

# The **STANDARD BEARER**

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

It is of the LORD'S mercies  
that we are not consumed,  
because his compassions fail not.

They are new every morning:  
great is thy faithfulness.

The LORD is my portion,  
saith my soul; therefore will I  
hope in him.

— Lamentations 3:22-24

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## THE STANDARD BEARER

Semi-monthly, except monthly during June, July, and August.

Published by the Reformed Free Publishing Association, Inc.  
Second Class Postage Paid at Grand Rapids, Mich.

**Editor-in-Chief:** Prof. Homer C. Hoeksema

**Department Editors:** Prof. Robert D. Decker, Mr. Donald Doezeema, Rev. David J. Engelsma, Rev. Cornelius Hanko, Prof. Herman Hanko, Rev. Robert C. Harbach, Rev. John A. Heys, Rev. Jay Kortering, Rev. Dale H. Kuiper, Rev. George C. Lubbers, Rev. Marinus Schipper, Rev. Gise J. Van Baren, Rev. Herman Veldman

**Editorial Office:** Prof. H. C. Hoeksema  
4975 Ivanrest Ave. S.W.  
Grandville, Michigan 49418

**Church News Editor:** Mr. Donald Doezeema  
1904 Plymouth Terrace, S.E.  
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49506

**Editorial Policy:** Every editor is solely responsible for the contents of his own articles. Contributions of general interest from our readers and questions for the Question-Box Department are welcome. Contributions will be limited to approximately 300 words and must be neatly written or typewritten, and must be signed. Copy deadlines are the first and the fifteenth of the month. All communications relative to the contents should be sent to the editorial office.

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**Business Office:** The Standard Bearer  
Mr. H. Vander Wal, Bus. Mgr.  
P. O. Box 6064  
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49506

**Business Agent for Australasia:** Mr. Wm. van Rij  
59 Kent Lodge Ave.  
Christchurch 4, New Zealand

**Subscription Policy:** Subscription price, \$7.00 per year (\$5.00 for Australasia). Unless a definite request for discontinuance is received, it is assumed that the subscriber wishes the subscription to continue without the formality of a renewal order, and he will be billed for renewal. If you have a change of address, please notify the Business Office as early as possible in order to avoid the inconvenience of delayed delivery. Include your Zip Code.

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**Bound Volumes:** The Business Office will accept standing orders for bound copies of the current volume; such orders are filled as soon as possible after completion of a volume. A limited number of past volumes may be obtained through the Business Office.

## MEDITATION

## Remember Lot's Wife

Rev. H. Veldman

Luke 17: 32

In this context Jesus is speaking of the coming of the kingdom of God and of the days of the Son of Man. He warns His disciples not look for anything spectacular as indicating His immediate appearance upon the clouds of heaven. There are those who will say: "Lo, he is here," or: "Lo, he is there," but we are not to pay any attention to these false Christs. O, it is true that mighty signs precede His coming throughout the new dispensation, and these signs are surely spectacular. But people will grow horribly accustomed to them, and the coming of the Son of Man will not disrupt life in the midst of the world. "And as it was in the days of Noe . . ."; "Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot. . ."

"Remember Lot's wife" — what a terrible notoriety! Do not imagine that we can ignore and forget this terrible example. We must do one of two things: either do as Lot did and flee for our lives, or we must do as Lot's wife did and turn back. A neutral position is impossible! Hence, remember Lot's wife. We are in the midst of a very evil world. All things are corrupt and work corruption. We do well to flee for our lives, and not to turn back as did the wife of Lot.

\* \* \* \* \*

The world is enroute to destruction! This was true in the days of Lot as well as in the days of Noah. The time had come when those wicked had filled their

cup of iniquity, had reached that pinnacle of sin whereof they were capable. And therefore the moment had come when their destruction was at hand. The Lord had announced this to Abraham, Gen. 18.

The world, also today, is rushing to destruction. All things are evil and corrupt and work corruption; all things serve to satisfy the lusts of the eyes, of the flesh, and the pride of life; everything is adapted to satisfy man's inner craving for iniquity. Chastity is rapidly disappearing; the unmarried may live as though they were married; disrespect for law and order in the home and in the school and in the state is rampant; in the church the very foundations of the truth are undermined and denied; Genesis 1-3 is repudiated, declared a myth. All things are hastening to the final manifestation of sin in all its fearful reality; the world is rushing pell mell to destruction.

Lot's wife had been fully warned! Indeed, the announcement of Sodom's doom had not come to Sodom, but to the house of Lot — see Gen. 19. Lot's wife, however, had been fully warned. The heavenly messengers had come to Lot. That they came toward evening, appearing as ordinary men, implied that everything appeared as usual. It was, of course, not at all uncommon for strangers to approach a city toward evening. That they appeared as strangers and ordinary men would also give the inhabitants of Sodom the opportunity to reveal to them their sin. And, entering Lot's house, they would experience Sodom's wickedness in a far more aggravated manner than had they remained in the streets that night. They would now also abuse Lot's hospitality to strangers.

According to Gen. 19:13 the Lord had sent these angelic messengers to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah and all the cities of the plain. That these were heavenly messengers is verified by the action of these angels when they strike the inhabitants with blindness. These Sodomites would commit the sin of sodomy against these messengers of the Lord, committing the sin whereof we also read in Rom. 1:17. And this sin of homosexuality should be condoned, as it is in the church today! Hence, when these messengers announce to Lot the imminent doom of the cities, Lot and his wife are surely fully warned. That the angels strike the carnal horde with blindness is indisputable evidence that they were sent by Jehovah, the Lord God of hosts.

We must, of course, apply this also to ourselves. First, we have here the example of Sodom and Gomorrah and the wife of Lot. Fact is, these cities of the plain were destroyed; and the Dead Sea is loud evidence of the fearful destruction visited upon them. Besides, the fact stands before us that the wife of Lot was changed into a pillar of salt.

Secondly, there is also for us the example of our Lord Jesus Christ. He spoke, as the Servant of Jehovah, the judgment of the Lord. How He condemned the wicked, declaring unto them that they were the children of the devil, white coated sepulchres, etc! How He strove for the righteousness of God! How He declared to them that in Him the kingdom of God and of Heaven was at hand, but also was reserved only for the hungry and thirsty! And God had highly exalted Him! Indeed, upon Him they poured all the hatred and venom of their evil heart. They ridiculed Him, even as they ridiculed Noah and Enoch and Lot and all the saints throughout the old dispensation. They mocked and taunted Him, hated Him without a cause, finally killed Him upon the cross of Calvary. But God vindicated and justified Him. The Lord vindicated Him in such a way as to leave no possible doubt in the mind of friend or foe.

Thirdly, there is also Christ's testimony in the Scriptures. He speaks of the impending judgments of the Lord's wrath and indignation. He speaks of all the signs that must characterize His coming. And these signs are being fulfilled before our very eyes. What more, I ask you, can and need be done to warn the wicked of God's impending and certain judgment? Indeed, the world is fully warned!

\* \* \* \* \*

How carnal is Lot's wife? Her calling is plain. There is, first of all, the fact that these visitors were divine messengers, and of this she was surely convinced. Secondly, there is the heinous sin of these Sodomites. On the one hand, they would commit this sin against these visitors. Then, being opposed in this by Lot, they would vent their frustrated fury upon him. Thirdly, we must also notice the reaction of the children of Lot. Of this we read in Gen. 19: 12 and 14. Imagine: they ridicule their father, "laugh him out of court." So, her calling is plain. On the one hand, she should have turned to the Lord in humble gratitude, confessed her sin, and fled to Him for safety. On the other hand, she should have turned her back upon Sodom and its iniquity, also the iniquity of her children, and concurred in the fearful judgment of Jehovah upon these wicked cities of the plain.

How great is her sin! First, she clave to Sodom. We read in verse 23: "When the sun had risen and Lot had come toward Zoar." Lot, therefore, was on the way thither and had not yet arrived in that city. Then the Lord rained brimstone and fire down from heaven upon the doomed cities. And we read of her that she looked back from behind him — she retreated behind Lot and stood and looked back. In spite of the clear commandment of the Lord (verse 17), she disobeyed that commandment of Jehovah. In spite of the fact that the Lord was actually destroying the cities, she disobeyed that commandment. She disobeyed

because, although forced to flee, having been taken by the hand by the messengers of the Lord, her heart had remained in Sodom; she longed for that which she had been forced to leave behind her. It was the sin of utter carnality, even while the Lord was raining destruction down upon the city.

Secondly, she rejected the judgment of the Lord. She chose her lot with the enemies of Jehovah and over against the Lord. Rather than join in the judgment of the alone living God and acknowledge Him in all the beauty and glory of His holiness, she loved sin and the things that are below and condemned the God of heaven and earth.

This, of course, is applicable throughout the ages. Notice what we read in Luke 17:31. Whereas, according to the corresponding passage in Matt. 24: 17-18, this also refers to the destruction of Jerusalem, Jesus also refers to the end of the ages. Let no man approach the end of the ages as continuing to seek the things that are below.

If despite the fearful announcements of God's judgments as they lie before us in the infallible Word of God; if despite the example of our Lord Jesus Christ to which we have already called attention; if despite the fact that the judgments of God are in the earth, being fulfilled all around us and before our very eyes as in complete harmony with Jesus' own prophetic word; if, despite all this, we continue to look back, setting our hearts upon the things that perish, the pleasures and treasures of this present evil world; if we do not flee from the wrath of God to come, do not take refuge to the only relief set before us in the cross and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ; if we continue to seek the earthy and to despise and ignore the coming to judgment of the alone fearful God in Jesus Christ, our Lord; what else is this but the manifestation of the fact that we are wholly carnal, would rather satisfy the lusts of the flesh for a season and perish forever rather than to turn away from sin and to serve the living God? It means that the announcements of the fearful judgments of the Lord and our continuing in sin merely

serve to emphasize and bring into sharp focus all the awful and complete carnality that is ours and our bondage to sin and iniquity.

\* \* \* \* \*

Lot's wife perished. Fearful was the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. Even to the present day the Dead Sea gives us a vivid testimony of this terrible catastrophe. In addition to Sodom, which was probably the chief city of the valley of Siddim, Gomorrah and the whole valley of Siddim are mentioned. May we think of the cities that were submerged underneath the burning lava that poured out of Mt. Vesuvius, engulfing them as in a moment? And the wife of Lot? Looking back, she may have been killed by the fiery and sulphurous vapour with which the air was filled and then encrusted with salt, so that she became as an actual statue of salt. Be this as it may, she was struck down by the judgment of the Lord; she perished, inasmuch as upon her disobedience and carnality the judgment inflicted upon the cities of the plain was also inflicted upon her.

Eternal destruction is ever the lot of those who seek the things that are below and despise and reject the fearful judgments of the Lord. "Remember Lot's wife," is a word that also comes to us, except that it comes to us, as in the new dispensation, with a far more frightening emphasis. How much greater is our knowledge than at the time of Lot! May we remember her, and heed this word of God by His grace, we with our children. At first Lot was hesitant, and then he complains that he cannot escape to the mountain. How often the world lies to us: "You are quite safe where you are; do not be in any hurry to go"; and later it lies: "You can never escape now." Let us, by the grace of God, reverse these whimpering fears of Lot. Let us be ready, always, also now, to heed God's command, flee from the wrath to come, take refuge to Him and to His Christ, walk in the way of His cross and His commandments, and then believe that where He leads us we are safe and all is well. The world is enroute to everlasting ruin. By the grace of God, remember Lot's wife.

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## EDITORIALS

### Editor's Notes

*God's Covenant Faithfulness.* The three addresses delivered on this subject at the Young People's Convention are published in this issue. *Beacon Lights* is

also carrying them. But because these addresses were part of our denominational Golden Anniversary celebration, we want to publish and preserve them in

the pages of the *Standard Bearer*. This, plus the fact that the Index to Volume 51 is included in this issue, accounts for the fact that some of our regular departments are omitted.

\* \* \* \* \*

*Blue for Black.* No, not black and blue! But last year some of you who receive an annual bound volume had your sets spoiled because all our bound volumes turned out to be black, instead of some blue. Well, here is good news! We have a new binder. And if you would still like your Volume 50 in blue instead of black, MAIL IT IN IMMEDIATELY to the Business Office; it will be rebound in blue — at no cost to you! Yes, our Business Office aims to please! But be prompt: this special service has to be done while Volume 51, just completed, is being bound.

\* \* \* \* \*

*Tour Report.* The promised report on our Australasian experiences will begin in the next issue. Our report to the Contact Committee had priority and (as of this writing) has just been completed. Besides, there is an unspeakable amount of catching up to do after an absence of 7 weeks! That accounts for the delay.

\* \* \* \* \*

*Who Has It?* Our seminary library reports that someone (unknown) has our copy of the *1952 Acts of Synod of the P.R. Churches*. Does that somebody happen to be you? If so, please return this little book. We won't prosecute.

\* \* \* \* \*

*Who Doesn't Have It Yet?* I mean the anniversary

book, *God's Covenant Faithfulness*. Our business office reports that about 2,000 copies have been sold already! If you have not yet purchased a copy, by all means do so soon! And don't forget copies for your children — even for your *little* children, who will appreciate this historic volume when they grow up! The price is \$5.95, and your order should be sent to: Reformed Free Publishing Association, P.O. Box 2006, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49501.

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*Another Note About Bound Volumes.* A telephone call from our Business Manager brought the information that he has on hand a considerable stock of bound volumes (all black) dating back a few years. These are available for the price of \$7.00. In fact, the Business Manager says that, given time, he could still gather a complete set of 51 volumes. How would you like that for \$357.00?

\* \* \* \* \*

*Effective Immediately!* Please send all news items of churches and schools to our new News Editor: Mr. Kenneth Vink, 1422 Linwood, S.E., Grand Rapids, Michigan 49507. Yes, D(onald) D(oezema), at his own request, has graduated from editor/reader to just plain reader. Thanks, "D.D.," for your years of faithful and prompt writing for our News column. And welcome, "K.V.," to our Staff! And please, ministers and clerks, send the church news to our News Editor. If it's only your weekly bulletin, it will help. The poor man can't very well manufacture news; at least, that would soon get him in trouble. Yes, there will be more Staff changes, beginning October 1. But I want to save some goodies for the next issue!

## Golden Anniversary Addresses:

# God's Covenant Faithfulness—The Idea

*Prof. H. C. Hoeksema*

(The following is an edited transcript of my address to the 1975 Convention of the Federation of Protestant Reformed Young People's Societies, delivered at the occasion of the Fiftieth Anniversary of our Protestant Reformed Churches. HCH)

[Convention Text: Deut. 7: 6-9, "For thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God: the Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth. The Lord did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people: But

because the Lord loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers, hath the Lord brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. Know therefore that the Lord thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations."]

Beloved Protestant Reformed Young People and Beloved Protestant Reformed Brethren and Sisters gathered with us tonight:

First of all, I want to say that I have always counted it a privilege to be able to address one of our Protestant Reformed Young People's Conventions; and especially is that the case in this Fiftieth Anniversary Year of our Protestant Reformed Churches, and when, as much as possible, all our people may be gathered with us to celebrate this occasion. I count that a privilege indeed. In the second place, I think a word of congratulations is in order to our Young People's Federation for planning their convention around the theme of our denominational celebration. I think congratulations are in order for two reasons. In the first place, this shows, to my mind, a healthy denominational consciousness and loyalty. And, secondly, I think it gives the lie to the idea that there is any serious generation gap among us. We are together at this occasion, old and young – and, may I say, middle-aged. And I think it is a glorious occasion that we may all be together in this fashion to commemorate this anniversary.

The theme is appropriate, I believe, not only because it surely touches on a key aspect of the Reformed faith as we have always held it and still do maintain it today; but more than that, it is appropriate because it expresses something fundamental concerning our very existence, our very life, as a Protestant Reformed people. And it certainly expresses what must be in the theme of all our celebration: we must end in the Lord our God and in His faithfulness, and never in self or in any man.

With that in mind, I will try to expound to you tonight THE IDEA OF GOD'S COVENANT FAITHFULNESS, and will do so under three heads:

- I. A High Distinction
- II. A Sovereign Faithfulness
- III. A Divine Revelation

### A High Distinction

It is necessary, first of all that we pay attention to the idea of faithfulness as such. We must ask and answer the question: what is implied in that notion of *faithfulness*? Faithfulness implies, in the first place, that there exists an established relation between two or more persons, or some kind of alliance or agreement. I am not speaking now, you understand, about the covenant. But faithfulness in general implies and presupposes an existing relationship of some kind. In connection with tonight's subject that existing relationship is the covenant relation, the bond of friendship between God and His people in Christ Jesus. You cannot properly speak of faithfulness without such a relationship. In everyday life you can speak of faithfulness, for example, between friend and friend, or of faithfulness between husband and wife. But you cannot properly speak of faithfulness between those who are enemies or between those who sustain no

relationship whatsoever to one another. In the second place, there is suggested in this idea of faithfulness, especially in connection with tonight's subject, the idea that somehow that relationship is put to the test. It is put under stress. It is strained. Faithfulness implies the existence of something which strains a relationship. Either that relation is strained by a long period of time, a long period of absence, or by some adverse circumstances of some kind which make it difficult and even impossible for that relationship to continue, and to be maintained, and to function, to survive. In the third place, faithfulness implies that in spite of these adverse circumstances, which put a strain on the relationship, nevertheless that relation between those persons does indeed endure and is indeed made to function. In that sense, for example, you can speak of a friend. A friend in times of prosperity, also according to the book of Proverbs, is nothing special. But a friend who is a friend and who remains a friend in adversity and in difficult circumstances, when that relation of friendship is put to the test, is a faithful friend. Then the faithfulness of a friend comes to manifestation.

Hence, there is the aspect in this subject of "The Idea of God's Covenant Faithfulness," first of all, of the covenant relationship itself. Let me briefly call attention to that covenant relation. That is necessary, and I think it is very important. I am afraid sometimes that we tend to become accustomed to that very glorious idea of God's covenant, that we probably tend to let it become commonplace, so that it becomes a matter of course for us, perhaps, to speak of that covenant relation of friendship between God and His people in Christ without really ever contemplating the amazing wonder of it. And it is wonderful! I would like to call attention to that idea in terms of the Convention text in Deuteronomy 7. The covenant is not literally mentioned there; nevertheless there is a very beautiful description of the covenant relation in that passage.

Let me call your attention, in the first place, to the fact that that passage speaks of God's covenant people as one people, one spiritual nation, a holy nation, a special people. God, you see, does not simply save a number of individuals and take them up into the stream of His own covenant life. He does not simply save a multitude, a mass of people. But He saves one people, a nation, one whole, with one King, one spiritual life-principle, one character, one law, one language, one heavenly country. He saves the generation of spiritual Israel from among all nations, the new humanity in Christ. That, first of all.

At the same time we must remember that God's people are not characterized by mere monotony. They are not all the same. They are not exact replicas of one another. But there is diversity among them.

There are many citizens in that one spiritual nation, gathered from the beginning to the end of the world and from among all nations. And each of those citizens occupies his own place and serves his own purpose in the whole of that nation, according to his own peculiar characteristics and talents and status. And yet that takes place so that all are fundamentally alike. And with that fundamental likeness of the people of God each serves in his own way in his own place to bring out the one idea of that covenant people of Jehovah.

In the third place, we must keep in mind tonight the organic viewpoint. What is said in the Convention theme text, and what is addressed to the people of God certainly cannot be applied to every individual in Israel of old, nor every individual in the church here in the midst of the world in the New Testament day. Nor can it be applied, let me add, to every one of us as Protestant Reformed people. Not all are Israel that are of Israel. But God's election and reprobation cut right across the generations of His covenant as they exist in history. Outwardly, indeed, all belong. Outwardly all share in the same benefits. Outwardly all claim the same name, and are called by the same name. But some to their salvation, and some to their damnation. Nevertheless while here in the midst of the world and in the course of history many branches may be cut out of that tree of God's covenant, the tree itself is saved. And God's covenant people here in the world are viewed as a whole, as an organism, and addressed as such, from the viewpoint of the elect seed that is always present in their midst. That is important to remember. For it means that only as you and I are actually redeemed and delivered, only as you and I are actually a holy people unto the Lord our God, can we and may we lay hold personally on the high distinction that is described in this passage.

Notice that there are several terms in the Convention text which serve to emphasize that God's covenant people are indeed a most excellent people. They are highly distinguished!

For one thing, they are called a *special people*. That is a term in Scripture which really carries the connotation of being a purchased possession, and in that sense a very *dear* possession, and in that sense a peculiar people. What a tremendous thing that is, beloved! We are God's special people, God's very own. All things are God's. He is the Sovereign of heaven and earth. But from among all things, from among all the nations of the world, from among all men and in distinction from all the others, there is one people that is His very own, His inheritance, precious in the sight of the Lord, the apple of His eye — His as no one else is His. In that sense they are a special people. How often this idea is emphasized in Scripture. God's people are His bride, His wife, His

friends. Or, as is emphasized in Rev. 21, where the final realization of God's covenant is described, "They shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God."

In the second place, they are the people upon whom is the divine stamp of approval. They are His chosen people. And as that expression is used here in Scripture, it points to the fact not only that God chose His people from before the foundation of the world. It points not only to the fact that God selected them from before the foundation of the world, in distinction from others. But it points also to this fact, that God realized that choice in time, that in history He actually singles out His people. And the expression that is used here in Scripture emphasizes especially that He set His heart and mind upon His people, that He approved them, that the divine seal is upon them, and He says to them: "You only have I known among all the families of the earth."

In the third place, we are the objects of His love. And the expression that is used here for God's love emphasizes the idea of fastening or binding together. It implies, therefore, that we are the people in whom God has delight. And as such we are the people whom God unites with Himself in the bond of fellowship, the bond of intimate communion and friendship.

Finally, God's people are called here a people which is holy unto Jehovah. I cannot take the time tonight to expound that idea of holiness in detail. But let me emphasize that holiness with respect to God means that He, as the absolute Good, is *Self-centered*. And with respect to us, His covenant people, it means that we are *God-centered*. We exist for His glory and for the manifestation of His virtues and praises. And as such we are consecrated to Him with heart and mind and soul and strength.

That, briefly and in concrete fashion, is the idea of God's covenant with us.

What a glorious estate is ours! Beloved, I mean not only that this is a wonderful doctrine. You know, it has been characteristic of us as Protestant Reformed Churches to emphasize that idea of God's covenant. And that is well. That is our heritage. But let us understand clearly that this doctrine of God's covenant with His people in Christ Jesus is the description of the actual, living relationship between God and us. Ye are a special people unto the Lord our God. Ye are a chosen nation. Ye are the object of His love. Ye are a holy people unto Jehovah or God. And Scripture never ceases to emphasize that idea. It never hesitates to remind us of that glorious estate that is ours. It does not speak merely in terms of what we *must* be, but in terms of what we *are*. And it does so not to make us proud, but to make us humble and thankful. It does so not to make us carnally secure,

but so that we may also know and fulfill our calling. It does so to remind us and reassure us of this glorious act, because that excellency is so often denied by the world, and because it is so often hidden, covered up, by our own sin. That covenant is the heritage of us as the people of God, of us as a Protestant Reformed people. We represent the cause of God's covenant in the midst of the world!

### A Sovereign Faithfulness

It is in this connection that we must understand the idea of God's covenant faithfulness. I noted earlier with you that faithfulness implies the presence of some kind of adverse circumstances which make it difficult, and even impossible, for a certain bond or relationship to be maintained and to function. And it implies that in spite of those adverse circumstances that relation *is* maintained and endures, cannot be destroyed, and functions. And that is true of this covenant relation.

That is true, beloved, first of all, as far as our origin as God's covenant people is concerned. We were once God's covenant friends by creation, in Adam, in the state of righteousness in Paradise. We were created that way in Adam. We were made in the image and likeness of God. We were created capable of living in covenant relationship, covenant friendship with the living God. Not only that: we were created living in God's fellowship in Adam. That was our original estate. God was our God, our Friend-Sovereign; and we were created His friend-servants, living in His fellowship, serving Him, knowing Him, and enjoying His friendship, His fellowship, His lovingkindness that is better than life.

But we fell. We were unfaithful. We were not true to that covenant position. We turned our backs on our Friend-Sovereign. We chose instead to be the friends of the prince of darkness. And when we did, we came in to the house of the bondage of sin and death, the house of slaves. Do you understand what that means? Those are those adverse circumstances of which I was speaking a moment ago. And those adverse circumstances were so adverse that as far as we were concerned, friendship with the living God became forever impossible! As far as we were concerned, that was the end, the end forever of that covenant relation of friendship between God and us. We became dead in trespasses and sins. We lost the right and we lost the ability to be God's friends. We lost the right and the ability to enjoy His fellowship and favor. We lost the right and the ability ever to be the objects of His love again.

But He redeemed us and delivered us by His mighty hand and by His stretched out arm. He brought us out of the house of bondage of sin and death. He changed us from being not the objects of

His mercy to being the objects of His mercy. He changed us from being not His people to being the people of the living God. And remember: even from a natural point of view, even apart from the whole question of our lostness, — even from a natural point of view there was nothing attractive about us. That is what the Word of God emphasizes in Deuteronomy 7 to the children of Israel, too. It wasn't that they were such a wonderful people even naturally. It wasn't that they were such a numerous people naturally. They were the fewest. They were the littlest. And literally Scripture emphasizes they were the "scrapings" — that which is left on the plate after you eat and which you throw away into the waste barrel. Such people God redeemed and delivered! Not the greatest, not the noble, not the mighty, not the wise, not the prudent! But the poor, the ignoble, the weak, the despised, yea, and things that are not, to put to nought things that are.

Why?

God is faithful, beloved! He is true! He had every reason to forsake us, every reason to turn His back on us forever. But He maintained His covenant. He took us anew for His covenant friends in Christ Jesus. And He even raised that friendship to the higher and heavenly level of the resurrection-life of our Lord Jesus Christ, and made us like — not unto the image of the first Adam — but like unto the image of His Son.

Still more. He maintains and realizes that bond of friendship and causes it to function although, even after we have been restored as His people, restored to His friendship, we still give Him every reason to turn His back on us, still give Him every reason to break off that covenant. I am referring now to the fact that as long as we are in this present earthly life, we sin against Him. We sin against Him a thousand times daily. And those sins are sins against grace, you understand. They are much more heinous. We violate His covenant. As far as we are concerned, we make that covenant incapable of functioning, we break it every time we sin. Any single one of our sins as the imperfect people of God would be sufficient in itself to bar us from His fellowship forever. But God is faithful. He never forsakes us though we make ourselves worthy of being forsaken a thousand times over. He never leaves us. He always forgives. He always takes us back. And He heals, He cleanses, He sanctifies, and He preserves to the very end. There is one expression in our beautiful Baptism Form that expresses that idea. It is a heart-warming and comforting expression to any child of God. At the end of the doctrinal section of that form you read: "And if we sometimes through weakness fall into sin, we must not therefore despair of God's mercy, nor continue in sin, since baptism is a seal and undoubted testimony

that we have an eternal covenant of grace with God.” That is God’s covenant faithfulness!

And it is sovereign! That is the beauty of it.

If you ask the question why God is faithful, the reason cannot be in you and me. We are unfaithful. The reason can only be in God Himself, beloved. God’s covenant faithfulness – that is the theme!

His faithfulness is *sovereign*. It is not dependent on anything in you and me. That is a good thing, too. If ever it depended on anything in you and me, that would be the end, the sure end.

He is faithful, in the first place, because He loved us. That is why – simply because He loved us. And that means, you understand, that He loved us in His electing love, from all eternity, according to His counsel, for reasons which He took out of Himself. He loved us from all eternity in Christ Jesus as our elect Head. In the second place, He is faithful because of the oath which He swore. That is a beautiful idea. God swore an oath. And because He could swear by no greater, He swore by Himself, by His own eternally, unchangeably, divine, true Being. And that He swore an oath means, first of all, that He spoke a word within Himself. From all eternity, God said “Surely, blessing I will bless them, and multiplying I will multiply them.” And His own eternally and unchangeably true Being is the witness of that oath. That is the oath that He spoke unto our fathers and that He always speaks unto His people according to the Holy Scriptures. It is the sure word of promise!

That is the idea of God’s faithfulness. According to that love and according to that oath He always beholds us. God, you understand, sees us not as we are in ourselves. He views us not as we are apart from Christ. He always views us as He purposes to make us in Christ Jesus. He always beholds us as we shall be some day, without spot or wrinkle among the assembly of the elect in life eternal. And always in Christ Jesus, therefore, He loves us – from eternity to eternity, in unchangeable love and faithfulness.

## A Divine Revelation

Then you can understand Christ, you see. Christ does not come to change the hatred of God into love. Then you would never have an answer to the question, “Whence is Christ? How could Christ come?” But He, the crucified and risen Lord, Who is become the quickening Spirit – He is the revelation of God’s sovereign love and faithfulness. Christ means that rather than forsake us, God – mystery of mysteries – forsook His only begotten Son in the bottom of hell, in order that we might be saved. Christ is the channel of God’s unfailing mercies.

Then, too, you can understand the very possibility of God’s faithfulness to us in the light of His faithfulness to Himself. For we must never forget that God’s faithfulness means in the deepest sense of the word that He is true to Himself as the Triune God of infinite perfections. Faithful God is to His own holiness and righteousness. But then the question arises: in the light of His holiness and righteousness, how can He be faithful to us? If He loves us, if He is faithful to us, poor, wretched, lost sinners in ourselves, aliens from His house by nature, can that not only be at the expense of His own holiness and righteousness?

No, beloved; look to the cross! There, at the cross, is the revelation of a sovereign love and of a sovereign faithfulness, but a love and a faithfulness in the way of God’s righteousness and justice. For there God’s own unchanging love and faithfulness provided satisfaction of His righteousness and justice. There mercy and truth – or if you will, faithfulness – are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other.

What is the conclusion?

This we have nothing to boast – not as individuals, and not as churches.

And it is this: ours is a wonderful and sure heritage. It is not the heritage merely of some dead doctrine, but of living and comforting and real truth. And the end of it all must be: all glory to our faithful covenant God! “He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord!”

# God’s Covenant Faithfulness–The Historical Realization

*by Rev. David Engelsma*

Protestant Reformed young people and members of the Protestant Reformed Churches – God’s covenant people in the world:

We are Reformed!

On the basis of the infallibly inspired Scriptures and in harmony with our precious Reformed confessions, we preach, believe, and confess the glorious sovereignty of God in the salvation of sinners by His grace alone. Salvation is not of him that willeth, nor

of him that runneth, but of God Who shows mercy to whom He will show mercy.

On the basis of the same Word and in harmony with the same creeds, we confess the sovereignty of our God over all. He is God! He is the *great* God! His counsel stands, and He does all His good pleasure. Of Him and through Him and unto Him are all things. He governs with almighty power the destruction of the wicked; the rise and fall of nations; the development of the Kingdom of the Antichrist; the fall of a sparrow from the roof-top; and the circumstances of the life of every one of us.

Fifty years ago, the Protestant Reformed Churches were born because men and women of God were determined to be Reformed; today, these churches can say what they said then: We are Reformed!

This confession is true — there is room for no doubt, either on our part or on the part of those around us. Listen to the confession of our people; attend to the instruction given young men in our seminary; above all, hear the preaching of the gospel in our pulpits and in the catechism rooms.

Yes, and let our life be a witness to the truth of the confession, “We are Reformed.” Where God’s sovereignty is known, there a people is consecrated to God so that they live all their life unto Him. This is holiness of life. We seek God in the education of our children in good Christian schools; in our marriages by honoring His marriage ordinance; in our work by submitting to our masters; in our everyday life on earth by striving to be separate from the ungodly world.

When we stand in the judgment, before God the Judge of all men, even those who put us out of their communion will testify of us: “it cannot be denied that they are Reformed in respect to the fundamental truths . . . .”

This is no boast!

If it were, if it would ever become a boast, we would be guilty of that which we hate with all our hearts — and which God detests with all His heart: boasting in man, rather than in the Lord.

No, “We are Reformed” is our joyful, thankful, utterly humble confession that God has done great things for us, whereof we are glad. “We are Reformed,” and “All that we are we owe to Thee.” We rejoice at being Reformed. To be Reformed is to be blessed above all people on earth, is to have such treasures as defy numbering and evaluating. Let us be glad today and sing with all our hearts before the Lord. Our joy is thankful joy. God has done this thing, not we ourselves. He has done it of grace, not because of our merit.

When we celebrate being Reformed for 50 years, we celebrate God’s covenant faithfulness. That we are Reformed, not only in name (which means nothing today), but also in reality, is due to God’s covenant faithfulness. He made a covenant with our fathers, and He has kept that covenant. This we remember and this we declare today.

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God’s covenant is with Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God in the flesh, and God is faithful to Jesus Christ. Between the Triune God and Jesus Christ there is the bond of friendship in love. God is the God of Jesus, and Jesus is the Friend-Servant of God. To Jesus were all the promises made; to Him is all of salvation given, so that in Him are redemption, life eternal, and glory. This is the teaching of Psalm 89: “I have made a covenant *with my chosen*” (vs. 3). This Elect One is the great Son of David, Jesus the Christ.

God is faithful to Jesus, keeping the covenant made with Him. From eternity to eternity, He is Jesus’ Friend; He fulfills all the promises made to Jesus; He blesses and glorifies Jesus with all the riches and glories of the Godhead. Such is the teaching of Psalm 89: “my faithfulness shall be with him” (vs. 24); “my covenant shall stand fast with him” (vs. 28); “I will not suffer my faithfulness to fail” (vs. 33); “my covenant will I not break” (vs. 34); “I will not lie unto David” (vs. 35).

At the same time, God’s covenant is with a *people*, the people who have been given to Christ in the eternal decree of election to be His Body, the Church; and God is faithful to this Church. God dwells with this people, so that they know Him in love; and this is life eternal. God is faithful to this people in the covenant — He keeps covenant with her. He is faithful down through history. Throughout the ages of her earthly struggles and sorrows, God is with her as her God. He is faithful when time is no more. The covenant is everlasting. Because of this, there is a Church in the world from the beginning to the end of time. Because of this, the Church enjoys salvation. God is faithful to the Church with the same faithfulness that He shows to Christ. The Church is in Christ; the Church is Christ’s Body. God cannot be unfaithful to the Church without being unfaithful to His own Son, and this is impossible. We celebrate firm, sure faithfulness.

Concerning two things, we must be clear. First, the covenant faithfulness of God concerns the *Church*. There is today a widespread, appalling disregard for the Church. This is evident among the youth, but also among the grown-ups. It is apparent in the neglect of worship services and catechism; in the slighting of the officebearers and discipline; and in outright, destruc-

tive criticism of the Church as instituted. Another form of disregard for the Church is the lack of concern for what is happening in the churches to which the people belong: the adoption of false doctrines; the lack of discipline; the corruption of the services of worship; the ungodliness of synods and assemblies. The attitude of many is: I personally keep my garments clean and will not involve myself in the struggles of the church. Who cares? Who cares about the Church? But how can the saints be unconcerned about the Church to whom God is faithful in the covenant?

It belongs to the Protestant Reformed tradition to be zealous for, to love the Church. It was not enough for Hoeksema, Ophoff, and the others only to hold the truth personally, perhaps also to write some articles and books about it, but they desired the *Church* to abide in the truth. They desired this passionately, so passionately that they were willing to suffer grievous loss themselves. Men have misunderstood our love for the Protestant Reformed Churches and our zeal on their behalf. They have viewed it as carnal pride in ourselves. In reality, it is love for the Church of Christ, God's covenant people. That we love these churches much does not mean that we love the catholic Church of Christ little, but the heat of our love for them is the temperature of our love for the catholic Church, of which they are manifestations.

Secondly, God's faithfulness to the Church is realized by God's keeping the Church in the truth of the gospel. It is a mistake — one of the most serious that anyone can make — to suppose that the people of God can have the covenant apart from the truth. In the *truth*, God is present with His Church as Friend; in the *truth*, we have the blessings of the covenant, forgiveness and eternal life. The historical realization of God's covenant faithfulness is the history of the Holy Spirit's leading the Church into the knowledge of the truth.

We can trace this faithfulness.

God was faithful to Israel, Christ's people in the Old Testament. For more than a thousand years, He dwelt with that nation, revealed Himself to her, gave her innumerable blessings, and showed her His salvation. No promise did He fail to fulfill. He brought her out of Egypt into Canaan; He gave her a great king and made her a great nation; He preserved her in the tribe of Judah; He restored her from Babylon. Nor did He become unfaithful at the time of Christ even though He rejected the earthly nation and cut it off. For He kept covenant with Jesus the Christ, Who always was, personally, the reality of Israel. Besides, He saved the elect remnant of Israel, the thousands who believed after Pentecost, and thus Israel enjoyed the fulfilled covenant. But at that time, the covenant

broadens out to all nations, and the New Testament Church becomes the covenant people.

God has been faithful to this Church. This must not be missing from our celebration of our anniversary as a denomination of churches. Our anniversary is part of His faithfulness to the Church down through the ages. It is the continuation of His faithfulness to the Church for over 1900 years.

God was with the Church during the 200 years or more that the Roman Empire persecuted her, and, therefore, the blood and the fire did not consume her, but she grew. He kept her in the truth, though heresies sprouted like weeds and though the number of orthodox preachers and elders was small, and, therefore, the Church confessed the Godhead of Jesus; the total depravity of man; and the authority of the canonical Scriptures. After hundreds of years of dreadful deformation, He reformed her in the days of Luther and Calvin.

God has been faithful to the Church in recent times, and this accounts for our existence. He planted and kept the Reformed Church in the Netherlands, in the face of the oppression of Spain and the Roman Catholic Church and in spite of the Arminian heresy. In the 1800's, He purified that Church by calling the remnant out and reviving them by the truth. In 1924, He separated the Protestant Reformed Churches from an apostatizing church. Fifty years later, it has become abundantly plain that, although they meant it for evil, the Lord meant it for good: to preserve the Reformed faith and life. In 1953, He preserved among us the precious truth of the gospel of free, sovereign grace, i.e., that the covenant depends, not at all on men, but only on Christ Jesus — without which we could not enjoy the covenant of God.

The history of the Church is a history of God's faithfulness.

It is filled with the unfaithfulness of the people—ours, too! You cannot read it without weeping: complaining, doubting, forsaking God for the idols, Baal, money, pleasure, glory. No other evidence is needed to prove beyond all doubt that the covenant faithfulness of God cannot depend on the people and their faithfulness, but must depend on Christ and, in Him, on God's free grace.

Over all the history of the Church, including our own history, stand the marvellous words of God in Psalm 89:30ff: "If his children forsake my law . . . then will I visit their transgression with the rod . . . nevertheless . . . will I not . . . suffer my faithfulness to fail. My covenant will I not break . . ."

The covenant faithfulness of God is a *wonder*!

It is impossible for the covenant to be maintained, utterly impossible, but God, the covenant God, does the impossible. This shines through in all the

historical realization of the covenant. By a wonder, Abraham and Sarah had the son who becomes the nation of Israel. By a wonder, Israel escapes slavery and genocide in Egypt. By a wonder, they pass through Jordan to enter and possess Canaan. By a wonder, Judah comes back from Babylon to dwell again in the land of promise. Yes, and by a wonder, there were always in Israel 7000 who did not bow the knee to Baal.

By a wonder, the Church survived the fire and the water of the Roman persecution; the lies of the false teachers; and the deep darkness of the middle ages. By a wonder, the Church was reformed. By a wonder, the Reformed faith was maintained in the Netherlands — read for yourself the histories of the terrible oppression of our fathers by Spain and Rome and of the struggle against Arminius.

“Now Israel may say, and that in truth,  
If that the Lord had not our right maintained,  
If that the Lord had not with us remained,  
When cruel men against us rose to strive,  
We surely had been swallowed up alive.”

By a wonder, the Protestant Reformed Churches proclaim the truth of sovereign grace.

Centrally, the wonder by which the covenant faithfulness of God is realized is the wonder of Christ Jesus. It is the wonder of the incarnation of Christ. It is the wonder of Christ's death. In all of history, there is only *one* apparent unfaithfulness of God. Never has God been unfaithful to His Church. She thinks so sometimes. There are such terrible struggles and troubles in the congregation that she supposes that God has forsaken her. The individual believer sometimes feels abandoned also. Then, he sings the sad lament of Psalter 210:

“I asked in fear and bitterness,  
Will God forsake me in distress?  
Shall I His promise faithless find?  
Has God forgotten to be kind?  
Has He in anger hopelessly  
Removed His love and grace from me?”

But we are mistaken when we think that God has been unfaithful and later we see that we were mistaken. We see that God was faithful, that through our bitter afflictions He was drawing us ever closer to Himself in the bands of covenant love. Then, we sing: “These doubts and fears that troubled me/ Were born of my infirmity.” For one small moment in history God was apparently unfaithful *to Christ Himself*. Psalm 89 speaks of this in verses 38ff. It has been teaching God's covenant with David's Seed and His faithfulness in that covenant. Abruptly, verse 38 breaks in: “But thou hast cast off and abhorred, thou hast been wroth with thine anointed.” Verse 39 adds: “Thou hast made void the covenant of thy servant

...” The Psalm here refers to the cross. On the cross, Christ was cast off and abhorred by God. His covenant with God was made void. The experience of it shook the covenant Christ to the depths of His being: “My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?” “The covenant is Thy nearness, communion with Thee — why hast Thou forsaken Me?” This is the Christ's people, a sinful people for whom the righteousness of God demands that the covenant be grounded in righteousness, the righteousness of the blood and death of the Son of God in the flesh. Then follow the wonder of the resurrection and the wonder of Pentecost.

The wonder of covenant faithfulness is the wonder of *grace*. The people are guilty. God establishes and maintains the covenant with them in free favor and by almighty power.

This takes place in the way of struggle. This is another, outstanding characteristic of the historical realization of God's covenant faithfulness: struggle, warfare. There is no struggle for God. On the contrary, when all of the hosts of hell are fighting against Him, God says to them, as He said to Pharaoh: “Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might show my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth.” But there is always a struggle for the covenant people. This was plainly laid down at the very dawn of the development of the covenant in Genesis 3:15: two seeds would be engaged in mortal combat throughout history. This struggle was evident in Israel's history. It was Egypt against Israel; the nations against Israel; then, Israel against Judah; and even within Judah, carnal Judah against the remnant of grace. The same thing appears in the history of the New Testament Church: Rome against the Church; Arius and Pelagius against the Church; Roman Catholicism against the Church.

Struggle has characterized the history of our churches. We have struggles with apostatizing churches; we have struggles with those who for a time were with us, but were not of us; and always we have had to struggle with the world, the world around us and the world in our own natures. We have had to fight, and we must continue to fight. We are criticized for this, but unjustly. This is a problem, at times, to the young people, but unnecessarily. The history of the covenant is the history of warfare.

To refuse to fight is to show that one does not love the truth and that one does not love the covenant. It is a pitiful thing, a disgusting thing, to see today the absolute unwillingness of the churches to fight the great fight of faith on behalf of the truth of the gospel of God, and on behalf of the covenant. Had these churches been the Church at the time of the Arian denial of Jesus' Godhead and the time of the

magnificent defense of the truth by the heroic Athanasius, they would have done something like this. They would have appointed a study committee for five years and then recommitted the matter to it for several more years. Finally, they would have hailed Athanasius before Synod, and Synod would have given this judgment: "Athanasius, you are orthodox in all the fundamentals, but you have a tendency to onesidedness. Therefore, we depose you from your office, excommunicate you from the Church, and banish you to the wilderness." To Arius, the Synod would have said: "You, sir, are ambiguous. We hereby give you a permanent appointment to Alexandrian Seminary, where you can teach all our pastors that Jesus is not God." And the people, those who were interested enough to read the Acts of Synod, would have said: "We are dissatisfied, but we can live with Synod's decisions" (because otherwise they would have to go out into the wilderness with Athanasius).

God bless us with the grace to continue to fight! A warning is in order here. We must not fight, with ourselves or with others, over personal matters. We ought to repent of such evils. We must resolve, as individuals and as congregations, to avoid all such quarrelling. We must resolve, before God's face, to be peacemakers in this regard. But fight we must as regards the covenant. As the people of God, we are involved in the one, great battle of all time: the City of God and the City of this World. This battle concerns the truth, the gospel, the doctrine that we have in the Reformed faith.

As we fight, we are without fear. God is sovereign; Christ is Lord of lords. God is with us in Christ. He will keep covenant. So, in the hour of deepest darkness, when the gates of hell rise up against us, when our cause seems doomed, the covenant people sing confidently:

"When troubles round me swell,  
When fears and dangers throng,  
Securely I will dwell  
In His pavilion strong."

There is a personal aspect to God's covenant faithfulness. God's covenant is not individualistic — apart from the Church, but within the Church, it is personal. God shows His faithfulness to each believer personally. God's covenant is established with him — he is personally the friend of God. God is faithful to him also. In His faithfulness, God will not suffer you to be tried above that you are able (I Cor. 10:13). In His faithfulness, God will preserve you to the end (I Cor. 1:8,9). In His faithfulness, God gives you eternal life with Himself. Not even death will break the

covenant. Your victory over death itself is grounded in the faithfulness of God. Our resurrection and everlasting life are due to God's absolutely unbreakable faithfulness in the covenant. He will never let you go! This does not minimize the struggle of the believer, but it does make that struggle a victorious one. The believer is kept by the wonder of grace.

Included in this personal faithfulness of God is His gift of the covenant also to a believer's children. Such is the faithfulness of God that it extends the covenant to a man *in his generations*. This explains our delight in and emphasis on the children and youth. They are not merely the deference that everyone pays to youth, nowadays. But they are our recognition of the children's place in God's covenant. They are God's covenant friends. Still, there is a struggle. It holds true here, too, that the covenant is realized in the way of a struggle. Not all the children of believers are elect, covenant children of God. There are Esau's and they show themselves Esau's by their contempt for the Word of God and by their despising of God's commandments. Probably, they manifest themselves at the Young People's Convention, when they have no interest in the speeches, the Bible study, or the spiritual fellowship and when they use it for satisfying their flesh. There is a struggle between them and the spiritual seed.

There are also young people who fall deeply into sin, but who, through the prayers of parents and the labors of pastor and elders, are restored. In all of the children, there is the constant, severe struggle of the old man and the new man.

That there is *one* young person, much more such a large group of young people, who loves the Reformed faith, who is consecrated to God in all his life, who has joy in such activities as those found in our Conventions, and who separates himself from the world, well — that is a *wonder*, a sheer impossibility which God nevertheless accomplishes.

How great is our blessedness! God is faithful to us and will be faithful in the future.

This is cause not for carelessness, but for gratitude and for reliance. The man who concludes from faithfulness that he may now sin freely has not really heard the message. The man who hears it, really hears it, in the depths of his sin-stricken heart, will be thankful. He will say, "Because God is faithful, we must be faithful, and we will be faithful — at all cost." And he will rely on God, in good times and bad, for all his needs, with all his burdens. God is faithful — depend on Him!

Above all, let us remember our blessedness. We have the full, pure Reformed faith. We have the preaching of the gospel of grace. We have the covenant. In the covenant, we have God Himself in His Christ. What Moses said of Israel applies to us:

"what nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the Lord our God is in all things that we call upon Him for?" (Deut. 4:7)

Our hearts are full. Great is our covenant God, and great is His faithfulness.

## God's Covenant Faithfulness—The Future Manifestation

*by Prof. H. Hanko*

Insofar as I have been able to participate in the activities of this year's young people's convention, I want to express my gratitude to all those who have made this convention and fiftieth anniversary celebration possible. The programs and singspirations which have been held have been spiritually exhilarating. And the Field Day yesterday was a very moving experience for all of us who have shared in it. If the fruit of yesterday was — as I am sure it was — a greater sense of unity among all the people of our denomination, it was worth all the time and effort which went into it. I have no idea who are all the people who behind the scenes did all the planning for all these activities. But I wish publicly to express my thanks to all the young people and to all the others who have made this convention one which will never be forgotten by all those who have had a part in it.

We have heard in memorable speeches what God's covenant faithfulness means for us as Protestant Reformed Churches: what it has meant for us in the past, and what it means for us now. The question still remains: What does God's covenant faithfulness mean for the future? What has God promised for the future? What has He promised for the future as far as our own individual lives are concerned? What has He promised for the future as families? as congregations? as a denomination? What may we expect in the future as members of God's covenant?

We cannot, of course, see into the future. Only God knows what shall befall us. He has determined it all in His counsel, but He has not revealed it to us in any of its details. Yet, in general, He has spoken of the future in His Word. And only on the basis of His Word can we determine what that future manifestation of His covenant faithfulness will be.

### I. Its Present Blessedness.

We must know, first of all, how much the doctrine of the covenant has meant to us.

It is, quite obviously, true that the doctrine of the covenant is uniquely Reformed. This doctrine more than any other distinguishes Reformed thinking and Reformed theology from that which is Calvinistic.

Historically, although it is possible to be Calvinistic without being necessarily Reformed, it is not possible to be Reformed without being Calvinistic. And that which specifically characterizes Reformed thought is the truth of the covenant.

But in another sense, the doctrine of the covenant is uniquely Protestant Reformed. This is true for two reasons. In the first place, there is almost no place in the world today where you can find the truth concerning God's eternal covenant of grace taught. For this you must be in Protestant Reformed circles. And in the second place, although the doctrine of the covenant has a long and illustrious history, nevertheless, these precious truths were especially developed by Revs. Hoeksema and Ophoff. To them more than to any other must be ascribed the credit for giving to us this rich and blessed heritage. In fact, it is not too much to say that the particular place God gave to these two men in the history of the Church of Christ was a place in which they developed this great truth of God's Word.

Nevertheless, while this truth is uniquely our heritage, it has never been among us mere cold and abstract doctrine. It is certainly doctrine, and we must never lose sight of this. But this doctrine has become part of the living confession of our people. And it has produced, by God's grace, in our lives a rich harvest of practical blessedness which is so wonderful that we ought every day to give thanks for it. God has made known to us the truth of His covenant and has given us many covenant blessings through this truth. And we ought to recount them for a moment, for they have significance of our discussion of the future.

Before we do this, however, we must remind ourselves that we have these blessings only with a great deal of imperfection. Our purpose in recounting them is not to enable us to give ourselves a collective pat on the back. We have nothing in which to boast. And, indeed, if we do boast in these things, we shall surely lose everything we have. We recount what God has done for us. For then we shall learn to be thankful. We shall learn what our calling is for the future, and

we shall learn how important this doctrine of the covenant is for us.

Many of these blessings have become so commonplace that we do not always remember even that they are directly due to the truth of the covenant which we hold dear.

Our churches in our local congregations remain strong. The historic Christian faith is maintained, confessed and faithfully preached in all our churches. Our people faithfully come together twice on the Lord's Day joyfully and thankfully to worship Jehovah our God. And all this is due in no small measure to the fact that we understand that the very essence of worship is covenant fellowship with our faithful covenant God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Closely connected with this, is our antithetical walk in the world. This faithfulness to the antithesis is also closely related to the covenant: for, as Paul explains it in II Corinthians 6, fellowship with God and fellowship with the world are mutually exclusive. Christ has no fellowship with Belial. We stand unalterably opposed to union and lodge membership, to worldly entertainment in all its forms, to cooperation with unbelievers in all kinds of worldly endeavors.

But it is perhaps in our homes and families that the blessings of God's covenant have become most manifest. The truths of God's covenant are reflected in our marriages. We are not troubled by the terrible problems of divorce and remarriage which wreck so many homes today and devastate the lives of thousands. The marriages of God's people within our churches reflect the covenant union of Christ and His elect Church.

Our family life is strong and rich, for also in our family life there is a reflection of the covenant fellowship of God's family where God is our Father, Christ is our Elder Brother, and all the saints are brothers and sisters in the one household of faith. The inroads of sin which destroy so many homes in our country are not apparent in our circles. Our families are bastions of godliness, fortresses in which to escape to safety the pressing temptations of life, places of joy and happiness, where the fear of the Lord is present. There is fellowship and communion, family devotions which are the envy of all from outside who enter our homes, a happiness which overcomes the trials and burdens of life.

And this is reflected in our young people and children. God has given to us deep covenant consciousness so that our parents are deeply committed to covenant instruction in the homes, in our schools and in our churches. We have received from God a Christian School system which is bearing rich fruit in our generations. We are relatively free from juvenile delinquency, crass and open immorality so prevalent

today; and God has preserved us from the dreadful problems of a generation of young people run amuck.

Jehovah our God has used the truth of the covenant to bestow all these blessings upon us, and has given to us these evidences of His covenant faithfulness. Let us remember them as the blessings they are and cherish them.

## II. Its Implied Calling.

The Scriptures are very emphatic about it that these blessings will continue to be ours only in the way of our faithfulness.

We must be clear about this. We must not understand this to mean that God's faithfulness is dependent upon our faithfulness as if our faithfulness is a condition to His covenant. The Scriptures are very clear that God is faithful even when His people are unfaithful. And our own history is a perpetual testimony of the fact that God has proved faithful even when we are least deserving of His benefits. God has sworn to be our God and the God of our children in their generations. We have this promise on which we can rely and to this promise alone we cling. Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it. And except the Lord guard the city, the watchmen watch in vain.

Our calling is important, therefore, for two reasons. In the first place, if we know what God requires of us and know that these very requirements which He demands are given to us by His mercy and grace, then we will seek all that we need from Him alone as we pursue our covenant calling in the midst of the world.

And, in the second place, the very gloriousness of our heritage will impel us to walk as God's covenant people in the midst of the world. The more impressed we are with what God has done for us, the more we will pursue our covenant calling with faithfulness and devotion.

We know from the Scriptures that this will become increasingly difficult as time goes on.

Faithfulness in the church will be increasingly difficult. There is no desire for sound doctrine to be found in the church world. The church world of today is careless about doctrine, openly embraces heresy, and scorns those who make sound doctrine the cornerstone of their life. Apostasy from the truth runs rampant in such a church world, and such apostasy will make its inroads into our churches as well. Liturgical experimentation which destroys true Scriptural worship is the order of the day, and the pressures will grow to change all these things in our churches as well. There will emerge a consensus among the churches, enforced by a hostile world

power, and climaxing in the rule of Antichrist which will force the church to go underground.

Affluence and open hostility threaten our antithetical walk. Faithfulness to the covenant will bring down on us overt persecution and suffering for Christ's sake. To walk as a covenant people will become increasingly difficult.

The home is under fierce attack in our day. The rise of immorality and the widespread approval of divorce and remarriage constitute threats to covenant marriages within our churches as well as elsewhere. To assume an attitude of carelessness over against these threats is to invite disaster. It takes a conscious and deliberate effort on the part of husbands and wives to protect our marriages from these evils. The breakdown of family life to the extent that some advance the notion that the day of the family is over is so common in our day that a closeknit and godly family is a rarity.

The same is true of our schools. Threats against our schools are real and frightening. I am told that there is sufficient legislation on the books in the state of Michigan to close our Christian Schools if these laws are enforced. Bills now pending before Congress enable the state to take away our children and limit by law the size of our families. And all these things threaten seriously our calling to be faithful to God's covenant.

The temptations to our young people are many and great. Open and crass immorality is so common and widespread that it is only a wonder of grace that holiness is preserved among our young people.

All these things are on the horizon. And they make urgent and pressing our calling to be faithful.

This faithfulness implies, first of all and above all, that we be a covenant conscious people. I am always struck by the profound covenant consciousness of the saints in the Old Testament. So often what they did by faith, they did because they were covenant conscious. And this was even in the face of persecution of every sort. They lived out of it in all their life, and made the covenant the very breath they breathed. And so it was with our fathers. I am told that it was very common among our forefathers to include in their prayers the earnest petition that God would not cut us off in our generations.

This covenant consciousness implies, first of all, that we know and understand the truths of the covenant as our own unique and Protestant Reformed heritage. We must become thoroughly acquainted with these precious truths and make them a living part of our confession. Secondly, covenant consciousness implies that we know God's covenant dealings with His people in the past and present. We must be able to see writ large on the pages of history, God's

faithfulness. We must know and understand how our faithful covenant God has preserved and maintained His covenant with His people through Christ. And we must learn to bow in humble adoration before Him Who has done so much for us. And, thirdly, covenant consciousness implies that we have a thorough understanding of our covenant calling in every area of life, and that we apply ourselves diligently and consciously to maintain the heritage of this precious truth in the daily walk of all our people. This truth must sound clearly from our pulpits. It must be indelibly impressed upon the minds and hearts of our young people in the home and in the school and in the church. It must be spoken of often amongst ourselves that we may remind ourselves, as Israel did, of God's faithfulness. Malachi tells us of the faithful remnant who feared the Lord and who talked often with one another. And the Lord wrote their names in the book of His remembrance. Faithfulness to all that we have received and a firm resolve to be faithful in the future no matter what that future may bring is our earnest calling as we return tomorrow to our homes and congregations.

### III. Its Future Blessedness.

And so we have a future bright with promise. Not from a natural point of view. The future is dark and grim. The storm clouds gather on the horizon of history. But a bright future, for we have the promise of our God. We know this to be a fact. He will be faithful. And part of His faithfulness is that He has given all the future in the hands of our Christ to Whom we belong. Christ rules over all. Nothing is outside His control. And through this sovereign and universal control of Christ, God will direct all things to make His people blessed.

God will preserve His Church. The gates of hell cannot prevail against her. There will be the church — believers and their seed — until our Lord comes back. There will be that blessed fellowship between God and His people in Christ though it be in the caves of the mountains and the holes of the hills.

God will also preserve our homes and families. I know not how this will be. It seems impossible in the light of what will happen. But somehow our families will continue to be islands of safety and spiritual peace in the midst of tumult and trouble. And He will care for our children and children's children no matter what the world may do.

God's faithfulness can never fail. It cannot fail because He is Jehovah Who never changes. He is gracious and merciful to us in our weakness and sin and He forgives when we turn to Him in repentance and sorrow. He maintains His promises, for Christ is the Head of the covenant and all things are in the hands of Christ.

This will happen to the very end.

But that faithfulness will have its future manifestation also in heaven. The Scriptures only give us a glimpse of the day when the tabernacle of God is with men. Then and then only will God's covenant be perfectly manifested. And though what we know now of God's gracious covenant thrills our souls, we know too that the half has not been told us.

But this we know. We know that the whole Church, Christ's Bride, God's covenant people, gathered in the line of continued generations, will be there. And that means also that we and our children will be there. We know that all the Church shall have fellowship with God through Christ Whom we shall see face to face. And this fellowship will be with all the saints from every age. We know that the Bride of

Christ shall be glorified and the marriage of heaven consummated. We know that the family of God shall live in God's house of many mansions. We know that sin shall never again interfere to rob us of the riches of covenant fellowship. And we know then it shall be evident far more perfectly than it is now that God's covenant faithfulness is the deepest cause of all our salvation. Now we know this and confess it. But we do so with much sin and imperfection, and our ability to appreciate even this is sorely limited by the narrowness of our own vision. But then we shall understand perfectly that of Him and to Him and through Him are all things, and that to Him is the glory forever and ever.

Take this truth with you as you return to your families and congregations. And may God bless you.

## FROM HOLY WRIT

# Exposition of Hebrews 13: 7

*Rev. G. Lubbers*

In this verse the writer touches somewhat on a basic chord and keynote of this Epistle. There is reason that he should repeat in somewhat different form this keynote of Hebrews 1:1,2, "God . . . hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son." This Son is so exaltedly great above the angels, being worshipped by all the host of heaven, (Heb. 1:6) that "... we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we let them slip." (Heb. 2:1). We must not neglect such great salvation, which "at first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him." (Heb. 2:3) Did not the writer quote with great taste and effect the passage from Psalm 95:7, "Today, if ye hear his voice, harden not your heart"?

Entirely in keeping with this basic concern which we referred to above, and which we could multiply by many other quotations, the writer now once more, as with a parting glance, insists that the Hebrews do not forget but keep in sacred memory their former preacher-guides, who had faithfully and carefully spoken to them the word of God. Some had laid the foundation as wise builders (Eph. 2:20; I Cor. 3:9,10), and others had built upon this, not with straw and hay, but with the gold and silver that can stand the day of trial. And we may remind ourselves that we, too, beware how we build upon this foundation, and be good workmen, who rightly divide the word. (II Tim. 3:15)

## THE LEADER-PREACHERS, WHO SPOKE THE WORD OF GOD (Hebrews 13:7a)

The term in the Greek for "have the rule over you" is really not emphasizing so much the "rule" as that of standing before the flock of God and giving leadership, guiding the willing feet in straight paths of the truth. The term is *toon eegoumenoon*. It refers to them as a class of men in distinction from others in the church. In this instance it refers to those men who have lived and now have died — at least some of them had. This is evident from the fact that, in verse 24 of this chapter, the writer speaks of the "rulers" in verse 17 to whom they must be subject and not make the work of these difficult. A little word-study shows that the term *eegomenon* is in the Septuagint translation of the Hebrew: a ruler. It is the translation of the Hebrew *marshal*. Joseph was made a ruler in Egypt and thus became a guide also to the church of the patriarchs, and he spoke with authority the word and will of God.

Perhaps we may infer from Hebrews 2:1-4 that the line here of those "who spoke the word of God," and who constitute these "rulers" which must be remembered is: The Lord himself — confirmed by those who heard Him, that is, the Apostles, the prophets, the shepherds and teachers. This includes Paul, an apostle, as one born out of due time. (I Cor. 15:8-11). Their word was very sure and steadfast.

Reasoning from the lesser to the greater, the writer to the Hebrews has pointed out in Hebrews 2:2, 3 that the word spoken by angels at Sinai to Moses was very steadfast and sure, and every disobedience received a just recompense of reward. None escaped who did not heed the word of God. And the New Testament church must give heed to these teacher-guides who received the Word of God, who does not simply speak on earth, but who speaks from heaven. (Heb. 12:25) For here is a speech of Him who will not only shake the earth but also the heavens. (Heb. 12:26)

This "who spoke the Word of God" emphasizes that these men were sent of God to preach. They did not simply come in their own self-appointed way of preaching; they did not take to themselves this great responsibility and honor. They are in line with Aaron and Christ, who were appointed and anointed. (Heb. 5:3-6) They are prophets of God, His mouthpieces. And as such they should be honored and revered with great deference and tenderness of feeling, which is rooted in an acknowledgement that they spoke the Word of God. These were men of God. Such we say today also of Calvin, Augustine and other great preachers.

The writer says explicitly that such "who spoke the Word of God" must be "remembered" by the Hebrews. The verb is in the present imperative. This activity is more than to have an intellectual "memory" of them. It means that one remembers more their "words" than their persons. When we remember "Augustine" we think of his *"City Of God," "Confessions Of Augustine"*. And he who remembers Calvin studies his *"Institutes Of The Christian Religion"*. And, again, he who remembers our own pastor who spoke the Word of God to us, will reread and relate what such men as Hoeksema, Ophoff, Vos, and others have written. That is what our younger men, too, will not forget, who now preach the Word of God. We will study such men as Kuyper and Bavinck and also we will remember what the preacher said in the large city congregation, as well as the preaching of the faithful minister in a far-off, lonely church of faithful Christians, who longingly wait for the next Sabbath day to come. This should surely be an element in our thankfulness for "God's Covenant Faithfulness" during these Fifty Years of our existence.

#### IMITATING THE FAITH OF THE PREACHER-GUIDES (Hebrews 13:7b)

The Hebrews are enjoined that they "imitate the faith" of these preacher-guides, who spoke the word of God. These men were such that they had not merely an office, a work, but they also had "life". They lived as did Paul when he speaks in II Cor. 4:8-13. They stood in the midst of the conflict, the battle of the ages against sin, unbelief and Satan with

all his hellish host of demons. They were battle-scarred warriors, who grew old and gray in the ministry. Their life was really a continual dying. They bore in their body the "dying of the Lord Jesus." Such was their faith. They were hated of all men for Christ's sake. (Matt. 10:22) But they endured to the end! They stood in the forefront of the battle. They were leader-preachers. They did not hide in the shadows, but boldly held forth the Word of life in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation. They entered the kingdom of heaven through great tribulation. But they believed the word of their Sender, Christ, "In the world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." (John 16:33)

Such was "the faith" of these men who must be remembered for their preaching. They sealed their preaching with a godly walk which had a noteworthy "end". They died and left this world victoriously. Theirs was not the bitter and disillusioned end of all unbelievers, whose lot is in this life alone. This world, too, has its "preacher-leaders." They have their Voltaire and their Rousseau, who both turned the world into Revolution by their teachings and writings. And their followers are legion. They wrote on Religion and Philosophy, Literature and Art and Music, People and State, Morals and Manners, the Worship of Beauty; but God was not in all their thoughts. The Christ, the Son of God, they hated and denied; and their end was destruction. Their feet were set on slippery places. They did not go into the "sanctuary" to see their own end, but kept the truth down in unrighteousness. Yes, intellectual giants these, who did not know Christ, and the word spoken by the preachers of the Word of God. They, too, have an *ekbasis*, an outgoing, which by contrast we may "consider." When one reads *"The Age Of Voltaire"* by Will and Ariel Durant, one need consider these men no more to acquire strength in the battle of the ages. But these, who spoke the Word of God, we must consider positively. The term in the Greek is *anatheoourontes*. We must consider very intensely what the faithful ministers have spoken and what is recorded in the Holy Scriptures. We must do so again and again. (*ana*) Paul took good notice in Athens of the idolatrous religion of the Athenians. It made him deeply moved and disturbed in his soul. Thus we must study and consider the Word of those who have spoken to us the Word of God.

Those who spoke the Word of God had a glorious end of victorious faith. Does not Paul express this beautifully in II Tim. 4:6-7, where we read, "For I am ready to be offered, and the time of my departure (unloose) is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith." What was the end of Paul which we must now notice carefully? This: "Henceforth there is laid up for me a

crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but to all them also that love his appearing." Yes, take careful notice also of the victory of the deacon Stephen, who said, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit," and who prayed for Saul of Tarsus and others, saying, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge," and then "he fell asleep" in the Lord. (Acts 7:59,60.) Who cannot but wonder at the victorious death of James, Peter and other of the Apostles. They loved not their lives unto death.

And there have been those who have given heed to those who preached the word, and were leaders in the fray. Who can but think of that period in the Church which is called "The Heroic Age" under the fires of Nero and the Roman Caesars. We read of them in the annals of the Church's history: Polycarp, Justin Martyr and those who were led to the lions in the Roman and Greek amphitheaters to the cry of "Christians To Lions." Look at the end of a man as Polycarp, who confessed dying, "Eighty and six years have I served him, and He has never done me wrong; how can

I blaspheme Him, my King, who has saved me? I am a Christian." Upon this the crowd yelled, "Let him be burned."

Thousands have died in the Inquisition at the time of the Reformation by the hand of the fire and the sword. And nothing could separate these who listened to God's Word and remembered those "who spoke the Word of God." They gave heed to Him who spoke from heaven and were saved.

This is no trite saying from the writer to the Hebrews. Besides, it is a fit introduction to the truth that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever. That makes this word so relevant to us today in the Twentieth Century. The message is ever constant and the same. The Gospel-message changes not. Hence, we, too, must take this word of admonition to heart—especially now in this year in which we speak of the Lord's faithfulness, and use as our watch-word "God's Covenant Faithfulness." May it be the outcry of faith that has a good end.

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Wars And Rumors Of War .....	CH	74
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Zion To Be Reformed, Corrupt .....	RCH	275

## NOTICE !!!

On Thursday, October 23, at 8:00 P.M., Prof. H.C. Hoeksema will deliver a lecture in Kalamazoo, Michigan on the topic "HOLY SCRIPTURE - WHOLLY DIVINE."

Place - Kalamazoo Christian High School Auditorium. (Take U.S.131 to Stadium Drive, east to Howard St.)

Everyone is urged to attend !!!



## SPECIAL DEPARTMENTS

## Books Reviewed:

<i>Chronology Of The Old Testament</i> .....	HCH	281
<i>Commentaar Op Het Oude Testament,</i>		
<i>Genesis</i> .....	HCH	214
<i>Concise Dictionary of Religious Quotations</i> .....	HCH	214
<i>The Corinthian Catastrophe</i> .....	HCH	382
<i>Exposition Of The Parables</i> .....	HCH	334
<i>The Freedom of God</i> .....	HCH	46
<i>The Idea Of A Christian College</i> .....	HH	358
<i>Holy Scripture</i> .....	HCH	431
<i>The Lord Of Glory</i> .....	HCH	356
<i>Models Of Religious Broadcasting</i> .....	HCH	167
<i>The Most Revealing Book Of The Bible</i> .....	HH	262
<i>My Heart's Desire For Israel</i> .....	HH	333
<i>The New Hermeneutic</i> .....	HCH	310
<i>The Origin And Destiny Of Man</i> .....	HH	262
<i>Peaceable Fruit</i> .....	HH	454
<i>Some Questions And Answers</i>		
<i>About The AACs</i> .....	HH	358
<i>Theological Dictionary Of The</i>		
<i>Old Testament</i> .....	HCH	382
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<i>When Love Prevails</i> .....	HH	237

## Question Box:

About Acts 28:2 .....	HCH	392
Another Question About Matthew 5:45 .....	HCH	466
About Breaking God's Covenant .....	HCH	368
About Common Grace and		
the Restraint of Sin .....	HCH	464
About A Dialogue Church .....	HCH	462
About Isaiah 5 .....	HCH	69
As To Luke 6:33 .....	HCH	249
About Matthew 5:44-48 .....	HCH	199
About Praying For Those In Authority .....	HCH	79
About Woman Suffrage .....	HCH	429

## ANNIVERSARY ANNOUNCEMENT

"Blessed is every one that feareth the Lord; that walketh in His ways." Psalm 128:1

September 18, 1975, the Lord willing, our parents, MR. AND MRS. ARTHUR DE JONG, will celebrate their 35th wedding anniversary. We, their children and grandchildren, wish to thank our Covenant-keeping God for giving us God-fearing parents and a Christian home. It is our prayer that they will always walk in obedience to His Word as they continue their life together on this earth.

Frank & Joyce Antczak  
Art & Sarah De Jong  
Carol  
Ken & Marilyn De Jong  
Wayne & Vicki De Jong  
Jim & Becky Hanemaayer  
George  
Homer  
Don  
Bill  
Anita  
Lewis  
Esther  
John  
Ann  
Henry  
and 12 grandchildren

South Holland, Illinois

**NOTICE!!!**

THE STANDARD BEARER Annual Meeting will be held, the Lord willing, Thursday evening, September 18, 1975, at 8 PM, in our Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church.

Rev. M. Joostens will speak to us on the subject — "GOD'S COVENANT FAITHFULNESS AND THE STANDARD BEARER." Refreshments will be served. Election of 3 new Board members will be made from the following nominees: Leonard Dykstra, Leon Garvelink, Leon Kamps, Joe King, Dale Mensch and Fred Ondersma.

We are expecting *YOU* to attend!

Don Knoper, Sec'y.

**RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY**

The Jr. Mr. and Mrs. Society of The First Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan expresses deep sympathy to their fellow members, Mr. and Mrs. Jack Feenstra, on the death of Mr. Feenstra's father. We offer the prayer that our Lord will continue to sustain and comfort them in their sorrow. "But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you." (1 Peter 5:10).

Rev. G. Van Baren, Pres.

Mrs. Duane Gunnink, Vice-Sec'y.

**News From Our Churches**

Rev. Van Overloop declined the call from Kalamazoo. A new trio has subsequently been made — this one consisting of the Revs. W. Bekkering, C. Hanko, and J. Kortering.

\* \* \* \* \*

At a June 19 congregational meeting in Hudsonville, a decision was made to "actively pursue the sale of our church building with a view to moving in the future." Their intent, I understand, is to erect a new building if and when they accomplish the sale of the old. Meanwhile, they'll continue to meet in an auditorium which has become manifestly inadequate for their needs. As it is now, approximately fifteen families are obliged to meet in the basement for the Sunday church services. There's not a scramble for available seats in the auditorium, however, for, in order that everything be done as fairly and orderly as possible, families are assigned to the basement on a weekly, rotating, alphabetical-order basis. And, too, those in the basement are able to *see* the minister, thanks to the closed-circuit TV which has been installed.

But, in spite of the fact that they've obviously made the best of their situation, the people of Hudsonville Church must surely look forward to the time when they'll once again be able to worship *together*, in one auditorium. For a couple of church services in August, by the way, they did exactly that — though not in their own church building. The consistory hit upon a rather novel means of investigating the advantages of various kinds of church buildings — they made arrangements to conduct services in them (including, I understand, a hexagonally shaped building). When it comes time to make decisions regarding the type of structure to put up, therefore, Hudsonville's people will have experiential knowledge of the subject.

\* \* \* \* \*

Other of our churches are also thinking of building some day. Southwest, for example, has purchased land on Ivanrest, near the Seminary building. And our two newest congregations are likewise looking to the future. Faith Church in Jenison has established a

"Sanctuary Fund" which will hopefully be built up on "a free-will basis." And our Prospect Park congregation, while acknowledging its present smallness, has established a building fund, for which a collection is taken on the fourth Sunday of every month. We wish these congregations well, of course. Perhaps we could also remember them with gifts.

\* \* \* \* \*

Other news from New Jersey concerns the church extension efforts of our little congregation in Prospect Park. They've begun a mailing program which I could probably best describe by quoting from a May bulletin. The paragraph reads as follows:

"We are planning a mailing program as another small way in which we can give witness to the Word of God in our community. Plans are to write short messages on important doctrines of the Scriptures and send these out by mass mailing. The purpose will be to finally establish a permanent list of people who would like to continue to receive our messages. We plan to mail in groups of 500 and, after mailing several messages, to ask for response. All of this will take a lot of work, and volunteers will be asked to help with various aspects of the project."

Volunteer help would be needed for such things as running the newly-purchased mimeograph machine, typing address labels, and folding and stamping the study sheets. According to another May bulletin, work on the project was done after the Midweek Meeting — at which, incidentally, there is discussion of "Christian Living in the Home." In addition, members of the congregation come out on other nights for the sole purpose of working on the mailing project. According to Rev. den Hartog, "all of the congregation, as well as some of our regular visitors, help prepare the mailers."

\* \* \* \* \*

The people of our Prospect Park Church got together on June 7 for a spring picnic, which had been postponed from May 31 because of weather conditions.

Postponement or cancellation of picnics on

account of rainy weather, has probably happened, at one time or other, to all of us. But how about the following from Isabel? The June 29 bulletin announced that "the annual Fourth of July picnic with our sister congregation at Forbes will be held this Friday at Hiddenwood Lake State Park near Selby. A potluck dinner will be served, followed by a short program with your pastor giving a short address." Handwritten in the margin of the bulletin sent to me by Rev. Miersema was this note: "Cancelled due to pressing haying needs." Now *there's* something that we city slickers only *read* about!

\* \* \* \* \*

This past summer I had occasion to pick up a bulletin personally from our Lynden Church. It was really a two-month bulletin, covering the events of June 8 through July 27, during which time Rev. Woudenberg was in Grand Rapids. On June 8 and 15, tape recordings were used in both the morning and evening services. Prof. Decker arrived during the week of the 15th, and he and his family stayed in the parsonage till July 21.

Included in the bulletin was a radio schedule which listed three separate weekly programs. One of them was the Sunday afternoon airing of the Reformed Witness Hour over KLYN. Another was the Sunday morning broadcast of the previous Sunday's morning worship service. That was also over station KLYN. And then, on KARI, there was a program entitled "Christian Dialogue" — a live broadcast of discussion via the telephone. For the past several years Rev. Woudenberg has been fielding questions concerning Christian life and doctrine, from those who call in during broadcast time from 9:30 to 10:30 on Saturday evenings. It is, we're told, a rather popular program in the Lynden area.

It's probably this, along with the mailing of study sheets and cassette tapes of Bible discussions, which has contributed to Lynden's growth in the past years. Ten years ago the congregation consisted of about four families, and filled the first few rows of the auditorium. Today the church, which seats about 100 people, is filled to capacity. The pews are full. In fact, I had the distinct impression that if all the people in the pew ahead of mine were to inhale simultaneously, they would be in deep trouble. One member relieved the situation somewhat by leaning intently, and prudently, forward during the entire service. That row was an exception, of course. Where I sat, there was room and to spare. But the fact is that the number of people present that evening made it necessary

to set up about 15 folding chairs. Visitors attend services, it seems, on a *regular* basis.

\* \* \* \* \*

From the looks of the bulletins, most of our congregations had opportunity this summer to hear a number of visiting preachers. To mention only a few, a service in Southeast was conducted by Rev. Kamps, in First by Rev. Woudenberg, in Redlands by Rev. Schipper, in Hull by Rev. Joostens, in Hudsonville by Rev. Slopsema, in Doon by Rev. Miersema, in Hope by Rev. Engelsma, in Faith by Rev. Van Overloop, in Edgerton by Rev. Moore, in First by Rev. M. Hoeksema. In Hope there was a scheduled morning reading service; and in Kalamazoo there was an unscheduled tape service, in consequence of Rev. Schipper's car failure enroute to the evening service there.

\* \* \* \* \*

Tapes of Rev. Engelsma were used for services in Houston on August 3 — not, however, because Rev. Harbach was out of town. From July 7 through 27 he was on vacation, halfway through which he caught a cold, accompanied, he said, by "what seemed to be laryngitis, affecting my voice." Sometimes it seemed that he was on the way to recovery, but that would last only till he tried to talk for any length of time. "So," he wrote, "I'm a little under the weather (which is very hot and very humid)." He added that this was "not the way I had planned to come off my vacation, but the Lord is always good, even in His afflictive ways, as we always learn."

\* \* \* \* \*

The ministers were, apparently, not the only ones who did the traveling this summer. From Redlands I received a bulletin, with additional notes, from none other than our old friend Mr. John M. Faber. I'm happy to be able to include, in the last of my columns, a few lines from the pen of J.M.F. He wrote that four Michigan families and one from Illinois attended the services in Redlands on July 13. Then he went on to tell a little about the school, which is probably the most exciting single item of interest in Redlands these days. He writes:

"We went to see their new school. The roof is on and the air conditioning and wiring are being installed. They have a large property for church, parsonage, and school. Rev. Kamps laid almost all of the cement block walls and fencing — his old trade (like Paul's tent-making). They expect about 40 pupils in grades kindergarten through 9th."

And he closed his short note, "C U in church."

D.D.