages from the Fathers for and against his view. They sat for five days, in December, 1333. John then made a public announcement, which was communicated to the king and queen of France, that he had not intended to say anything in conflict with the

Fathers and the orthodox Church and, if he had done so, he retracted his utterances.

The question was authoritatively settled by Benedict XII in the bull *Benedictus deus*, 1336, which declared that the blessed dead — saints, the Apostles, virgins, martyrs, confessors who need no purgatorial cleansing — are, after death and before the resurrection of their bodies at the general judgment, with Christ and the angels, and that they behold the divine essence with naked vision. Benedict declared that John died while he was preparing a decision.

The financial policy of John XXII and his successors merits a chapter by itself. Here reference may be made to John's private fortune. He has had the questionable fame of not only having amassed a larger sum than any of his predecessors, but of having died possessed of fabulous wealth. Gregorovius calls him the Midas of Avignon. According to Villani, he left behind him 18,000,000 gold florins, and 7,000,000 florins' worth of jewels and ornaments, in all 25,000,000 florins, or \$60,000,000 of our present coinage. This chronicler concludes with the remark that the words were no longer remembered which the Good Man in the Gospels spake to the disciples, "Lay up for yourselves treasure in heaven." Recent investigations seem to cast suspicion upon this long-held view as an exaggeration. John's hoard may have amounted to not more than 750,000 florins, or \$2,000,000 of our money. If this be a safe estimate, it is still true that John was a shrewd financier and perhaps the richest man in Europe.

When John died he was ninety years old.

The Papal Office Assailed.

In connection with the decline of the Papacy it is of interest to note how the Papacy was assailed. Among these assailants was a certain Marsiglius who has been called by Catholic historians the forerunner of Luther and Calvin.

To the pontificate of John XXII belongs a second group of literary assailants of the papacy. Going beyond Dante and John of Paris, they attacked the pope's spiritual functions. Their assaults were called forth by the conflict with Lewis the Bavarian and the controversy with the Franciscan Spirituals. Lewis' court became a veritable nest of antipapal agitation and the headquarters of pamphleteering. Marsiglius of Padua was the cleverest and boldest of these writers, Ockam — a Schoolman rather than a practical thinker — the most copious. Michael of Cesena and Bonagratia also made contributions to this literature.

Ockam sets forth his views in two works, *The Dialogue* and the *Eight Questions*. The former is ponderous in thought and a monster in size. It is difficult, if at times possible, to detect the author's views in the mass of cumbersome disputation. These views seem to be as follows: The papacy is not an institution which is essential to the being of the Church. Conditions arise to make it necessary to establish national

churches. The pope is not infallible. Even a legitimate pope may hold to heresy. So it was with Peter, who was judaizing, and had to be rebuked by Paul, Liberius, who was an Arian, and Leo, who was arraigned for false doctrine by Hilary of Poitiers. Sylvester II made a compact with the devil. One or the other, Nicolas III or John XXII, was a heretic, for the one contradicted the other. A general council may err just as popes have erred. So did the second Council of Lyons and the Council of Vienne, which condemned the true Minorites. The pope may be pronounced a heretic by a council or, if a council fails in its duty, the cardinals may pronounce the decision. In case the cardinals fail, the right to do so belongs to the temporal prince. Christ did not commit the faith to the pope and the hierarchy, but to the Church, and somewhere within the Church the truth is always held and preserved. Temporal power did not originally belong to the pope. This is proved by Constantine's donation, for what Constantine gave, he gave for the first time. Supreme power in temporal and spiritual things is not in a single hand. The emperor has full power by virtue of his election, and does not depend for it upon unction or coronation by the pope or any earthly confirmation of any kind.

More distinct and advanced were the utterances of Marsiglius of Padua. His writings abound in incisive thrusts against the prevailing ecclesiastical system, and lay down the principles of a new order. In the preparation of his chief work, the Defence of the Faith, — *Defensor pacis*, — he had the help of John of Jandum. Both writers were clerics, but neither of them monks. Born about 1270 in Padua, Marsiglius devoted himself to the study of medicine, and in 1312 was rector of the University of Paris. In 1325 or 1326 he betook himself to the court of Lewis the Bavarian. The reasons are left to surmisal. He acted as the emperor's physician. In 1328 he accompanied the emperor to Rome, and showed full sympathy with the measures taken to establish the emperor's authority. He joined in the ceremonies of the emperor's coronation, the deposition of John XXII and the elevation of the anti-pope, Peter of Corbara. The pope had already denounced Marsiglius and John of Jandum as "sons of perdition, the sons of Belial, those pestiferous individuals, beasts from the the abyss," and summoned the Romans to make them prisoners. Marsiglius was made vicar of Rome by the emperor, and remained true to the principles stated in his tract, even when the emperor became a suppliant to the Avignon court. Lewis even went so far as to express to John XXII his readiness to withdraw his protection from Marsiglius and the leaders of the Spirituals. Later, when his position was more hopeful, he changed his attitude and gave them his protection at Munich. But again, in his letter submitting himself to Clement VI, 1343, the emperor denied holding the errors charged against Marsiglius and John, and declared his object in retaining them at his court had been to lead them back to the Church. The Paduan died before 1343.

The personal fortunes of Marsiglius are of small historical concern compared with his book, which he dedicated to the emperor. The volume, which was written in two months, was audacious as any of the earlier writings of Luther. For originality and boldness of statement the Middle Ages has nothing superior to offer. To it may be compared in modern times Janus' attack on the doctrine of papal infallibility at the time of the Vatican Council. Its Scriptural radicalism was in itself a literary sensation.

In condemning the work, John XXII, 1327, pronounced as contrary "to apostolic truth and all law" its statements that Christ paid the stater to the Roman government as a matter of obligation, that Christ did not appoint a vicar, that an emperor has the right to depose a pope, and that the orders of the hierarchy are not of primitive origin. Marsiglius had not spared epithets in dealing with John, whom he called "the great dragon, the old serpent." Clement VI found no less than 240 heretical clauses in the book, and declared that he had never read a worse heretic than Marsiglius. The papal condemnations were reproduced by the University of Paris, which singled out for reprobation the statements that Peter is not the head of the Church, that the pope may be deposed, and that he has no right to inflict punishments without the emperor's consent.

The *Defensor pacis* was a manifesto against the spiritual as well as the temporal assumptions of the papacy and against the whole hierarchical organization of the Church. Its title is shrewdly chosen in view of the strifes between cities and states going on at the time the book was written, and due, as it claimed, to papal ambition and interference. The peace of the Christian world would never be established so long as the pope's false claims were accepted. The main positions are the following: —

The state, which was developed out of the family, exists that men may live well and peaceably. The people themselves are the source of authority, and confer the right to exercise it upon the ruler whom they select. The functions of the priesthood are spiritual and educational. Clerics are called upon to teach and to warn. In all matters of civil misdemeanor they are responsible to the civil officer as other men are. They should follow their Master by self-denial. As St. Bernard said, the pope needs not wealth or outward display to be a true successor of Peter.

The function of binding and loosing is a declarative, not a judicial, function. To God alone belongs the power to forgive sins and to punish. No bishop or priest has a right to excommunicate or interdict individual freedom without the consent of the people or its representative, the civil legislator. With these main positions of the *Defensor pacis* we will continue the next time.

H.V.

TRANSCRIPT OF SPEECH

Delivered at the annual meeting of the
Reformed Free Publishing Association

September 25, 1958, at Grand Rapids

THE STANDARD BEARER AND OUR MISSION WORK

Mr. Chairman, Beloved Brethren:

I count it a privilege to speak this evening in the interest of our *Standard Bearer* and of the R.F.P.A. I am thankful that as a member of the second generation of our churches, I may do this. You know, *The Standard Bearer* and I are equally old; we both had our birth in the year 1923. And, I say, I am thankful that we still have our *Standard Bearer*, and that I may speak in behalf of it.

The Board asked me to speak about the relation between *The Standard Bearer* and the official mission work of our Protestant Reformed Churches,—a rather big subject for a little speech of forty minutes, but I will try to touch on some fundamentals.

At the same time, I was informed that *The Standard Bearer* faces somewhat of a crisis in its existence. Probably these crises have become more or less a perennial matter. And undoubtedly the difficulty has been accentuated by the ravages of the “split” in our churches. But I want to say very candidly, after having considered some of the facts and figures concerning our magazine, that this crisis is indeed serious,—so serious, I must say, that if the present trend would continue, *The Standard Bearer* might die.

Let me add at once, however, that I am not basically pessimistic. If that were the case, I would give up and not even speak here tonight. I am confident that basically and principally our people know and love the Reformed truth. I am confident that our people know their calling to bear witness to the truth. And therefore I am confident that our people will recognize their calling to witness through our *Standard Bearer* also! Thus I am not pessimistic, but confident that if only our people are reminded of that calling, they will not allow *The Standard Bearer* to die, but will want to maintain it and see it prosper.

On these matters I want to touch, therefore, rather concretely, as I speak on:

The Standard Bearer and our Mission Work

- I. The Position of our *Standard Bearer*
- II. Its Relation to our Mission Work
- III. Our Calling to Promote *The Standard Bearer*

In order to deal properly with this subject, we must remind ourselves, first of all, of the character and position of *The Standard Bearer* from its very inception. We will not meet with anything new in this connection, but merely remind ourselves of the facts. This is necessary in order to understand the relation of *The Standard Bearer* to our mission efforts. In fact, it is the fundamental premise of all my

remarks that *The Standard Bearer* is of exactly this character, and that it must be maintained in its present position and character.

What is that character of our magazine?

The Standard Bearer purposes to be a free witness to the Reformed truth, as also the name “Reformed Free Publishing Association” indicates. The R.F.P.A. purposes to give such a free witness to the Reformed truth by publication, chiefly, of our *Standard Bearer*, as well as by other publications, such as booklets and brochures, of which it has made use often in the past.

This implies, in the first place, that the R.F.P.A. purposes to give forth a *specifically Reformed testimony*. What does this mean? Very succinctly, as our editor-in-chief expressed it once, this means that it purposes to witness concerning the covenant of the Lord our God, as He Himself realizes it through Christ Jesus our Lord, according to His sovereign good pleasure, in the way of sin and grace, along the antithetical lines of election and reprobation, and that too, in connection with the organic development of all things. In the second place, *The Standard Bearer* is a *witness*. This implies that it is distinct as to the nature of its testimony from the official ministry of the Word. *The Standard Bearer* is not a missionary, though it has sometimes been loosely referred to as such. The preaching of the Word is the task of the instituted church through its pastors and teachers. *The Standard Bearer* and the R.F.P.A., on the other hand, belong to the organism of the church. They function in virtue of the office of all believers. And this is indeed important, practically speaking. It means that *The Standard Bearer* is *yours*. It is *your* testimony. To have this magazine and its witness is *your privilege*. And to make its testimony as effective and far-reaching as possible is *your calling and responsibility*. Finally, this implies also that *The Standard Bearer* is *free*. This does not mean that it is a doctrinal freebooter. It does not imply either that it is absolutely separate from the institute of the church, that it perhaps despises the institute. That cannot be: *The Standard Bearer* is Reformed! But it does imply that our paper is not institutionally bound. It is not a church paper. It is not and cannot be hamstrung by ecclesiastical bonds and mere formal institutional bonds and directives and decisions. The church, when it becomes corrupt, cannot silence the testimony of *The Standard Bearer*. What, then, binds our magazine and prevents it from being licentious? Only one power: the love of the Reformed truth. That is, after all, greater and more powerful and more fundamental than any mere institutional bond. And that true freedom has characterized *The Standard Bearer* from its very beginning,—when the papers of the Christian Reformed Church were closed to the Revs. H. Hoeksema and H. Danhof,—down to the present day.

Let me emphasize once more: *The Standard Bearer* must be maintained in that character of a free Reformed witness. We must never be tempted to change this even though it

may at times seem attractive to convert it into an official Protestant Reformed Church magazine.

But there is another question which we must answer in order to have a complete picture of the nature of our *Standard Bearer*. It is this: with reference to whom and to what has *The Standard Bearer* purposed to witness, both within and without the circle of our churches?

In general, our magazine purposes to give testimony concerning any and all issues pertinent to the cause of the truth and to the cause of Christendom at large. And our purpose is to reach as much of Christendom as possible. In this respect the scope of our witness is unlimited. And throughout the years *The Standard Bearer*, as a survey of its past volumes will reveal, has not hesitated to let its voice be heard whenever it could serve the cause of the truth. More specifically, however, *The Standard Bearer* has purposed to witness concerning those aspects and issues of the truth that concerned Reformed believers and Reformed churches everywhere, but especially here and in the Netherlands. There are always such issues in Reformed circles. And with regard to them, whether they were doctrinal or practical, *The Standard Bearer* has ever attempted to sound a distinctively Reformed note and to shed the light of the Word of God upon them. It has done so both for the benefit of our Protestant Reformed readership and for the benefit of those people and churches immediately concerned with such issues. But still more specifically, *The Standard Bearer* has persistently given testimony concerning those issues of the truth which have arisen in Christian Reformed circles, and has purposed to reach with its witness concerning those issues not only our own people, but the Christian Reformed constituency. As is well known, especially the issues of "1924" have been the constant concern of *The Standard Bearer*.

This is according to history. It has been the history of *The Standard Bearer* from its very beginning. In fact, when *The Standard Bearer* first began to let its voice be heard, there were no Protestant Reformed Churches; its editors and publishers were still Christian Reformed, and concerned vitally about the welfare of God's Zion as represented in the Christian Reformed Churches. And ever since that time, that testimony has continued, so much so that *The Standard Bearer* has more than once been called the "voice of conscience" of the Christian Reformed Churches and of Reformed groups generally. This does not mean that our magazine has issued a purely negative witness and that it thrives on denials, as has been charged more than once. Nothing could be farther from the truth. *The Standard Bearer* has maintained and developed and promulgated the positive line of the pure Reformed truth. It has done so distinctively. It has done so with great benefit for the cause of the Reformed faith. But it has always done so, — and this is always necessary for those who would maintain the truth, — *over against all kinds of departures from that truth*. And this remains the specific calling and

undying obligation of the R.F.P.A. It must purpose to reach those persons and those groups that are departing or are in danger of departing from the pure Reformed faith. And it must touch on, must maintain and defend the truth, over against all kinds of departures, but especially over against those errors which were officially promulgated by the Christian Reformed Churches in 1924. That belongs to our history and our origin. And we cannot possibly deny that history or ignore it. To do so would be fatal! And therefore, as the late Rev. H. Danhof once wrote, using the words of Hosea 2, our calling as a Protestant Reformed people also in this organization of the R.F.P.A. is and remains: "Plead with your mother, plead: for she is not my wife, neither am I her husband: let her therefore put away her whoredoms out of her sight, and her adulteries from between her breasts."

Now what is the relation, if any, between this witness of our *Standard Bearer* and the official mission labors of our churches?

As to the nature of the question, we may notice that it views only one aspect of our *Standard Bearer*, that aspect which has to do with those who are outside the pale of our churches. The witness of our paper is certainly not only for them. By means of *The Standard Bearer* we surely intend to witness among ourselves and to ourselves, to all our Prot. Ref. people. We purpose to witness to the next generation of our churches, to our covenant young people. But now we are dealing with the witness which we purpose to give beyond the pale of our churches, to other churches and to members of other churches. And then the question is: does *The Standard Bearer* truly have a place, or does it perhaps usurp the place of missions? If it has a place, what is it? Does it give testimony entirely in separation from the testimony of our official mission work? What is the scope of its witness? What is its use, its purpose? Does it depend on our official mission work in any way? Does it stand in subordination to it? Does it serve the purpose of our mission labor? Does it perhaps accomplish anything that our mission effort cannot very well accomplish? These questions must be answered, first of all, from the point of view of principle; and then we can also make a practical survey of them.

Our answer is, in the first place, that there is no conflict, but fundamental harmony between the witness of our *Standard Bearer* and our mission labors. This cannot be different. For there is no conflict between the organic witness of the body of believers and the institutional ministry of the Word. The relation between them is fundamentally one of harmony. And if it is true, and it is true, that our *Standard Bearer* is part of that organic witness of the church, then it follows also that there is no conflict, but harmony, between *The Standard Bearer* and the official ministry of the Word whether the ministry within the church or the ministry of missions. In the second place, we may also say that both *The Standard Bearer* and the official missions of the church have the same fundamental content and purpose. They both intend to reach those who are without our churches with

the message concerning the covenant of our God, as He Himself realizes it through our Lord Jesus Christ, according to His sovereign good pleasure, in the way of sin and grace, along the antithetical lines of election and reprobation, and that too, in connection with the organic development of all things. But they differ as to source and means and way. The one is organic; the other is institutional. The one is a witness; the other is the official proclamation of the Word of God. The one makes use of the printed word; the other is the lively preaching of the Word. In the third place, we may say that there is a mutual relationship between the two. Principally, first of all, the organic witness of the church is always dependent upon the preaching of the Word by the church institute as a means of grace. This is also true of *The Standard Bearer*, so that there certainly would not even be a witness of our magazine if there were not the preaching of the Word. This does not mean that the organic witness of the church is dependent upon the particular institution of the Protestant Reformed Churches. In the abstract, it is conceivable that the Protestant Reformed Churches become corrupt, that the preaching of the Word is corrupted by them, but that the witness of our *Standard Bearer* goes on and remains pure. Nevertheless, there is a fundamental relation of dependence here. For remember: it is not some individual officebearers who preach the Word, but the *church* through the God-instituted offices. And therefore, on the one hand, when the church no more prizes the pure preaching of the Word, it will no more bear witness to the truth organically. And on the other hand, when the church organically ceases to care about bearing witness to the truth of God's Word, it will also become corrupt institutionally and will no more purely preach the Word of God. And so we may see, in the fourth place, that there is a relation of *service* between the witness of the church and its institutional mission labor. The former stands, ought to stand, in the service of the latter. And the latter makes use of, ought to capitalize upon, the testimony of the former.

How does this work out practically? How ought it to work out?

First of all, *The Standard Bearer* can surely serve as a powerful means to instruct and edify our own people. This is of prime importance. But you say: what does this have to do with mission work? My answer is: everything. For the *source* of the preaching must be kept pure and vigorous. That source is the church. And *The Standard Bearer* as a witness to the truth among ourselves and to ourselves is an outstanding medium to instruct and to inform and to edify our Protestant Reformed constituency and thus to assist in keeping the source of our official mission testimony pure and vigorous and alive.

In the second place, *The Standard Bearer* is a ready and efficient means to reach many outside the pale of our churches with the truth. Even the world recognizes the tremendous power of the printed word. And as *The Standard Bearer*

sounds its clear and continual witness to the truth as it is maintained and developed in our Prot. Reformed Churches in harmony with the Word of God and our Reformed Confessions, it can and should exert great influence, especially in Reformed circles. As such it can reach and influence other Reformed churches by its witness, staunchly defending the faith, warning against departure, sounding a distinctively Reformed note for others to hear and heed. It has done so in the past. And who can measure the influence it has exercised upon other Reformed groups, both here and in the old country? Who can tell how often and in how far it has acted in restraint of erring and liberalizing tendencies? In this connection, our paper can even be the means to prepare the way for contact and correspondence with other groups. And also in this respect I think our *Standard Bearer* has served in no little way to gain the attention and respect of others for the persistent and distinctive testimony of our Protestant Reformed Churches. Moreover, the witness of our *Standard Bearer* can certainly reach many people who could not possibly be reached by our official mission efforts. And it can reach them in a way that our official mission labors do not and cannot reach them frequently. The missionary and his word do not remain after he has left a home; *The Standard Bearer* can call regularly twice a month and can remain in the home to be read and studied and digested. And in this respect our magazine can also serve not only as an aid in preparing the way for official mission labors, as it has more than once in the past, but can, as long as it remains faithful to the truth, be used also by our missionary(ies) to aid in the propagation of the truth of God's Word. But, finally, regardless of concrete, visible, tangible results, we must witness at every possible opportunity and through every possible channel, and must let our witness reach as far as possible. This is our God-given calling. The fruits and the results are God's, and they are in His hand. And our *Standard Bearer* can certainly serve as such a witness, and can positively be a source of support and instruction and guidance and encouragement in any home where there still remains a love for the Reformed faith.

Hence, we have a calling. We are highly privileged, let me say, with a calling. That calling is that we maintain and promote the cause of our *Standard Bearer*. Never let us consider that a heavy burden, to be carried perhaps unwillingly; but let us count it a high privilege from our God!

That calling includes this, that we must use *The Standard Bearer*, as much as in us lies, as an instrument of witness to those who are outside of our churches. We must use it too in conjunction with and in support of our mission efforts. We must use it, let me add, with the support of our official mission. We must use it wherever possible!

What does this mean practically? At this juncture I must be severely critical. But my criticism will not only be negative; it will be constructive as well. And then I must say that there is much, very much, to be desired as far as our witness to those outside is concerned. There are only

265 copies of *The Standard Bearer* at present that go to persons and institutions outside of our churches. That means very plainly that our witness is not nearly as far-reaching as it should be. Many issues of our magazine that should, because of their contents, by all means reach others, are ineffective in their testimony. When criticism is offered of the doctrine and practice of others (for example, the recent criticism of the Rev. Verduin's diagnosis of the ills of Christian Reformed missions), then that criticism should not only benefit our own people, but should also reach those who are most vitally concerned. If we fail in this respect, the witness of our *Standard Bearer* fails largely. And tonight we ought to face this fact very candidly and very seriously: the witness of our *Standard Bearer* to those outside our churches has become largely ineffectual. This must be changed! There was a time when this was different. There was a time when the R.F.P.A. through *The Standard Bearer* and through brochures and booklets propagated the truth much more extensively, and reached many a home with its clear testimony and entered many a parsonage with its clarion call to the truth. That "golden age" of our R.F.P.A. and our *Standard Bearer* must be revived.

How must this be done?

First of all, I propose that the cause of *The Standard Bearer* and especially the cause of the Reformed Free Publishing Association must be brought home to the consciousness of all our people. I do not refer now merely to the reading of and subscribing to *The Standard Bearer*. In that respect we are doing rather well at present, and we have a high percentage of readership among our people. But I refer to the R.F.P.A. as an organization to witness to the truth actively. Do you know that the R.F.P.A. itself is little known and seldom thought of outside of the Grand Rapids area. There are those of our people who do not even know what those initials, "R.F.P.A.," stand for. And therefore, the primary thing is to go out among our people and revive the R.F.P.A. itself. Whether that requires the establishment of branch organizations in our other churches, or whether this can be best accomplished, for example, in the Midwest by establishing closer contact with the Society for Protestant Reformed Action (one of whose purposes was to further the cause of our *Standard Bearer*), or whether somehow we could gather a large and interested associate or sustaining membership outside the Grand Rapids area,—these details can be worked out. What I want to emphasize now is that the very idea and purpose of the R.F.P.A. must be brought home to the hearts of our people. And even if it takes a representative of the Board to go out through the country and to do this personally, the R.F.P.A. must be promoted among our people. This is the basic element of any solution.

In the second place, there must necessarily be financial support. It stands to reason that the higher the number of paid subscriptions is, the nearer *The Standard Bearer* comes to being self-sustaining. We are far from that now. But

that is not really the goal. The idea is to get *The Standard Bearer* out beyond the pale of our churches as much as possible. We must do more than pay for *The Standard Bearer* as it is at present. We must expand it and extend its witness and send it out free to many homes. To do this, we must put an end to the era of shrinking subscriptions and rising subscription fees. I grant that this trend was accentuated by the fact that in the time of the split many became unfaithful and defected from the ranks of *The Standard Bearer*. But this must be stopped. If it is not, we will put ourselves off the market. Secondly, we must take steps to get *The Standard Bearer* on a sound and steady and systematic footing financially. The economic diet of the hand-to-mouth existence of some subscription fees plus some hit-or-miss collections of uncertain amount ought to be changed, so that the Board has a steady income to work with and to expand the witness of our *Standard Bearer*. Thirdly, in this support of the R.F.P.A. our churches could and should join. An outright subsidy, in recognition of the fact that our *Standard Bearer* serves the cause of our missions, would not be amiss. Besides, we can use *The Standard Bearer* directly and distribute it in our church extension work. Why should not the Mission Board take upon itself the task of financing and distributing a few hundred free subscriptions to our magazine? This was attempted once in the past, according to a notice which I read in one of the older volumes of *The Standard Bearer*. And in our Illinois churches the local church extension committee of the two consistories there is at present busy with that very thing. This, if it is paid for at the going rate, will both spread *The Standard Bearer* and assist it financially.

Undoubtedly more suggestions can be made.

But let us get busy. At present the witness of our *Standard Bearer* is very small and growing smaller. This trend must be reversed.

The R.F.P.A., and especially its Board, must not be satisfied to "get along." As far as the regular affairs of *The Standard Bearer* are concerned, we would not really need a Board. A capable business manager could take care of them alone. But the Board must address itself vigorously to the task of the promotion and furtherance of the cause of *The Standard Bearer* and the R.F.P.A. and to the task of expanding its witness. We must go forward or we will go backward! This task will take dedicated effort, hard work, sacrifice. When you look at the results, you will perhaps often be disheartened. You will probably find sometimes that your task is a thankless one.

But if in this way we obey our calling to witness wholeheartedly, God will bless us, and God will bless our *Standard Bearer*, and God will bless its witness. Of that I am sure.

I thank you.

H.C.H.

DECENCY and ORDER

Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction

THE REPORT

(The continuation of the report of the Study Committee and Committee of Pre-Advice, Synod of 1926, freely translated)

4. The Denomination. (*Het Kerkverband*)

The *origin* of the denomination does not rest in the local church or in the consistory, but in Christ, the King of the Church. All that belongs to the church is of Christ. The denomination is not a thing of choice or utility but is established for Christ through His apostles as is evident from Acts 15 and, therefore, has its origin in the will of the King of the Church. Neither is this added to the church from without but is a manifestation of the unity of the body of Christ inasfar as this is possible in this time (bedeeling). Besides, what is called by Voetius "*Jus positivum divinum*" we may speak of the "*free assent*" (*liber consensus*) but this freedom has to reckon with the positive law of God.

The denomination follows necessarily from this that Christ is the sole King of the Church. He is not first King of the local church and by that King of all the local churches together. But He is King of the Church in her entirety, as a unity, and as such, by this is King of each local church. The denomination is not something non-essential for that would presuppose that each local church exists wholly by itself and stands disengaged from all other churches. Yet from Scripture and the history of the origin of the local church, it is plain that the denomination actually exists from the beginning.

Bavinck says, "The catholic (algemeen) church is there first. She has her origin in Christ and in the days of the New Testament came first to manifestation in the church at Jerusalem, and then broadened out from there to other places. Already by virtue of her origin the local church stands in inseparable relation to the denomination. For no one church arises instinctively (*autochthonish*) out of unconsciousness but is planted through the seed of the Word which another church has sown in that place. Contemporaneously, therefore, each local church is an independent manifestation of the body of Christ and a part of the larger whole; a separately existent church that stands spiritually and historically related to the catholic (algemeen) church." (Dogmatiek, 2de Ed., IV, Pg. 407). The denomination exists from within. It is in official, institutional form the manifestation of that which is invisible and has real existence.

All Reformers acknowledge that the denomination is established by Christ. The acknowledgment of the denomination, so as by the consistory, is naturally a voluntary deed. Yet, this does not mean that the denomination has its origin

in the will of the local church or of the consistory. It alone denies that it is founded from without and by coercion. And it asserts that the local church and consistory take it up in obedience to the King of the church and therein will live and act in unity with other local churches.

5. The Relation of the Consistory and the Classis.

(a) Our Church Order in Article 41 states that the Classical Meetings shall consist of neighboring churches. This, according to Article 33 and the content of the credential-letter, is not meant so that the church, apart from the consistory, delegates special representatives of the church to the Classis. The credential-letter is signed by those who send the delegates and this is done by the Consistory. (Art. 33) Thus the delegates, as representatives of the Consistory and thereby of the church, come together in Classical gathering. They come there in the capacity of office bearers. Otherwise they would have no right to act officially in the meeting of the Classis. From this it follows that a Classical meeting is a gathering of office bearers who, as servants of Christ the King, may decide in all matters that, by common agreement, stipulated in the Church Order, belong to the domain of the Classis.

(b) There is yet something else that must be considered here. From the unity of the Kingship of Christ over the church follows not only the unity of the local churches but also the unity of the ruling authority, the unity of the office-bearers of all the local churches. As a unity, this authority over the local churches is not, as Rome contends, given to individual persons (bishop and pope) but rests in the offices of the local church. There rests in the offices a common official element by which all the office bearers together can rule over the local churches as one in all cases that belong to the churches as a whole and also in cases of each local church which cannot be disposed of by her consistory. In the offices of all local churches there is thus an authority that extends beyond the scope of the local church.

This is also plain from the Church Order. In Article 79 it is stated that a consistory alone may depose an elder or deacon. This must be done with official cooperation of a neighboring consistory. This proceeds from the idea that the office bearers of the neighboring consistory, by virtue of their office, have the right to resolve official cases in another church with her consistory. The neighboring consistory must be petitioned but the office bearers of the neighboring consistory do not receive that right by virtue of this petition. If this right did not reside in their office, they might not be requested to also rule in official matters in another church. They could only be sought to give advice, nothing more.

In the same 79th Article it is stated that a double consistory may not depose a minister. The Classis alone may do this. Thus here is given to a gathering of office bearers out of a number of local churches the right to depose a

minister (office bearer) of a local church. This proceeds from the thought that this right is placed by Christ in the office of the local church and therewith in the Classis. If this were not so the Classis might not exercise this power for the Classis has no other or higher power than that of the office bearers of the local churches. All that the Classis decides, she decides in the name of the King of the Church, an authority received by virtue of Him.

By virtue of this common element in the office of the local church, the office bearers, gathered in Classis, can make decisions that are binding for all the local churches and consistories that are represented in the gathering (Art. 31, D.K.O.) and the Classis can have jurisdiction (*zeggenſchap, auctoritas, gezag*) over the local churches and consistories (D.K.O. Art. 36).

In this way does the unity of the power and of the rule of Christ as King of the church come to manifestation in the unity of His office bearers as a one-ness inasfar as this is possible in this time (bedeeling). And by this all hierarchy, collegialism and independentism become excluded.

(c) From the preceding the answer to the question, *Can a Classis Depose A Consistory?*, can be stated. Naturally a consistory is meant here in which all the office-bearers depart (*afwijken*) in doctrine or life or both; over whom an ecclesiastical process is conducted; office-bearers, therefore, who will not submit themselves to the decision and are hardened in their departure. They are guilty of official misdeeds for which, according to the church order, they must be deposed.

Who must do that? The congregation cannot carry out that decision because she is no official body and cannot administer discipline. This consistory herself naturally also cannot carry out this decision of the Classis to depose. If the Classis may not do it, it cannot be done. Then we have here a discipline case (the deposition) that cannot be executed.

If to a Classis is reckoned alone the right to *decide*, that is, to pronounce a *judgment* of deposition, then a difficulty arises with its execution.

Whenever in a consistory the *minority* of the office bearers depart in doctrine or life, and a double consistory cannot arrive at agreement, the Classis must then make a decision (Art. 79). And then the consistory carries out this decision. The Classis itself does not do it because the Consistory is the ruling power of the local church and the classis may not do what the consistory by reason of its own power can and may do. Yet, what shall be the procedure if the majority of the office bearers depart? The holding of a double consistory is, in this case, virtually excluded. The majority will not want to direct a request to the neighboring consistory and the minority *may not* do it because then the neighboring consistory would decide alone in such an important matter in another church in conflict with Art. 84, D.K.O. Suppose now that the Classis decides to excommunicate. Must she leave the deposition in the local church

to the remaining faithful minority of elders? If the principle that lies at the basis of Article 79 is assumed, namely, that the Classis has the right to pass the final verdict whether an office bearer shall retain his office, by this then the Classis is given the right to deal with an official matter of a local church. And for this the Classis must have official power (*recht*). And if it be acknowledged that the Classis has the official right to depose office bearers in such a case in a local church, why then haven't they the right to do this alone if all the office bearers should be deposed?

One other point is closely related here. If the Classis has no right to depose all the office bearers (consistory) because this is an encroachment upon the power and independence of the consistory, then such a departing consistory, also after the condemnation by the Classis, remains in office and is officially the lawful ruling power of the local church. The difficulty is that only some of the members of the congregation are agreed with the consistory which is condemned by the Classis. The congregation itself cannot depose the Consistory because that is an act of discipline and the congregation has no right to administer discipline. May the congregation withdraw herself from that consistory? On what grounds? The consistory is yet the lawful ruling power of the church. She is not deposed. In a Reformed Church a congregation may not withdraw itself from a consistory unless it has rightly ceased to be a consistory. Besides this withdrawing is only a negative act that brings no change in the official status of the consistory and for this reason cannot depose it from the office. In a false church, with a false association (*kerkverband*) and ruling arrangement (*bestuursinrichting*) the believers can withdraw themselves from the consistory and separate themselves from that church. But this is here not the case. Here is a Christian Reformed Church in denomination with the Christian Reformed Church and remains there. Her consistory is not deposed. They have officially no ground to withdraw from it. If the condemnation of the consistory by the Classis must be carried out through the consistory, then this shall first be possible only through a new consistory since the existing consistory will not do it. But the election of new office bearers is officially unlawful, for as long as the decision of the Classis is not carried out, the existing consistory remains lawfully in office.

(to be continued)

G.V.D.B.

Eastern Ladies' League

The Eastern Ladies' League will have their Fall meeting, D.V., on October 23 at Southwest Protestant Reformed Church. Rev. B. Woudenberg chose to speak on the topic, "Television in the home."

We invite all ladies to come, that we may enjoy an evening of Christian fellowship together.

Mrs. H. Velthouse, Vice Secretary

ALL AROUND US

Introducing "The First Orthodox Protestant Reformed Church."

Such is the title of an article appearing in the September 15, 1958 issue of *The Presbyterian Guardian*, and written by Carl J. Reitsma, minister of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church of West Collingswood, N. J.

A "Foreword" precedes the article, evidently written by the editor of the *Guardian*, which explains the purpose and nature of the article written by the Rev. Reitsma. The "Foreword" reads as follows:

"The 1958 General Assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church instructed its Committee on Correspondence with other Churches to undertake conversations leading to closer relations with that denomination of which the First Orthodox Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids is a member. The following brief article by the Rev. Carl J. Reitsma of West Collingswood, is designed to provide information concerning this denomination. Our fellowship with it is of special interest inasmuch as it has taken an interest also in our work, through contributing to the support of our foreign mission endeavor."

Now follows the article of Rev. Reitsma:

"The recent General Assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church instructed its Committee on Correspondence with other Churches to seek to develop closer relationships with the Protestant Reformed Church identified with the Rev. Hubert De Wolf. The Assembly action takes account of increasing cooperation between the two denominations.

"The Protestant Reformed Church originated in 1924 as a secession from the Christian Reformed Church in protest to the deposition of the Rev. Herman Hoeksema and others from the Christian Reformed ministry. Mr. Hoeksema failed to subscribe to 'Common Grace' insisting that the doctrine was Arminian and amounted to an open invitation to 'worldly-mindedness.' The denomination rallied to a membership of 6000 distributed in twenty-four congregations throughout the United States. The members were almost all of Holland descent and in some churches one Dutch worship service is still being conducted.

"The extraordinary abilities of Mr. Hoeksema may be seen in that while he was the pastor of the 1200 communicant member congregation in Grand Rapids, Michigan, he simultaneously established and conducted his own theological seminary, denominational magazine, *The Standard Bearer*, and kept a steady flow of devotional books running through the presses of Eerdmans Publishing Company. As a pulpiteer he held his flock in the grip of his text with sharp exegesis, sound logic and rich personal application. His flashing eyes refused to let the listener go, and his pauses were so perfectly timed that they would eat holes in your soul as you neared the breathless climax of an hour-long message. He was my pastor for twenty years and I find it

hard to criticize so learned a teacher and so warm a friend.

"As the years passed, however, the anti-common-grace thinking drifted more and more into hyper-Calvinism. Divine election became an intellectual hobby with the people, and one heard little else. Piety was regarded as though it were Baptistic. The spiritual life of the church was at a standstill as the church sank deeper and deeper into vain speculations about the counsel of God. Faith, it was emphasized, is the *means* for the obtaining of salvation but not the *condition* of salvation. The church became so afraid of attributing any part of salvation to man that they even took the challenge out of faith.

"By this time there were some in the church who were awakening to the danger of passive Christianity and insisted that we 'must believe' and that we 'must obey.' To bring these into line the Hoeksema element succeeded in getting a 'Declaration of Principles' passed by the Synod in 1951 in which 'unconditional theology' was fixed as the doctrine of the Protestant Reformed Church.

"Two years later, in 1953, the Protestant Reformed Church was brought a point of decision by the Lord. The large Grand Rapids congregation by this time had three associate pastors, Mr. Hoeksema, the Rev. Cornelius Hanko and Mr. De Wolf. De Wolf in a sermon made two statements for which he and one half of the consistory which supported him were suspended. The statements were, first, 'God promises to every one of you that, if you believe, you shall be saved,' and the second, 'Our act of conversion is a prerequisite to enter into the kingdom of heaven.' The rift quickly spread through the congregation and then through the denomination, and litigation, which is still in progress, followed for the properties. The denomination was divided in half with seventeen churches, sixteen ministers and a total membership of 3300 siding with De Wolf.

"During the last five years the Protestant Reformed Church associated with Mr. De Wolf has reviewed its doctrines, rejected the 'Declaration of Principles,' returned to the simple Gospel, and has re-discovered the challenge of world missions. There is a passion for evangelism in these churches and a strong desire to make up for lost time. The Rev. John Galbraith was introduced to these brethren, spoke at a specially called missionary meeting and was enthusiastically received. It seemed to them that a whole new world of blessed opportunity was opening to them.

"Quickly the Lord provided them with a field and a messenger. The Rev. Edwin L. Wade was introduced to the Protestant Reformed Church and an agreement was reached whereby Mr. Wade would continue to be a ministerial member of the Presbytery of California of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church but loaned to the Prot. Reformed Church for missionary service on Guam in the interest of establishing an indigenous Reformed Church. Mr. Wade sailed for Guam in December 1956 for a two year term of service. At the 1958 Synod of the Protestant Reformed Church this relationship was extended for three more years.

"While this was being done by the denomination, the Second Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids volunteered to support the Rev. Donald H. Taws and family in Eritrea to the amount of \$250 per month for at least a year. This church has 176 communicant members. The Rev. John Blankespoor is its pastor.

"As our Committee begins its work let us pray that God will bless these deliberations, for we know that cooperation in the work of the Lord rests upon the foundation of scriptural agreement."

In respect to what Reitsma writes concerning the person and character of the Rev. Hoeksema as a pulpiter we find most disgusting. His words spread smooth as butter, but are as biting as salt in an open wound. Mind you, Reitsma is speaking of a preacher and pastor who with "sharp exegesis, sound logic and rich personal application" ate holes in his soul for some twenty years with his sound expository preaching, whom Reitsma still considers a "learned teacher" and "so warm a friend," yet, he is going to criticize him. Must not one be utterly beside himself to contradict a teacher who for twenty years convicted him with sharp exegesis, sound logic, and rich personal application of the truth of God's Word? Isn't it most illogical to criticize sound logic and throw it overboard? I see no hope for the man who is convinced with sound logic and then turns away from it. Or, does Mr. Reitsma mean to tell us that the Rev. Hoeksema has now changed and departed from that sharp exegesis, sound logic, and rich personal application with which he so effectively preached to Mr. Reitsma for twenty years? The rest of his article leads to the conclusion that his answer to the last question is affirmative. He ought to know better, of course. Doesn't Mr. Reitsma know that when he so writes about Rev. Hoeksema that he at the same time reflects on the sound judgment of others who look at Hoeksema quite differently, men like Mr. William Eerdmans, for example, who publishes Hoeksema's books? If Mr. Eerdmans reads these comments, and I'm quite sure he does, he will sit back in his office chair and laugh, saying, "Who is that peanut over there in West Collingswood who claims he was a student of Hoeksema for twenty years and is now going to criticize his doctrine and teachings as having changed?" Surely, on the basis of Mr. Reitsma's commentary on Hoeksema, Mr. Eerdmans must be beside himself to now prepare for publication Hoeksema's Dogmatics, the very Dogmatics he taught Reitsma while he attended the seminary of the Protestant Reformed Churches. Nobody in his right mind believes that Hoeksema has changed in his sharp exegesis, sound logic, and rich personal application. Indeed, what Reitsma writes about Hoeksema is most disgusting, and a very evil thing.

And it is also very difficult for us to be gracious in reply to Reitsma's vicious attack on those who still love Hoeksema's sharp exegesis, sound logic, and rich personal application of the Word of God. It is the more difficult because we know that Rev. Reitsma, who was practically born and

raised under our doctrine, knows he has told nothing but a blatant falsehood when he so described us in his article.

Notice the accusations he raises against us. We are hyper-Calvinists. We make divine election an intellectual hobby. We are really impious. Our spiritual life is at a standstill. We vainly speculate about the counsel of God. We have a passive Christianity.

We deny that any of these accusations are true. Rev. Reitsma cannot prove any of them to be true, and I challenge him to do so. What is true is that these accusations are the salve wherewith he smooths his troubled conscience for having left our churches where he claims for some twenty years the preaching and instruction he received ate holes in his soul.

What is true is that we adopted "The Declaration of Principles," that we do not believe that faith is a condition to salvation. It is true that we have learned to become suspicious of those who always insist on "must believe" and "must obey." This latter is especially true when they at the same time subscribe to the two statements of De Wolf, "God promises to everyone of you that, if you believe, you shall be saved," and "Our act of conversion is a prerequisite to enter the kingdom of heaven."

But does that make us to be hyper-Calvinists, given to a passive Christianity? Does that cause us to have no respect for piety, and bring our spiritual life to a standstill? Reitsma knows better. We say once more, it is difficult indeed to give a gracious reply to one who writes as Reitsma does in the *Presbyterian Guardian* about our churches. And I would warn the editorial staff of the *Guardian* that before they publish anymore lies about us they had better ask for a conference with us to really find out what we believe and teach.

What Reitsma writes about the group which subscribes to the heresy of De Wolf is quite true. It is true that as soon as they left us they repudiated "The Declaration of Principles." It is true that as soon as they left us they suddenly became filled with a passion for evangelism and missions, and as Reitsma says, had "a strong desire to make up for lost time." It is also true that they immediately set in motion the machinery that would bring them back into the Christian Reformed Church and strike up association with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. Then it was that they were caught up in the ecumenical movement of our time that attempts unity regardless of doctrinal distinction. Oh, yes, as soon as they left us they began throwing overboard the doctrinal position they defended among us for some thirty years as ministers and missionaries. They rejected the doctrines which clearly assert that salvation is of the Lord from beginning to end and there is no work of man in it whatsoever. But let no one think that these people remained distinctly Protestant Reformed when they so acted. The very name "Orthodox Protestant Reformed Church" is a misnomer. They are neither Orthodox, nor Protestant Reformed.

M.S.

QUESTION HOUR

Held after Address at Hull Mass Meeting

July, 1953

Questioner: Rev. H. C. Hoeksema*Answers by:* Rev. H. Hoeksema

Question: Why was the Rev. H. De Wolf's public explanation-apology related to the two-statement heresy charge against him not found acceptable to that part of the First Prot. Ref. Church Consistory headed by the Rev. H. Hoeksema?

Answer: Let me say, in the first place, that there is no part of the Consistory that is headed by the Rev. H. Hoeksema. That's not so. We had in our Consistory three pastors, the Rev. Hanko, the Rev. De Wolf, and myself. I was not heading the Consistory. Besides, I'm not heading a part of the Consistory. I'm president, together with the Rev. Hanko, — and I was president with the Rev. De Wolf, — of the whole consistory. The consistory that deposed the elders did so according to the advice of the classis, as I explained. Why the apology was not acceptable to the consistory, I think I have explained too. The apology I read here. And the apology as I read here I explained. It was no apology, except that the Rev. De Wolf, instead of apologizing for the literally heretical statements, as the classis said, apologized really for those that misinterpreted the statements. That's what he did. He did not apologize for himself, but apologized for the fact that we misinterpreted the statements. And we deny that we misinterpreted them. We could understand them clearly. We did not misinterpret the statements. Besides, in the connection they were very bad. And therefore, we could not accept that apology.

Question: Here are two related questions, and one question to the Chair. No. 1: Do all ministers who do not agree church politically with your stand want a conditional theology mixed in with their sovereign grace preaching, for which they always stood fast? No. 2: Must I consider each and every one in our churches who does not rally around your standard in this case a heretic? The third question I'll give here yet: Will the chair please ask the questioners if they are satisfied with the answers given?

Chairman, answering third question: As has been announced, there will be no questions on questions tonight. The meeting would become endless. If, however, it appears that there is need for more information, I can assure you in behalf of our committee that we're willing to call another meeting of this nature at any time. And if the necessity arises, we will. Now, however, we'll abide by the rules announced in our letters, that all questions will be collected at once, and answered. The other two questions I'll turn over to our speaker. (Questions repeated).

Answers to 1 and 2: I don't know whether I understand that question, but I think I do. They mean to say that if they disagree with the action taken legally by our Consistory, and, of course, by our Classis, — if they disagree with that, do they necessarily mix in with their preaching of sovereign grace a conditional theology. My answer is no, simply no. That doesn't follow. I don't think that follows. It does not follow from a church political conception that one must have a conditional theology. That isn't so. One can very well disagree with the one, and still proclaim the other. Only, you must not forget that in that case the one that so stands should bring his protest, and that should be cleared up. You know, it has been said, — let me explain that a minute yet, — it has been said that our Consistory did wrong. And even the Fourth Consistory doubted whether we had the right to suspend and depose elders, or officebearers, in their absence. Let me say, in the first place, that there is nothing in the whole church order that demands that any officebearer must be present when he is deposed or suspended. In the second place, let me quote to you all kinds of examples where that has been done by the church in the past. The famous Synod of Dordrecht deposed Arminian officebearers, Arminian ministers, by the hundreds. Without their being present. Opinion has differed about that, but nevertheless, that's a famous historical example. The Synod of Dordrecht deposed ministers by the hundreds without their being present. In our own history, the Synod of 1922 deposed Prof. Janssen without his being present. In the old country, they deposed in 1926 Dr. Geelkerken without his being present. And at the latest actions of the Synod of 1939 to 1946, in general, several officebearers were deposed. We may disagree on the question whether a classis or synod can depose an officebearer. But certainly, it cannot be maintained on the basis of the Church Order that an officebearer must be present if he is to be suspended or deposed. That is my answer. But, I say once more, a church political theory does not necessarily involve a conditional theology and the deprecation of the doctrine of sovereign grace.

(Second question repeated).

Answer: I don't like the formulation of that question. It's not a question whether anyone rallies around my standard. No, sir. That's not the question, not the question at all. The question is: whether anyone rallies and, not rallies, but stands on the basis of the Three Forms of Unity and the Scriptures, and, the Three Forms of Unity as they have always been maintained and explained in the Prot. Ref. Churches. That's different. You don't have to rally around my standard. That would be awful. I don't even want you to rally around my standard. I'm a sinful man. I'm a fallible man. And I'm going to die pretty soon. What are you going to do then? There's only one thing that remains for you and for me. That's the truth. The truth as we as Prot. Ref. Churches have maintained since 1924. If you don't rally around that, yes, you're a heretic. No question about it. Then

you must be considered a heretic. If we don't maintain or preach or teach the doctrine of our confessions and of the Scriptures as they have been maintained in the Prot. Ref. Churches for all these years, you must not stay with us. You're not only a heretic if you do, but you're a hypocrite. A hypocrite too. Don't stay with us. There are plenty other churches. Go to the Christian Reformed Church. Go anywhere else. But do not corrupt our Prot. Ref. truth, please. Leave us. In 1924, when we were cast out, I preached on the text, "Will ye not also go away." I preached that again in this connection, on that same text I preached in the Chr. High School. Without malice, without any malice to anyone, I say to you: if you don't believe in the Prot. Ref. truth, which certainly is not expressed in the sentence, "God promises to everyone of you salvation if you believe," leave us. We're not angry at you. We're not mad at you when you don't agree with us. If you cannot agree with us, leave our churches. But don't stay and corrupt our churches in the meantime. That is hypocritical. I thank you.

Question: Several questions on this sheet. The first is: How is it possible to depose an elder that has been in office less than 48 hours?

Answer: I've explained that already. The fact is that that elder was installed, and should not have voted on a thing that he didn't know anything about, — at least, he should not have known anything about it. But he did nevertheless. He voted against the Classis, and against the decision of the consistory on June 1. He voted against the question whether the question of apology should be asked of the minister and of the elders. And therefore, with the elders he was worthy of deposition. I can't help that, that he was in office only 24 hours. I tried to prevent that, as you have understood. I tried to prevent him from being installed in the office, because I claimed that he couldn't possibly serve in this case. But they wanted him.

Question: The second is this: Is every use of the word *condition* in theology necessarily Arminian?

Answer: That all depends what you mean by condition. If you mean by condition, condition in distinction from state, the word condition is perfectly in order any time. I can speak of the condition of my heart, as I can speak of the condition of my body. But when I say, use the term condition as a prerequisite, as something which man must fulfill at all, — and that's the meaning, — the word is heretical. Of course, you must not forget: in this case, and in my talk, I purposely did not enter into the broad question of "conditions." I did not. I can. But I won't. That would take me at least another 2 hours. And I can't keep you till morning. But I'm willing to do it anytime, if you ask me to come back and have a speech on the term *condition* in Reformed theology. That's something else.

Chairman: We might do that sometime.

(to be continued)

CONTRIBUTIONS

Missionary Notes

Occasionally I am asked by members of the Protestant Reformed Churches the point-blank question: is there a church political ground for the Forbes-Isabel churches to "withdraw" from the Eureka Classis? And the second question is: if any, what is the doctrinal reason for leaving the Eureka Classis?

Eureka Classis has just met this summer in their "48th Annual Session" at Eureka, South Dakota, although they were incorporated as a corporate entity as late as 1928 under the Statutes of the State of North Dakota, having their "residence" at Ashley, North Dakota.

Due to my close contact with Rev. Mensch and the Isabel congregation during the past few years, and being intimately acquainted with the recent history of the Isabel-Forbes churches during the past few years, being even an eye- and ear-witness of several "sessions" of the Eureka Classis, I can write the following in good conscience:

1. That although Eureka Classis, in its Constitution, recognizes four ecclesiastical bodies, to wit: Consistory, Classis, particular Synod, general Synod, in practice these churches do not have all these church bodies (assemblies) as their very name suggests, and as is evident from their very articles of Incorporation. It is simply a fact that the larger body of which Eureka Classis used to be a part, namely, the Northwest Synod of the Reformed Church, U.S.A. is not extinct as a denominational entity. Eureka Classis is really a remnant Classis, a fragment of the once larger denomination. This is not said disparagingly but factually.

2. Eureka Classis does not conceive herself to be a discontinued "Classis" at the end of each gathering, but considers the Classis somewhat as an institution of office-bearers in the church. Hence, they do not designate themselves to be the Classis of 1958, but rather they had the "48th Session of Eureka Classis." It is a kind of super-consistory! It is the only appellate body in those churches. Rightly or wrongly there is no possibility of seeking redress from the decision of this body. They are the sole court of redress.

3. The *members* of this Classis (a corporate body with the State) are not simply those who come with a credential from their own consistory and congregation, showing that they have been duly delegated by such a consistory, and, therefore, members of a particular Classis, (as Protestant Reformed Churches conceive of a Classis) but ministers too, even though they have for many years not even been in office in a local congregation or charge, having been duly and properly installed in their local church. Also it has often and rather commonly occurred that a minister does not even serve a church, resorting in the Classis, but that he is still a member of the Classis. One sees here a conception of

doubtful Reformed Church polity. Such ministers straddle the fence between Eureka Classis and E. and R. Church, often leaving the sheep in the Classis itself without a shepherd! And these ministers serve on committees, permanent committees bedecked with such awe-inspiring names as "judicial committee," and in these committees they do not merely have an "advisory vote" but they cast a deciding vote. Thus it happens, sad to say, that such ministers toot the loudest horn and exercise dominion over ministers in the Classis with a bonafied standing, properly installed in a congregation. The danger is more than imaginary that such ministers, consciously or unconsciously, form the ruling oligarchy, cracking the ecclesiastical whip. In such a set-up a rule by men, not according to Christ's ordinances, is inevitable.

4. Since Eureka Classis meets (has a "Session"!) but once a year, it stands to reason that expediency dictates, that, in the interim between these "Sessions," the Classis function through Committees. There is one such committee which often virtually arrogates to itself the prerogative of being a "Classis Contractum," a small Classis, and that, too, in rather important and far-reaching matters. That Committee is the "Executive Committee," rather fondly called by the president of the Committee, Rev. E. Bosma, "the Executive."

5. It was especially this Executive Committee that made itself particularly obnoxious to the brethren and sisters of the Forbes Church and the congregation here at Forbes with its Consistory. They felt the impact very painfully of this "boardism" of the Executive Committee. Precedent simply becomes rule. It is then right because it was done before. First we act and then investigate, when the damage is done, whether it was Constitutional and Scriptural.* Thus the brethren and sisters experienced the dealings of this Executive Committee in putting Rev. H. Mensch out of office on November 28, 1956 at Leola, South Dakota. Without a hearing, simply by stating the facts slantedly, the Executive Committee gave its version of the facts in the case, and sent a circular letter to the "members of Classis" (also ministers out of office and not in the Classis) and if no dissenting vote came, this committee simply issued a decretal that Rev. Mensch was no longer in office! A trial without hearing by a correspondence course. And that in flagrant transgression of the "limiting clause," limiting the cases in which this Committee can act, in Article 95 of the *Constitution of the Reformed Church in U.S.* According to this Article, as plain common Christian sense should even dictate, the Executive Committee can execute matters of a routine nature, except "in all cases when between parties concerned there is no question at issue." Now there was an "issue" between Rev. Mensch and the Consistory of Leola.

6. The "Spiritual Council" (elders and minister) of Isabel challenged this assumed authority of the committee and desired, according to Article 131 of the Constitution to institute an inquiry into these matters which had come to

them by the "circular letter" of the Executive Committee, and by means of a counter-circular letter of Rev. Mensch. Rev. Mensch was at this time also the duly installed minister of Isabel. To be ousted by the Committee out of Leola did not change the status of Rev. Mensch in Isabel. It would be the duty of the "Spiritual Council" to try this case in their judicatory. However, when asked for the record and minutes, the Executive Committee hedged and obstructed! They preferred to work, keeping the Consistory of Isabel and also Rev. Mensch in the dark. Hence, they first told the Consistory in a high-handed way that the Consistory's meeting was illegal since a deacon had presided at the meeting. (Meetings in Leola were legal even though meetings were held, prior to Rev. Mensch's ousting from office, not merely in his absence, but without his knowledge!) When the Consistory of Isabel gave full measure later, held another meeting, under such cracking of the whip by the "Executive," the Consistory was told that it was none of their concern what was happening to Rev. Mensch in Leola! (See letters of Dec. 17, 1956 and Jan. 16, 1957, from Executive).

7. After being given the high-handed run-around by this "Executive," the Consistory waited to see whether Classis would enter into its protest against all of this. Classis met in "executive session" and approved of Rev. Mensch's being deposed from office. I doubt whether Rev. Mensch himself ever received a verbatim copy of the decisions. Being thoroughly convinced that Eureka Classis was not interested in truth and righteousness, but subscribed tacitly, at least, to this boardism, the rule of an oligarchy, they informed Classis that Classis had lost its usefulness and purpose of Christ for them, and that they irrevocably severed relationships with them! Even this letter would not have been sent by the Committee to the members of Classis verbatim. Fearing this the Consistory sent a mimeographed letter to all the members of Classis. This was branded publicly by the "Executive" as being "sinister" on the part of the Isabel consistory!

The Isabel people smile a bit when they read the report of the "Executives" president in the "Acts of Classis, 1958" which is as follows: "The Hope Church of Isabel, having received substantial aid from Classis in the past, which could no more be granted, informed Classis that it resolved to withdraw from membership in Classis."

It is difficult to believe that Rev. E. Bosma did not consciously write this, knowing that he was not speaking all the truth, and that what he did write is not wholly true. At least we may believe that the letter, written by Isabel, was so lucid that intellectual honesty need not be called in question, because of lack of clarity on the part of Isabel's missive!

G.L.

* Classis Eureka has in its last Session appointed a Committee designated "Interpretation of Art. 95." As far as Rev. Mensch is concerned a rather meaningless gesture. However, the undersigned has good and solid reasons to believe that more ministers in Eureka Classis see the hang-man's rope, when a mere Committee can set aside an explicit stipulation and depose a minister by correspondence course.

NEWS FROM OUR CHURCHES

"All the saints salute thee . . ." PHIL. 4:21

The R.F.P.A. (Standard Bearer) met in annual session Sept. 25 at First church. The brethren R. Bloem, D. Engelsma and C. Kregel were elected to serve on the board. The high light of the evening was a speech by the Rev. H. C. Hoeksema. The Reverend challenged the members and the board to renewed zeal for their mission—the witness of *The Standard Bearer* in the church world. The constructive criticism offered by the speaker will serve as an excellent guide to the board in the coming year.

Sunday, Sept. 28, the young people in the Grand Rapids area, under the sponsorship of the *Beacon Lights* staff, held the first hymn sing of the season. Ed Ophoff led a capacity crowd in spirited singing. A tenor solo and a musical number added variety to the program.

An Office Bearer's Conference was enjoyed by about thirty men in First Church, Sept. 30. The Rev. B. Woudenberg introduced the subject, "The Calling And Duty Of Office Bearers In Sick Visitation." The Reverend then led the men in a lively discussion of the various aspects of this manifestation of the communion of saints. Meetings of this nature surely are beneficial to the elders and deacons in attendance, and therefore to the whole church.

The Deacons' Conference scheduled for Oct. 2 was postponed until the 16th of this month.

South Holland presents us with some real news. Their church is becoming too small for their congregation, and they have unanimously decided to purchase two acres from their School Society for a future site for a church and parsonage. The land in question adjoins their present property to the south, and seems to be the only land available in that locale. When this deal is completed with the School Society they will have a good start towards a new church building. This activity in South Holland reveals the zeal with which they are endued and the confidence they have in the future.

From far off Lynden we learn that the adults in the congregation meet in Bible Class Wednesday evenings, and are currently studying the third chapter of the book of Genesis. The Rev. Harbach was absent from his pulpit three weeks in September. Classical appointments called him to Loveland and Pella. The Reverend writes that the members of our newest congregation consist of real Reformed brethren and sisters in the Lord. Their famed German hospitality was displayed in family gatherings, mountain trips, visits in the alfalfa fields, farmyard baseball, and fine German food. These classical appointments coincided with the meeting of Classis West held in Oak Lawn.

Kalamazoo's societies and Sunday School have opened for a new season, some of the meetings being held in the parsonage at 1226 Pinehurst.

Southeast (formerly Fourth) has two servicemen, Homer Teitsma and John Hendricks. The young men in the church take turns writing the boys each week. Already \$10,380.00 was pledged towards their building fund and the committee will soon have detailed plans for immediate building.

In Holland an inspirational meeting was held for all the members of the various societies in the church. Rev. G. Vos spoke to them on the subject, "The Benefits Of Society Life." A meeting of this type is certainly a good send-off to a fruitful society season.

Edgerton has also purchased lots for a future church building and parsonage. The spirit of this congregation is excellent, and they live in the conviction that the Lord has called them as a Protestant Reformed Church to uphold the banner of His sovereign grace and love.

Randolph's church activities are in full swing. Rev. Emanuel is conducting a pre-confession class with eight members.

Doon has again organized a choral society which meets every Thursday. With Sunday evenings for society and another evening for catechism the young people are kept busy three nights a week.

Hull also has a choral society and is preparing a Christmas program. The Rev. Heys addressed a meeting of the Society for Prot. Ref. Action held in Doon, Sept. 26. His topic was, "The Christian And His Conscience." At this meeting the following were elected to the board, Rev. Van Baren, J. Blankenspoor, G. Gunnink and B. Bleyenbergh.

Oak Lawn's societies and catechism have started, and Rev. Vanden Berg has instituted a pre-school catechism class which meets on Sundays.

Hudsonville's bulletin reveals that Rev. Vos alternates his catechism sermons morning and evening. The alternate sermons are currently occupied with the Psalms.

Creston's children are busy on a paper drive for Hope school. Besides his regular duties, the Rev. Woudenberg teaches in our seminary, and is one of the editors of *The Standard Bearer*.

Loveland has nominated a trio from which they will elect a minister whom they will call to labor in their midst. The trio consists of Rev. E. Emanuel, J. Heys and H. Kuiper. The congregational meeting has been called for Oct. 13.

And now the news for which you have been looking: Rev. Ophoff is still showing continual improvement, and at this date (Oct. 4) it gives promise to an early discharge from the hospital. Rev. and Mrs. Ophoff have moved to a new address, 1126 Eastern Ave., S. E., Grand Rapids 7, Mich.

. . . see you in church.

J.M.F.

REPORT OF CLASSIS EAST

October 1, 1958

First Church — Grand Rapids, Mich.

The Rev. J. A. McCollam led in opening devotions. The credentials showed all churches represented by a minister and an elder delegate.

After the classis was declared constituted, the Rev. A. Mulder of Kalamazoo presided for the first time, and in our judgment did a good job.

The chairman appointed elders W. Kamps and R. De Young, Sr. to serve as finance committee, which committee reported later the expenses of this meeting of classis.

Routine reports of the Stated Clerk and Classical Committee were read and accepted.

The two main issues before this classis were the tabled matter re the overture of Hope Church re the proposed Conscientious Objector's Charity Card, and the overture of First Church re the matter of Hymns. On both of these matters classis was advised by committees previously appointed. Classis decided it could not approve of either overture on the grounds of Articles 30 and 69 of the Church Order respectively.

Kalamazoo requested classis for the right to ask for collections in our churches, and to forward this request to synod to the churches in Classis West. Kalamazoo needs assistance in the heavy expenses incurred in calling and maintaining a pastor. This was granted.

One Consistory asked classical advice re increase of censure of one of their members, which advice was given.

Classis also took cognizance of the illness of the Rev. G. M. Ophoff, and appointed a committee to visit him.

Elder P. Schipper was appointed to thank the ladies of First Church for their excellent catering services.

Questions of Article 41 of the Church Order were asked and answered satisfactorily.

Classis decided to meet next time, D. V., in Hope Church on January 1, '59.

Rev. G. Vos closed the meeting with thanksgiving to God.

M. SCHIPPER, S. C.

MEETING OF CLASSIS WEST IN OAK LAWN, ILLINOIS

September 17, 1958

Classis West of our Protestant Reformed Churches met in Oak Lawn, Illinois on Wednesday, September 17, 1958. Rev. J. A. Heys was the chairman of the day. Of particular interest was the fact that our congregation of Loveland, Colorado, was present for the first time. We may also report that all our congregations were fully represented.

The Classis granted Loveland's request that the ministers, appointed to fill classical appointments, receive three Sundays to labor in Loveland. This was done, of course, for reasons of economy for the congregation of Loveland. It was also remarked at Classis that, should the ministers receive only two Sundays, Loveland would be without a minister, during the week, every other week.

Requests for collections in our churches of Classis West were received from three of our churches: Edgerton, Loveland, and Lynden. Edgerton requested help toward the payment of church lots, Loveland in connection with the travelling expenses of a pastor and the probable purchase of a parsonage, and Lynden for aid in the meeting of a debt on its parsonage.

An overture was received from our consistory of Oak Lawn, requesting the appointment of a committee to draw up a set of parliamentary rules for classical procedure. This committee consists of Rev. H. C. Hoeksema, Rev. G. Vanden Berg, and Elder W. Terpstra.

We may also report that a protest was received in connection with certain decisions of our Synod of 1957. This document was placed in the hands of the following committee: Revs. J. A. Heys, H. Veldman, G. Van Baren, and Elder E. Van Egdom.

Classical appointments were arranged as follows. For Loveland: October 12, 19, 26 – H. Veldman; November 2, 9, 16 – J. Heys; November 23, December 7, 14 – E. Emanuel; January 4, 11, 18 – H. H. Kuiper; January 25, February 1, 8 – G. Van Baren; February 15, 22, March 1 – G. Vanden Berg; March 8, 15, 22 – R. Harbach. For Pella: October – H. C. Hoeksema; November – G. Van Baren; December – H. Veldman; January – E. Emanuel; February – J. Heys; March – H. H. Kuiper.

The Classis also decided to send a letter of sympathy to the Rev. Ophoff and his family in connection with the brother's illness, and wish him and his family the blessing of the Lord.

Classis decided to meet, the Lord willing, next March in South Holland. After the singing of Psalm No. 422: 5, 6, the Rev. H. C. Hoeksema closed our classical gathering with prayer.

REV. H. VELDMAN,
Stated Clerk.