

The **STANDARD BEARER**

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

You graduate tonight out of a marvelous tradition, the Protestant Reformed tradition. God in His eternal love and wonderful grace has preserved that among us. You have been instructed in those traditions the past three years. Hold to them. Defend them fearlessly. Expound them faithfully.

(see Seminary Graduation Address, p. 414)

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THE STANDARD BEARER

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

Department Editors: Prof. Robert D. Decker, Rev. David J. Engelsma, Rev. Cornelius Hanko, Prof. Herman Hanko, Rev. Robert C. Harbach, Rev. John A. Heys, Rev. Mark H. Hoeksema, Rev. Meindert Joostens, Rev. Jay Kortering, Rev. George C. Lubbers, Rev. Rodney Miersma, Rev. Marinus Schipper, Rev. James Slopeema, Rev. Gise J. Van Baren, Rev. Ronald Van Overloop, Rev. Herman Veldman, Mr. Kenneth G. Vink.

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

Church News Editor: Mr. Kenneth G. Vink
1422 Linwood, S.E.
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49507

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

Australian Business Office: Reformed Literature Centre,
P.O. Box 849,
Rockhampton 4700,
Queensland, Australia

New Zealand Business Office: The Standard Bearer,
c/o OPC Bookshop,
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MEDITATION

The Helmet of Salvation

Rev. H. Veldman

“And take the helmet of salvation.” Eph. 6:17a

All-embracing is the significance of the shield of faith. Through it we receive and stand in the unspeakably blessed consciousness of our righteousness in Christ before God and we have peace with God and therefore with all things. Through this shield of faith we also lay hold of the helmet of salvation and are able to take up the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God. Indeed, faith is the victory that

overcometh the world, the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things unseen.

We now call attention to the helmet of salvation. This scripture must surely remind us of Is. 59:17 and possibly also Is. 61:10. Only, in Is. 59:17 it is the Lord Who has this helmet upon His head; in this text we must put it upon our heads.

ITS MEANING

Does this salvation in this text refer to salvation in the eschatological sense of the word, the salvation as it shall be revealed at the end of time, in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ? Or, does it refer to salvation as we possess it here, in this life, having been called out of darkness and death into God's marvellous light and life?

How wonderful is salvation! To be delivered from the greatest evil and become a partaker of the highest good! Two scriptural passages are particularly pertinent in this connection. We read in 1 Thess. 5:18: "But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation." We may note that the apostle here speaks of an helmet as the hope of salvation. And although it is true that this salvation here must be explained eschatologically, it is also true that the *hope* of this salvation we possess in this life. And in Is. 59:17 we read: "For He put on righteousness as a breastplate, and an helmet of salvation upon His head; and He put on the garments of vengeance for clothing, and was clad with zeal as a cloke." This "He" in Is. 59:17 is the Servant of Jehovah, Jehovah revealed as the God of our salvation in our Lord Jesus Christ. He has put on the helmet of salvation, the salvation of His people. In that work of salvation He will walk in the way of righteousness, fulfill the will of God, execute vengeance upon His enemies, and be filled with a holy passion and zeal. The salvation of His own and the destruction of the world go hand in hand.

Now we can understand the idea of this salvation in this armor of the christian warrior. First, this salvation must be principally the same in all these three passages. They all speak of it as an helmet. Secondly, the salvation of Is. 59:17 surely must refer to that wholly divine and tremendous work whereby the Lord translates His people out of sin and death into the heavenly and immortal life and glory of His eternal covenant. Thirdly, as far as 1 Thess. 5:8 is concerned, the hope of salvation must surely refer to this salvation as in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. Besides, it is only in that day that we will truly be saved, delivered from all sin and death and translated into life and glory. However, we also read in 1 Thess. 5:8 of the *hope* of salvation. And this hope is something we possess now, in this life. Consequently, the helmet of salvation is surely the salvation of our God as we possess it already in this life, in principle, and ultimately will possess it in perfection in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. Salvation! Deliverance from the greatest evil! So often our greatest evil is merely that which we suffer as contrary to our flesh, our natural distresses and miseries, not sin itself but the results of sin. We, then, fear wars and rumors of wars,

catastrophes and calamities. . . . However, the greatest evil is sin. There is, first of all, the guilt of sin. Sin is the greatest evil because it lies at the bottom of all the results of sin, of all miseries and sorrows; it separates us from and deprives us of the unspeakably blessed fellowship with God which is eternal life. This sin as guilt is the greatest evil because its power lies in the unchangeable righteousness of God which denies to every sinner the blessed fellowship with God unless His justice be fully satisfied. And, secondly, sin is the greatest evil because, as a spiritual power, it holds us relentlessly in its grasp, is a band or chain of iron and steel, which no man can possibly break. And now we are delivered from this sin, legally upon the Cross of Calvary, and also spiritually by the power of the grace and Spirit of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Salvation! To become a partaker of the highest good! Indeed, we will know what this good is only if and when we know what the greatest evil is. This highest good is blessed fellowship and communion with God. Can one conceive of anything higher than that the living God, the only adorable God, the God of eternal and infinite goodness and beauty, should call us His own, make us His children, assure us of His love, grant us the privilege to love and to praise Him, to declare His praises! And, this is the highest good! O, not the highest to which we could possibly attain. But this is the highest which God can possibly give us, fellowship with Himself in everlasting and heavenly immortality and glory.

ITS IMPORTANCE

Indeed, without this helmet we cannot fight. Are you carnal? Do you cleave to sin and things that are below? Are you more interested in the results of sin than sin itself? Are you lukewarm to the power of sin and evil, indifferent to the temptations of sin and attracted to the lusts of the eyes and of the flesh and of the pride of life? Do the pleasures and treasures of this world appeal to you? Salvation, we understand, is, first of all, deliverance from sin. Besides, are you indifferent to the things that are above? Salvation is also to be a partaker of the highest good. Is your position in the midst of the world such that the hope of eternal and immortal life and glory lives and throbs in your heart and soul? Are you so earthly and carnal that you have little time and longing for the new heavens and the new earth? My hatred of sin and the longing for the city that has foundations are inseparably connected and related. Let us take inventory of ourselves.

Indeed, without this helmet of salvation we can never fight. Then we have no desire to be delivered from sin and evil. Why and how should and can we bear the reproach and ridicule of sinful men and of a world that lies in sin and darkness? Of what interest,

then, are to us the breastplate of righteousness, the shoes of the gospel of peace and the shield of faith? How, then, can we believe and confess that it is a privilege, not only to believe on Jesus, but also to suffer for His sake? And, satisfied with the life of this world, we cannot experience any desire for the life that shall be. Indeed, our evaluation of the wonderful salvation of God in Jesus Christ will surely determine the position we assume in the midst of the world!

How different things become with this helmet of salvation. Now we will fight this battle of faith because we have been delivered from sin and iniquity. We have learned to hate sin. The love of God in Christ Jesus has been shed abroad in our hearts and minds. We have learned to hate the filthiness and corruption of sin and evil. The empty husks of this present time we have learned to understand in their true significance. And we will also recognize the purpose of the enemy, to lure us away from the blessed fellowship of God and lead us into the mire of sin and evil we have learned to know and hate. Indeed, with this helmet of salvation we will fight. We will refuse to return into the mire of corruption from which we have been delivered. We will rather sacrifice, including our lives, than to return to the filth we have learned to hate and despise.

And we will also fight because we have in our hearts the blessed hope of life and glory everlasting. Already in this life we experience the blessed fellowship with God and His service, and we know it to be inexpressibly sweet. And we surely look forward to the future, to gaze upon the city that has foundations whose builder and maker is God. Standing in this salvation, with the helmet of salvation resting firmly upon our heads, we look over the battlefield, turn our attention to the enemy, and realize that his sinister and diabolical purpose to deprive us of life and glory will surely fail. We know that nothing shall ever be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus. How important and wonderful is the helmet of salvation!

ITS APPROPRIATION

“And take the helmet of salvation.” Indeed: be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might; put

on the whole armor of God; gird yourselves with the girdle of truth; put on the breastplate of righteousness; shoe your feet with the shoes of the preparedness of the gospel of peace; take the shield of faith and the helmet of salvation.

This word, “take,” in verse 17 emphasizes more the idea of “receive.” This does not mean that God offers it and we must accept it, as some would explain the text. But it is true that salvation is a gift of God and we must take this helmet as freely given of God, and place it upon our heads.

Indeed, we must surely do something. Of course, we must not do something as prior to the work of God and upon which this work of God depends. Yet, as people of God we must do something as the fruit of grace. To receive the crown of victory in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ we must surely fight the good fight of faith that no man take our crown.

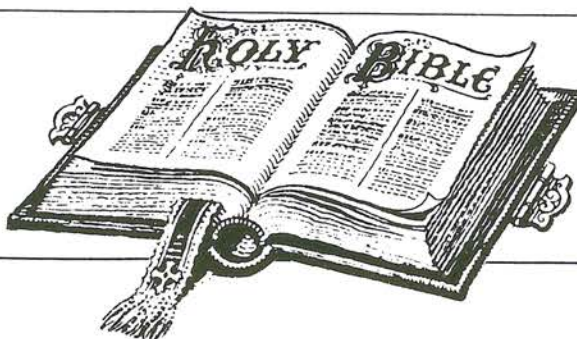
We must take the helmet of salvation. We must appropriate it unto ourselves, every day anew, the unspeakably blessed and sovereignly free gift of salvation. We must stand in the consciousness of our deliverance from sin; we must know our sin, study the Scriptures, increase in our knowledge of them, and we must ever hate and flee from evil even as we learn to hate it more and more. We must stand in the consciousness of the hope of eternal life, must grow in our desire and longing for it, appropriate it unto ourselves by a true and living faith, increase in our hatred of and rejection of the things that are below and in the blessed longing for that which is above. This we must do, never in our own strength, but always in prayer, that the Lord may lead us and finish the work He has once begun in our hearts. In this consciousness of our salvation we must grow and increase. Hence, take this helmet of salvation, appropriate it unto yourselves, always setting before us the Word of truth, in the personal assurance that Jehovah God, in Christ Jesus, suffered and died for you, that you might live, even forevermore.

This is our calling as christian warriors, soldiers of the cross.

Put on the whole armor of God, also this helmet of salvation.

And your defence will be sure.

**The STANDARD BEARER
makes a thoughtful gift
for a shut-in.**



EDITORIALS

Graduation, 1978

Prof. H. C. Hoeksema



I to r: Candidates Wilbur G. Bruinsma, Richard A. Flikkema and Michael J. De Vries.

Tuesday, June 13, was an important and joyous occasion for our Protestant Reformed Churches. It was the date of our Theological School's graduation program, held this year at our Hope (Walker) Protestant Reformed Church, with a goodly audience in attendance.

This year's graduation program was unique in more than one respect.

In the first place, at this same program we also had a graduate from our Pre-seminary Department. Usually pre-seminary graduation is conducted in a daytime program at the Seminary Building. However, since pre-seminary and seminary graduation coincided this year, the two were combined in one program. Deane Wassink, a son of our Holland congregation, has completed his pre-seminary work; and next fall, the Lord willing, he will begin his seminary work.

In the second place, this year we had three seminary graduates who were all sons of churches in Classis West. Wilbur Bruinsma and Richard Flikkema are sons of our South Holland, Illinois church; and

Michael De Vries is a son of our Pella, Iowa congregation.

In the third place, two of the graduates were at one time parishioners of two of the professors. Prof. Decker mentioned in his address that Messrs. Bruinsma and Flikkema were at one time his parishioners in South Holland. They were also my parishioners in South Holland prior to 1959. In fact, I baptized Mr. Bruinsma. However, these young men were toddlers when I bade farewell to South Holland and do not remember that I was their pastor.

As I remarked the evening of graduation, there is something sad about graduation for the faculty. These three candidates have been with us at school for a total of six years — three as pre-sems and three as seminarians; we will miss them. But graduation is also commencement. We rejoice that the Lord has given us three well-qualified candidates for the ministry. Our hope and prayer for them is that they now stand at the beginning of a blessed and fruitful ministry.

Prof. Decker's pertinent graduation address appears elsewhere in this issue.

Last Chance To Join!

As announced in our May 15 issue, the cut-off date for our RFPA Book Club membership drive is July 15.

Have you, members of your family, and your friends signed up?

Remember, these are the generous provisions:

1. If 1000 readers sign up, Book Club discounts will be 40%.
2. If 400 sign up, discounts will be 30%.
3. If less than 400 sign up, the discount will be 20%.

You can help us and help yourself by promoting this membership drive. At this writing, we need 163 new members to reach the goal of 400.

What are the requirements? They are simple:

- 1) You must be from a *Standard Bearer* home.

More than one member of a family may join.

2) You must agree to purchase automatically every *new* book published by the RFPA, with the exception of educational texts, such as Bible manuals and workbooks. If you are a member, these new publications will be sent to you when they come from the press, you will be billed, and as a member you promise to pay by return mail.

3) You may, by virtue of your membership, purchase any RFPA publication at the going discount rate.

We urge you to take advantage of this offer.

Elsewhere in this issue you will find our ad and a membership blank. Mail it to RFPA Book Club, Box 2006, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49501.

On or before July 15!

SEMINARY GRADUATION ADDRESS

Holding Our Traditions

Prof. Robert D. Decker

It is a special privilege for me to give the address tonight. It is always a privilege to give the address for the Seminary commencement, but it is a special privilege for me tonight. That is because two of the graduates were parishioners of mine in South Holland when they felt called to the ministry. They spoke with me about this and I counselled them at that time. I have observed them through the years of their training, and now they graduate. For that reason I am especially grateful that I may speak.

Graduates, Candidates, we are thankful with you tonight. You have attained a significant goal. You have been through some seven years of training and instruction in preparation for the ministry of the Word and sacraments in the church of Jesus Christ. That is a significant accomplishment. Many hours of study and prayer went into that. Now you are candidates and anticipate the call of Christ through His church. That is abundant reason for thanks. It is

the fruit of the grace of God to you and to our churches. We rejoice with you and wish you God's richest blessings.

I wish to speak to you about traditions tonight. That is a bad word on the ecclesiastical scene today. By tradition is meant the doctrine and practice which have been handed down to us from the past and preserved throughout the ages in God's church. The church today does not want that tradition. Renewal is the good word today. Among many it is charismatic renewal, a return, they say, to the zeal and gifts of the early, Spirit-filled, tongue-speaking New Testament church. Among others renewal means something quite different. It amounts to revolution against time-honored tradition. There is a revolution against the traditional doctrines: creation in six days, the inspiration and infallibility of the Bible, predestination, particular and effectual atonement, the virgin birth of Jesus and more. In the sphere of

practice renewal means revolution against the way the church does things and the life of the people of God. Drama and dance are approved as well as divorce and remarriage. The traditional methods of missions and evangelism, the simple preaching of the gospel, are said to be wrong. The traditional way of worship with the emphasis on the preaching of the Word must be changed. Thus it is said the traditions have to go. They belong to a by-gone era. The church today needs renewal and change.

Overagainst all this I submit to you that there is a set of traditions which we have inherited. Those traditions have come out of the infallible Word of God and have been transferred to us from the church of all ages through the Reformation of the sixteenth century and through the Reformation of 1924. These are *Protestant* traditions and they are *Reformed* traditions. To these traditions God calls us to hold.

The word *tradition* means a giving over, a passing down either by mouth (oral tradition) or by writing. It refers to the transmission by ancestors to posterity. A tradition, therefore, is that which is handed down or inherited; a set of beliefs or practices or both. We find this idea in Scripture. We read, for example, of the "tradition of the Pharisees." The reference is to the whole body of laws, precepts, and interpretations of the law of God; that whole system of "work-righteousness" so sharply condemned by Jesus. This is, of course, tradition in the bad sense. The term is also used in a good sense in Scripture to refer to the truths of the Word of God which are transmitted from one generation of God's people to the next. (Cf. II Thess. 2:15).

It is in this latter sense that we speak of traditions. This means that our traditions are not the teachings of men or the practices of mere men. Our traditions are not the teachings of Hoeksema and Ophoff, Bavinck or Kuyper, Luther or Calvin. Our traditions are not even the teachings of Peter, Paul, John, Moses or Isaiah. But our traditions are the truths of Holy Scripture, the doctrines and the way of life taught in God's Word and transmitted from generation to generation by God's people, right down to the present day.

More specifically those traditions are set forth in our creeds. In the Three Forms of Unity the church has set forth and systematically arranged the truths of Holy Scripture. As Protestant Reformed Churches we have inherited these truths. They are our traditions. Those creeds are under severe attack of late. It is being said that they need revision at many key points. Moreover many truths are openly contradicted and denied. Gravamina are lodged against key creedal truths as, for example, reprobation. That is a despising of the Spirit's guidance and preservation of the

church in the past and a despising of the church itself which struggled to express and maintain the truth, often sealing its confession with its own blood. We must hold these confessional Reformed traditions.

Specifically those traditions are doctrinal first of all. Belonging to them is the doctrine of Holy Scripture, the truth that Scripture is the very Word of God. That tradition is under vicious attack in our day. Scripture is said to contain a human element or factor which makes for all kinds of inaccuracies and errors. Or it is said the Bible is full of myths and teaching models. The Bible is not reliable in what it says concerning the origins of man and the universe. Its accounts of the miraculous cannot be trusted. There are errors of historical fact and genealogy. The Bible is man's witness to God or the record of man's religious experience or encounter with God. Overagainst that the Scripture itself testifies that it is given by the inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, instruction in righteousness. (II Tim. 3:16) The Bible says that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. (II Peter 1:20,21) This means that the Bible is the infallible, inspired Word of God, our only authority for faith and life. That is our confessions and that is our tradition and to it we must hold. And that is absolutely critical, for quite obviously our view of Scripture determines our view of everything.

There is also the traditional doctrine of the covenant. There are many views on the covenant. Some teach that the covenant is a pact or bi-lateral agreement between God and man. Others find the essence of the covenant in a conditional promise. Overagainst these the Scriptures teach and we believe that the covenant is the bond of friendship between God and His people in Christ. The covenant is established by God in Christ sovereignly and according to His eternal counsel. The covenant is maintained and realized by God in Christ through His Holy Spirit and Word. We also affirm the second part of the covenant, our obligation to new obedience. The covenant obligates us to a life of obedience, an antithetical walk in the midst of the world. We must be manifest as members of the party of the living God. For that same reason we have our children catechized and we maintain wherever possible covenant Christian schools where our children are taught the fear of God. This truth belongs to our traditions. In fact it is a distinctively Protestant Reformed tradition.

There are the doctrines of sovereign grace. To these belong the truths of man's total depravity, his inclination to sin and his inability to do the good; God's unconditional election of His people in Christ

in distinction from the rest whom He reprobates; the limited or definite and effectual atonement of Jesus Christ; irresistible grace and the perseverance of the saints. These doctrines of sovereign and particular grace are clearly taught in Scripture. They are set forth in the creeds and have been confessed by the church throughout the ages. For them we had to battle in 1924 and again in 1953. They belong to the traditions which we must hold.

There is the tradition of the godly way of life. Scripture calls us as the redeemed to a life of godliness, obedience to the law of God. In every sphere — home, church, school, work, and recreation — we are called to live antithetically out of the principle of regeneration, opposing the evil. Strangers we are, pilgrims as all our fathers were, for we are citizens of the kingdom of heaven. That great truth has been preached and lived by the church throughout the ages. It belongs to our traditions.

There is our liturgical tradition. Belonging to it is Psalm singing. Psalm singing is taught by the Word of God and required by the Church Order of Dordt. The Psalms are the inspired songbook of the church. The church through the ages has sung the Psalms: the church of the Old Testament sang them; Jesus and the church of the Apostolic era sang them; the Reformational church returned in its liturgy to Psalm singing; the Dutch church of our fathers sang the Psalms and we are still singing them today. Psalm singing is our beautiful, distinctive musical tradition and we must hold to it. There are the prayers and Scripture readings and the offerings to relieve the poor and to maintain the ministry and schools. These are taught in Scripture and belong to our tradition.

But the chief element in our liturgical tradition is the preaching of the Word. The church of the Old Testament through its prophets preached. Jesus preached the gospel of the kingdom. The church of the New Dispensation through its apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers preached. The Reformation was liturgically pre-eminently a return to preaching. The Dutch churches were known for preaching and producing some truly great preachers. The same is true of our own churches. Our Protestant Reformed fathers, Ophoff, Hoeksema, Vos, were excellent preachers and they taught us to strive for excellence in preaching. Our worship services today are characterized chiefly by sound, exegetical preaching of the Word. That is the Protestant Reformed liturgical tradition. Its beauty lies in its profound, Biblical simplicity.

To these traditions we must hold. That involves in the first place a sturdy defense of them. This is necessary because those traditions are under attack. That always was the case but it is the more true today. The attacks have intensified. Every tradition

which we have mentioned, both doctrinal and practical and liturgical, not only has been denied in the past but is denied today. And that too not only by the liberal church but within the Reformed churches. Many winds of false doctrine blow today. Hence without shame or fear we must defend those traditions. We must expose and refute the false doctrines and evil practices. In our preaching, teaching, and evangelizing we must show the error of them out of the Word of God. That is a difficult task to be sure. It is not calculated to make us popular. In fact we will be cordially hated for it. But if our churches are to stand in this evil day then those traditions must be zealously defended.

In the second place there must be positive exposition of the traditions, especially the doctrinal traditions, for they are the foundation of the Christian life. Again that is terribly necessary. If there be no positive exposition of the traditions the churches will stagnate and fall into the pit of dead orthodoxy. And if that happens they will not be able to hold the traditions.

Hence we must constantly be searching the Scriptures, for they are an unfathomable treasure. We must know and diligently study the creeds and we must be steeped in the writings of the fathers. The fruit will be that the churches will grow and develop in the knowledge of the truth. They will be faithful to the Word in doctrine and walk. They will hold to the traditions and the glory of God will shine in them.

But how is this to be done? By what means shall the church defend and expound the truth? The answer: by preaching! The churches must preach. Preaching, as we have seen, is itself a tradition. It is alive in our churches. Our churches are characterized by many things: doctrinal awareness and sensitivity, insistence on a godly walk, discipline, generous support of the causes of God's kingdom and more. But the one thing that stands out above all else is our preaching. It is the distinguishing mark of our churches and it is our strength. It is utterly crucial that we be faithful in preaching. The Scriptures teach that by preaching the wisdom of this world is made of no effect and believers are saved. (I Cor. 1) By preaching believers are kept from being tossed to and fro by every wind of the doctrine of deceivers, and they are built up into the Lord Jesus Christ. (Eph. 4) By a preacher who is sent by Christ we hear Christ, are given faith to call upon His name and be saved. (Romans 10) By the sincere milk of the Word which by the gospel is preached unto us we grow. (I Peter 2) We must preach, therefore. It is the only way we shall defend and expound the truth. It is the only way we shall administer the sacraments and exercise discipline. It is the only way we shall hold to our traditions.

Our calling is plain. The seminary must prepare preachers. Professors must therefore vindicate sound doctrine, expound the Holy Scriptures, and hold the traditions so that the truth is developed and preachers are prepared for the churches. The churches must exercise discipline, administer the sacraments, care for the poor, visit the sick, comfort the dying and sorrowful. But above all the churches must preach the Word. At home, on the Lord's Day, in catechism, from house to house, in missions, among all nations wherever God leads and opens doors, the churches must preach.

And, candidates, that is your calling. You graduate tonight out of a marvelous tradition, the Protestant Reformed tradition. God in His eternal love and wonderful grace has preserved that among us. You

have been instructed in those traditions the past three years. Hold to them. Defend them fearlessly. Expound them faithfully. If those traditions are to continue in the churches you above all will have to hold them! And, finally, if I may end on a somewhat personal note, I have often told you in class that you must be many things in the ministry. You must be compassionate pastors after the example of the Good Shepherd of the sheep. You must be able to visit the sick, comfort those in sorrow, bring the Word to those distressed, admonish the wayward. All this and more you must be. But I also always told you and I take this opportunity to exhort you once more, above all else: strive to be good preachers!

May God bless you and our churches.

Synod of 1978—A Report

Rev. Arie den Hartog

Since this was the first opportunity for me to attend synod as a delegate, I looked forward to this with eager anticipation. It is an opportunity that anyone who loves our churches and the work in them would greatly enjoy. With a great sense of excitement, therefore, and a measure of fear and awe I came to the synod. I make this brief report to you not only that you may know some of the decisions made by our synod but also that you might share in a way in the excitement and joy of these labors. This is the synod of our churches and therefore ought to be the concern of all of us.

The first matter of business at synod is always the appointment of officers and the division of labors into the various committees. The result of synod's elections was that Rev. J. Heys was appointed President, Rev. J. Kortering as Vice President, Rev. M. Joostens as First Clerk, and Rev. A. den Hartog as Second Clerk.

As was mentioned by our President, the most exciting and joyful labors of the synod of 1978 had to do with the examination of our three graduating students: Wilbur Bruinsma, Michael De Vries, and Richard Flikkema. On Wednesday afternoon synod listened to each of the three students give a forty-five

minute sermon on a text assigned to him. This is always the first part of the examination because of our conviction that above all a minister of the church of Jesus Christ must have the ability to preach the Word, which will be his chief task. Having heard the three sermons, I was impressed by several things. Our students are trained to preach the same blessed gospel that we have the privilege to hear every Lord's Day. Although we as delegates had the calling to listen particularly carefully to these sermons, I don't think that any of us really feared that one of our students would preach a sermon that would be characterized by false doctrines or modern philosophy. This may easily be taken for granted; but especially when one considers the "preachers" that many seminaries in our land are graduating and synods are approving for candidacy, this should be occasion for great thanksgiving on our part. All the students, though perhaps with varying ability, demonstrated they learned to exegete the Word of God carefully and to preach in a way that was a clear and edifying exposition of God's Word. We have again gained as churches three men who have been trained and equipped to preach the blessed gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ unto us. Thanks be to God!

After the sermons the rest of the examinations continued. The examinations to which our students are subjected are indeed very difficult and thorough, as anyone witnessing them would testify. I can remember my own feelings on the morning before the beginning of examinations. If the Lord in His grace had not sustained me, it would have been impossible to sustain the examination. Imagine being examined for six hours in dogmatics. In this part of the examination especially the students were again and again asked to prove the doctrines of Scripture by quoting texts. In fact, in preparation for synodical exams one must have about 200 proof texts at his finger tips. After dogmatics the students were examined in Bible history, church history and church polity. But why all of this, you might ask. Our whole denomination through its elected representatives had opportunity to witness and give consent to the knowledge and ability and conviction of our students before they were declared candidates. The last part of the examination is called practica. In this part the students were asked practical spiritual questions about their conviction and calling. Rev. C. Hanco every year again is called to take this part of the exam, undoubtedly because he is so well qualified for this task and truly makes this part of the exam a beautiful and significant climax to the whole of the examination.

In a brief but very moving ceremony, all our three graduating students were declared eligible for candidacy in our churches. This joyous moment should be able to be shared by all our people. Once again the Lord has given us men ready to be called to serve in our churches. How greatly we are in need of this gift of the Lord also to replace those of our ministers who will be retiring. May we pray earnestly that God may make these men as faithful and zealous as those of our ministers who became emeritus.

Our President made a very significant general comment about the rest of the labors of our 1978 synod. He noted that the bulk of the agenda had to do with matters relating to work outside of our denominations, especially matters of mission work. A great deal of time is being spent today in many synods on internal issues of doctrinal controversy and matters such as women in office in the church and the status of the homosexual. This is most often due to apostasy and error in the churches these synods represent. Matters are often being considered which should not even come up in synods of the church of Jesus Christ. The Lord has greatly blessed our churches so that the time and efforts of synod could be directed to matters proper to the church of Jesus Christ. Furthermore, that so much time was taken up by mission related matters evidences that the Lord has given us much work to do in carrying out the

glorious commission to preach the gospel even to the uttermost parts of the earth. In comparison to the larger denominations of our land our mission programs, of course, seem small. But we know that the Lord is not dependent on numbers and size. According to the measure of our size and resources the Lord has given us work to perform and this should be the occasion for rejoicing and for zealous involvement in these labors.

The first mission work dealt with was our Home Mission work in Victoria, British Columbia. Our work there does not presently seem to be having a lot of positive fruit. Rev. Harbach is laboring with a few faithful saints there. Synod decided to continue the labors of Rev. Harbach in Victoria. Let us continue to pray for Rev. Harbach and the work being done there. One can well imagine that the work of Rev. Harbach must at times be disappointing and discouraging. We all labor, however, in the assurance that God will never allow His word to return to Him void.

The second mission related matter treated at synod was the Jamaican Mission field. We have had the privilege of laboring directly and indirectly in Jamaica for many years now. This year again two emissaries spent several weeks in Jamaica to evaluate the field. The emissaries Rev. B. Woudenberg and Mr. C. Prince gave a detailed report to the synod and were also given the opportunity to speak on the floor of synod. Their report evidenced that they labored very hard while in Jamaica and even since the time they returned through correspondence with the Jamaican ministers. In general, their report emphasized that the Jamaican mission field remains for our churches an open door for much labor. Our assistance is both needed and desired by the Jamaican churches. There is a great need for a much more extensive evaluation and work of the field. Our synod therefore made several decisions about Jamaica. It was decided to continue laboring in Jamaica through the ministers by means of correspondence, tapes, and instruction programs. The Mission committee was instructed to enlist the continued help of the emissaries in carrying out this work. Synod decided to instruct our Mission Committee to send emissaries to Jamaica again if necessary to provide assistance and guidance to the churches. Synod decided to instruct the Mission Committee to investigate carefully the Jamaican Mission field to determine if a full time missionary is needed, and to come to next year's synod with a complete set of objectives and a plan of action. It was decided also to increase the financial support of the Jamaican ministers and to ask our churches to take up collections for this support. From all these decisions it is evident that the Jamaican Mission field remains for our churches a field where we can expend much labor for the extension and prosperity of the church of Jesus Christ there.

In other mission-related matters synod approved the calling of a second home missionary and appointed South Holland as a calling church. Our Mission committee continues to use the Reformed Witness Hour in its work and was granted approval of a budget \$10,000 for this purpose. The budget in the amount of \$60,320.00 for Home Missions was approved.

At the writing of this article synod is anticipating the treatment of one more major item of missions.

This will deal with the field of Singapore. I will report this as well as other significant acts of synod to you in my next installment.

(Editor's note: Due to the fact that Synod of 1978 did not begin until June 7, this is only a partial report. The second installment will appear in the August issue. We thank Rev. den Hartog for taking the time during the busy labors of Synod to prepare this report.)

SPECIAL REPORT

More About Singapore

Rev. J. Slopsema

In the April 1, 1978 issue of the Standard Bearer there appeared an article entitled "Singapore." In this article the Foreign Mission Committee informed you that it had sent two emissaries, Elder Dewey Engelsma and myself, to Singapore to investigate a possible field of labor with a group of young people who call themselves the Gospel Letters And Tracts Department (GLTD). This article, written on the basis of past correspondence with the GLTD, was necessarily brief and incomplete. Having finished our investigation, however, we would now like to give you a more detailed idea of the situation as we found it in Singapore.

Singapore itself is a rather small island on the tip of the Malayan peninsula, approximately 24 miles long and 15 miles across. Nevertheless, it is the fourth largest seaport in the world and boasts a population of over 2.5 million people, which makes for very crowded living conditions. The largest percentage of the population is Chinese, although there is a significant percentage of Malaysians and Indians as well. Singapore is predominantly a pagan country embracing many false religions. One can find Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus, Chinese ancestor worshippers, and others in Singapore. The Christian church is also present in Singapore, with many denominations represented. In addition to Roman Catholic and Anglican, there are also Methodist, Baptist, and Presbyterian Churches on the island. But these have by and large followed the general trend today of apostasy. All we can say is that at best they are devoted to Arminianism. And it was in that spiritual climate that we found the GLTD.

What is the GLTD? Who are these people?

To understand the GLTD we must first understand some of their history. The GLTD had its beginnings a little over 10 years ago as the Monks Hill Bible Club. This was actually a Bible study group formed by a number of new converts attending the Monks Hill Secondary School. In the course of time, however, the members of this Bible Club turned their attention more and more to evangelism and the distribution of Christian literature and tracts. This, by the way, is still one of the main concerns of the group today. But in harmony with this, they changed their name to the Gospel Letters and Tracts Department. Although the GLTD has always been an independent organization, many of its members at one time were also members of the New Life Bible Presbyterian Church in Singapore. But about two years ago most of the GLTD withdrew its membership from Life Church. The reason was dissatisfaction with certain practices, viz., Life Church employed a Hindu and a Roman Catholic to teach in its school. Consequently, most of the members of the GLTD are not affiliated with any church. At about the same time that the GLTD broke away from Life Church, they received a Baptist missionary pastor. Actually this missionary pastor was one of the original members of the GLTD who had gone to the U.S. to study for the ministry in a Baptist Seminary. His Baptist teachings, however, especially his views on baptism, were not received by the GLTD. As a result he left to labor elsewhere.

At present the GLTD has approximately 120 members. With one exception they are all single individuals. The exception is a man without children whose wife is a Hindu. The GLTD is also very young. Most of its members are 18 to 21 years of age. In

addition to this they are all converts from paganism. They have all been born of pagan parents, reared in pagan homes, and indoctrinated in the idolatry of paganism. In fact, their parents and families are still in the darkness of heathendom. With but two exceptions, each of these young people is the only one of his or her family that has been brought to the Christian faith. The two exceptions involve sisters that were led to conversion. These young people, therefore, have never had the advantage of a covenant home or upbringing. In fact, many of them have been persecuted and beaten by their parents for their faith.

As we have suggested, the GLTD is not an organized church with properly ordained office-bearers. It is a society that is seeking to be organized into a church. And even now they are for all practical purposes functioning as a church with a full-orbed "church life." The exact structure that this assumes is of course different than ours. And the reason is that their situation is different than ours. Perhaps the chief determining factor is their difficulty in meeting together as a group. Most of them have no means of transportation. In addition to this their parents discourage and even militate against participation in the activities of the GLTD.

Bearing this in mind, we can understand that the GLTD meets only once a Sunday for worship. It is simply impossible for most of them to meet twice. They do, however, make the most of the situation. For their worship service lasts from 2 to 3 hours as their leaders on a rotating basis exhort them from the Word of God.

In addition to this the members of the GLTD meet during the week for Bible study, much as we do in our Bible societies, although, again, because of the difficulties of getting to meetings, they do not all meet together in one place. Instead there are little groups scattered here and there throughout the city of Singapore, meeting wherever there happens to be a concentration of members. Some meet in schools, especially those that attend school. But one night we also met with a small group in a park under a street lamp. They have no other place to meet.

The GLTD also provides instruction for its members, much as we do in catechism. This instruction is especially for those who are young in the faith. For this purpose they have three "Saturday Club Meetings" and several Sunday School Classes. Attendance is voluntary, however, because of the difficulty that many members have in coming.

In addition to this the GLTD also has a Ladies' and a Men's Fellowship that meets every week for varied activities. They have three prayer meetings a week — one on Wednesday evening and two on Friday. The Friday meetings are for those who attend school and are not able to attend the Wednesday evening session.

They also have an annual Bible Camp in December (it is warm all year round in Singapore) and a Vacation Bible School, both of which are for the purpose of evangelism. The GLTD, therefore, is for all practical purposes operating as a church.

As far as the spiritual life and walk of the GLTD are concerned, we were deeply impressed. They are very much devoted to the cause of God and very careful to conform themselves to the law of God. In many ways we can look to them as examples. We found, for example, absolutely no trace of the paganism of their past or of their families. One might expect a problem with this, especially after reading Paul's epistles to the church at Corinth. But we found not an inkling of this. The members of the GLTD walk very antithetically over against the paganism of Singapore. They are truly lights shining in the midst of darkness.

In addition to this we found that the GLTD also knows how to give. The average worker in Singapore earns much less than do we. We were told that a common laborer earns about \$8.00 a day. In addition to this most of the members of the GLTD do not work but go to school. Yet, while we were there their collections on Sunday were from \$300 to \$500. We were told that they have been as high as \$800. In addition to this, the GLTD provided us with free lodging and gave us \$100, which probably would have covered all our expenses had we been able to adjust ourselves more to the oriental culture. The GLTD is definitely not looking for a financial handout. Their interest in us is purely of a spiritual nature.

In addition to this, the GLTD also knows how to suffer for Christ's sake. As we have indicated, many of the GLTD have been beaten and persecuted by their parents when they first came to the Christian faith. But yet they persevered in the faith. And in almost all cases, we were told, their parents became more tolerant when they saw the transformation that the grace of God had worked in the lives of their children. Perhaps more striking yet is the fact that in spite of all this, these young people hold no ill-feeling towards their parents. They love their parents, are concerned for them and their salvation, seek to please their parents, and are very obedient in the home. Our own young people would do well to follow their example.

Where does the GLTD stand doctrinally?

The GLTD does not have a doctrinal stand. What we mean by this is that the GLTD is not doctrinally one. They do have a "Statement of Faith"; but this Statement is brief, incomplete, and allows for many different and divergent views. In harmony with this, the GLTD embraces anything from Arminianism to a somewhat Reformed position.

We found in our discussions with the GLTD that many of them want to be four-point Calvinists. On the one hand, they want to maintain sovereign predestination, total depravity, irresistible grace, and preservation of the saints. But on the other hand, they also want a universal atonement of Christ, along with a universal love of God and a universal offer of salvation. They make the common distinction between the hidden and revealed will of God. Although God sovereignly elected some and not all (hidden will), He nevertheless reveals Himself as loving all and seeking the salvation of all in Christ. And it appears as though they want this for the sake of the addressability of the gospel. They have difficulty seeing how one can effectively do mission work unless he can come to the unbeliever and say, "God loves you, Christ died for you," etc.

Once again, however, this does not represent the position of all of GLTD. Some have difficulties with other of the five points of Calvinism. And others accept all five points, although at the same time they do speak of a common, non-saving love (grace) of God.

Perhaps this wide range and diversity of doctrine in the GLTD can be explained from their history. Until about two years ago, the whole group was totally Arminian. But through reading, some of the leaders came into contact with Reformed theology and started to develop in that direction. As they did so, they were able to take some of the members with them, some part way, and others hardly at all.

What must we think of the GLTD?

In many, many ways the GLTD is to be highly commended. In many ways they also put us to shame. Indeed, the GLTD is not without its weaknesses and shortcomings. And they will be the first to

admit that. Their biggest weakness is in their doctrinal position, or lack of it. But considering the paganism out of which they came, considering the total Arminianism they embraced only two years ago, considering their youth and lack of experience, considering the church situation in Singapore, considering many things, we were utterly amazed to find what we did in the GLTD. While many today are departing from the truth and the sacred ways of God, these young people without the benefit of older leaders have been advancing towards the truth. Amazing!

What is our future with the GLTD?

The GLTD is looking for help and leadership. They recognize their need for growth and development. They also recognize that they can get no real help from the existing churches in Singapore. They came to us looking for help. They heard us; in many ways they were receptive to us; we were able to show them many things from the Scriptures, even on matters of disagreement. But both they and we recognized that it is premature to send a missionary to labor among them. For the differences that exist between us have been clearly spelled out. And now they need time to think things over. Is the Reformed faith as we maintain it the direction in which they want to go? They want to make sure. Remember, it was only a year ago that they had trouble with a Baptist missionary pastor. And so it was decided that we would begin a tape program of instruction with them, following the Heidelberg Catechism. This will give them the opportunity to decide in the future whether or not they will want a missionary from our churches.

The Foreign Mission Committee asks for your support in this and that you remember this work and the GLTD in your prayers.

ALL AROUND US

What's Up at the C.R.C. Synod?

Rev. G. Van Baren

By the time these lines are read, the C.R.C. Synod should be history. At the time of this writing, it is still several weeks away. The issues will have been decided by the time this *Standard Bearer* is sent out. One wonders what those decisions will be. Likely, on

some of the more controversial issues, these will be returned to the hands of a study committee. Some of the issues are reported in the June 1978 issue of *Outlook*. Rev. Peter De Jong reports. On dancing:

Among the items that concern the college and seminary, what seems likely to catch the most attention is the follow-up of last year's announced board decision to actively promote dancing on campus. Last year's synod turned down a motion to disapprove of that policy but directed that reactions to it be sent to the board. The board now reports that it has received hundreds of reactions, at least 85% of them critical, but is still of a mind to follow the announced course and that it expects the synod to support it.

The opposition against social dancing is evident. Yet the Board of Calvin College and Seminary is correct: the Synod's decisions in 1966 on movie attendance and 1971 in answer to an overture of Classis Hamilton on dancing give no alternative to Synod but to approve. To deny the request would be to contradict earlier decisions; to approve might stir up a hornets' nest. We await with curiosity to see how the Synod extricates itself from this problem.

Another controversial subject at the Synod will be that on liturgy. A standing committee has been grinding out a series of new forms for use in the churches. These forms were made optional within the churches. Now, it seems, the committee is concerned that there is too great diversity among the churches. It proposes that Synod try to provide limits on the variations of forms which may be used. This might create problems for those most conservative congregations who still want to use the old and tried forms. The *Outlook* states:

Now the committee, fearful that this policy (of using various forms) has created "anarchy and sheer congregationalism" determines that this freedom of the churches must be reined in. It "believes that it is time for the synod to begin to set . . . limits". It proposes to set up an order for the Lord's Supper in which it indicates what words must be used and at what points and to what degree they may be altered. This order may also be the order for other services than those at which the Lord's Supper is celebrated. Included as an option in it is what it calls "the Passing of the Peace." By this the Committee means Paul's "holy kiss" for which it would substitute a handshake and words such as "The peace of the Lord be always with you". The Report goes on to indicate how the three current forms for the Lord's Supper may be divided up and used piecemeal in different parts of the service. The net impression the reader gains from the whole business is that it is extremely and needlessly complex and arbitrarily cuts up our too many existing forms.

. . . To help guide the churches in the confusion it is creating, the Committee proposes that the Synod approve a loose-leaf Service Book which can be constantly changed!

Churches are asked to bring to the Committee their reactions to the new marriage form which was

approved for trial last year, before September 1, 1978. That form in its capitulation to the modern liberation fad in the vows pointedly refused to recognize the God-given distinction between the role of man and woman in marriage and even tastelessly presumed to instruct God in the prayer how He ought to counsel the partners when they would become bored with each other!

One wonders about some of the doctrine expressed in the new forms found in the report. Where does the Bible ever intimate that the Christian "may joyfully bear the cross of Christ". We have crosses to bear, but never bear Christ's unique cross! Is this an unintentional slip or a deliberate heresy?

Again, although the Bible instructs us to confess our sins to the Lord and to one another as we sin against him or her, where does it ever instruct us to confess them to "the whole communion of saints in heaven and earth"? We should not say such things if we do not mean them. If we include such material in our liturgy just because it sounds grandiloquent, are we not in danger of turning the whole business into hypocrisy?

The article continues by pointing out that there are various reports which are concerned with the position of the minister within the C.R.C. There have been increasing problems with ministers who leave the ministry as well as problems related to ministers who begin labors not very related to the ministry of the Word. One wonders if this whole matter has gone much too far already for the Synod ever to correct this as it should. The report says:

The Minister's Information Service notes "that there is an increasing concern about the question of being released from the office of the ministry and from the ordination vows. Would it therefore be wise to establish a period of probation prior to ordination? Or to remove the implication of permanency attached to the ordination vows?"

. . . Increasingly ministers of our churches are being placed in roles which are quite different from the ordinate pastorate. When questions about how far a minister's ordination might be stretched to cover such duties arose two years ago, a committee was appointed to study the matter. Its report proposes that the description of the minister's task as "spiritual in character and directly related to the ministerial calling" be abandoned.

It proposes a series of changes in Church Order articles 11-14 to deal with these matters. Some of these details seem to have some merit. What I find somewhat disturbing is the Committee's baldly stated assumption "that most stipulations governing the offices . . . are neither sacred nor biblically enjoined. To put it another way, the nature and extent of ecclesiastical office is what the church says it is". Although we all recognize that the Bible does not give us detailed regulations to cover every area of the churches' life, doesn't such a sweeping assumption as

this contradict the principle that Christ governs His church by His Word and Spirit? In a variety of matters one senses that we pay less and less attention to anything the Bible says, but isn't it somewhat startling to see this Committee baldly claim such independence of Scripture as a basic church principle?

Increasingly, too, the C.R.C. is becoming involved in the "social" issues of the day. This hardly conforms to the old Reformed principle that the ecclesiastical gatherings treat only ecclesiastical matters. Many rejoice that finally the church is becoming involved in this world's problems. However, when reading the report in the *Outlook* one is struck not only by the extent to which our "mother" church has been doing this, but also by the absolute nonsense in which they have involved themselves. Listen to this:

Last year the Race Committee (SCORR), burdened with an impossibly broad mandate (to "eliminate racism, both causes and effects . . . through the world . . .") and no assigned job, brought in a somewhat dispirited report. The Synod, however, continued it and raised its quota which had been cut the previous year. . . .

The Committee's report includes the 6-page "Koinonia Declaration" of a group of white Afrikaners who are objecting to some of their South African government's policies. The Race Committee wants our Synod to endorse this declaration which condemns both Black as well as White nationalism. "Nor are we convinced that both White and Black nationalist movements ought to be condemned with equal force, as the Declaration seems to do".

Of its \$114,000 budget, \$50,000 is for salaries and operating expenses and the rest is given to other agencies (and minority scholarships). How can giving special "minority scholarships," restricted to certain races eliminate race discrimination?

(Or, on "World Hunger"): A Task Force on World Hunger" faces us with 70 pages of lengthy discussion on poverty in the world, some common sense recommendations that we waste and spend too much and ought to be more saving and give more help to the needy. Not content, however, with such practical and generally acceptable advice, it would have us take on the job of *restructuring the world!* It is confident that it will meet with opposition as it criticizes our "recreational vehicles and Cadillacs" and "Florida vacations"; it proposes that we give one percent of our income to a world hunger program, and vastly expand the work of the CRWRC. Since its aim to restructure the world system, "structural or systematic change both in North America and worldwide," is a bit ambitious even for that agency, it suggests that the Synod continue the work of this Committee to take on that problem. Without underestimating the competence of our modest "task force" to handle such an undertaking, don't we have to face the question whether the Lord has assigned this job to our churches (Luke 12:14)?

(Or, on "Social Justice"): A Committee to consider establishing a denominational "standing committee for social justice" first considers objections that this is going beyond the proper province of the church, then finds precedents we have established for a move in this direction and finally recommends establishing such committees on all church levels.

And there comes again a report from a third study committee concerning women in office.

We observe that it, in what may prove to be the most controversial item of the Synod's business, would lead us to the same conclusion that the Bible tells us nothing clearly and that the church is free to do as it pleases. It may be worth recalling that this is the last of three reports that in one way or another have been dealing with this matter. In 1973 an 80-page report went through the Bible citing the many examples of the prominent places given women in order to prove their equality and dismissed anything the Bible taught about their not being put in the same offices as men as the expression of the male-dominated ancient culture.

In 1975 another committee first plainly exposed the fallacious reasoning of the earlier report and called attention to New Testament passages which showed that special offices were not given to women. Then it observed that if these passages were taken literally they would forbid a few things which our churches are already doing. "Therefore" the Committee sought and found excuses which it argued made such Bible teachings no longer applicable. By this curious process the Committee reached the same conclusion that the Bible didn't oppose the ordination of Women. The Synod of 1975 appointed a new committee which was to study the way in which the Bible should be understood to apply to such matters.

This Committee found itself sharply divided, four of the professors (from Calvin College and Seminary) on one side, three others, two from Reformed Theological Seminary in Jackson, Mississippi and one from Reformed Bible College) on the other. In that situation the Committee, instead of presenting two reports in which the positions of each group could be clearly stated and argued, was prevailed upon to stay together and attempt to bring one report which probably satisfies no one. Although the differing conclusions are indicated at the end, the argumentation, as Professor Van Groningen, himself a committee member, pointed out in last month's *Outlook*, is confusing and far from satisfactory in many ways.

. . . As one moves through it, however, he notices an emphasis emerging that stresses the way biblical material was culturally conditioned. . . . "Care should be taken not to transfer such applications directly to the different situations obtaining today."

Again, the question may be considered whether a given word in Scripture, which appears to be the last word the canon speaks on the subject, is possibly open to the future for further development in connection with the coming of God's kingdom". Not

surprisingly, the majority of the Committee, seeking for reasons or excuses to defend the modern movement to remove all distinctions between men and women in the church, as it refers to some selected Scripture passages, ignoring many others, laboring especially to dispute Paul's clear injunctions in I Cor. 14:33-36 and I Timothy 2:9-15 arrives at the desired conclusion that "the biblical evidence for allowing or denying women admission to the office of elder and minister as presently understood is not clear". It would now open the office of deacon to women, but would not yet admit them to become ministers or elders especially since "most of our churches do not seem to be ready at this time for women elders and women pastors".

Two of the minority, although dissuaded from bringing their own separate report differ from the majority's conclusion. They find some evidence in the Bible for permitting women deacons (Rom. 16:1 and 1 Tim. 3:1) and would permit their ordination to that office, "provided that their work is distinguished from that of the elders". They "find no evidence in

the Bible for opening the offices of elder and minister to women" and see the Apostle Paul (I Cor. 14:34 and I Tim. 2:12) stating "that a woman is not to have authority over a man". They would have the Synod declare that "the offices of elder and minister not be opened to women".

Striking, that though these two reports disagree on the ordination of women into the offices of elder and minister, both agree that they may serve as deacons. In that connection, I recall a lecture given to supporters of "women in office" a few years ago in which the speaker exactly advocated this approach: first get women into the office of deacon — then work for elder, and finally for minister. So, whether the C.R.C. takes committee "A" or committee "B" report, the end result will be the same.

I guess that I'm just happy that I need only serve in our little Synod so that I won't have to become involved in all of those "momentous decisions" which the C.R.C. Synod faces.

THE STRENGTH OF YOUTH

A Letter From New Zealand

Rev. R. Van Overloop
100 Sparks Rd.
Christchurch 2
New Zealand
April 27, 1978

Young People of the
Protestant Reformed Churches,
c/o *The Standard Bearer*

Dear Young People,

Greetings to you in the Name of Jesus Christ Who is the King of His people and the Head of His Church.

Since our last letter to you, two months have quickly passed. By the time you receive this letter you will be nearing the end of the school year. Your thoughts will be turning to summer work, warmer weather, and to the coming Young People's Convention. On this side of the equator the leaves are turning color and falling from the trees. Also the temperatures are growing increasingly cooler.

Our work here in the Christchurch Orthodox Presbyterian congregation seems to be progressing well. The meetings of which we wrote in our last letter are continuing and prove beneficial to all involved. Besides those meetings, there are more activities which receive our attention.

Although our efforts remain centered in Christchurch, we are now doing some work in Wellington. Wellington, which is the capital of New Zealand, is on the lowest tip of the North Island and is about 40 flying minutes northeast of Christchurch. I am flying up to Wellington every other week to conduct a Bible doctrine study class. This work is being done in the hopes that it will serve as a means to gather others who are interested in a truly Biblical teaching. There are three or four families who serve as the base for this work. It is also hoped that in time the numbers of the group will be large enough to organize a congregation which can be a part of the Orthodox Presbyterian Churches.

Every Monday evening I am meeting with four or five young people. None of these young people is a member of the Orthodox Presbyterian denomination. Rather a couple are members of the Presbyterian Churches of New Zealand, one is from a Baptist congregation, and one is a member of the Anglican churches. In these meetings we are considering the basic tenets of the Reformed faith. The reception of this instruction has been very good.

Also, I have been asked to teach a one-hour-per-week course at Middleton Grange School. Middleton Grange is a private Christian school which my two

older children attend. This ten week course which I am to teach will be on Doctrines of the Bible. This course has been offered as an elective to students who are in their last year at Middleton (the equivalent to high school seniors). There will be approximately thirty students in this class. Because the student body of Middleton is from a varied church background, this experience should prove very interesting.

One thing has forcibly struck me time and again since I have been in New Zealand. That is the fact that the churches of New Zealand have almost entirely neglected their young people, giving them stones for bread. Very few, if any, receive sound Biblical and doctrinal teaching.

This lack of covenantal instruction is not so much a reflection of Presbyterianism as such, for many of the older people who had been brought up in the Presbyterian churches can remember instruction in the Westminster Shorter Catechism. Nor is the lack of covenantal instruction the attitude of the Orthodox Presbyterian Churches in particular. Rather the cause of this lack of covenantal instruction in most of the congregations in New Zealand is great apostasy from the truth and the false notion that an evangelistic program will meet the need for instruction. And, as you know, this is not unique to New Zealand. This terrible sin is world-wide. Evangelistic programs have taken the place of sound catechetical instruction. The youth programs which do exist are more social than educational. The children of these mainline denominations are very little brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

It is the principles of the primacy of the home, of instruction of the youth, and of the centrality of the church which the Orthodox Presbyterian Churches are dedicated to restoring. The present generation of New Zealanders is without the benefits of sound covenant instruction in the home and church. In addition, they have not had the blessed privilege of solidly Reformed preaching.

This has made me aware of how blessed you are to receive catechetical instruction thirty weeks a year for eleven or more years. I hope you realize how important and vital this instruction is. Its tremendous importance has been impressed upon me by witnessing the lack of it.

For you the catechism season has ended for another year. But you can resolve to work harder in the catechism classes when they resume in the fall. During summer vacation do not take a vacation from continued study of God's Word. Strive to be more faithful in your own personal devotions. A well trained youth will not forget his training when he is old.

In His service,
R. Van Overloop

(Editor's Note: Did you see that return address at the beginning of this letter? Young and old, how about dropping the Van Overloops a line? I know they welcome letters. And: by all means, send it airmail; surface mail takes a couple months. HCH)

MY SHEEP HEAR MY VOICE

Letter To Timothy

Dear Timothy,

The time has come in our discussion to talk about the office and work of the elders in the Church of Jesus Christ.

In previous letters we have already talked about the basic idea of the office of elders: how it stands connected with the Old Testament offices; how it is related to the office of the apostles and the office of the ministry of the Word; what is the chief feature of this office as a special office in the Church of Christ; and such like subjects. Now we must turn to more practical matters in connection with this subject.

There are a few remarks which I wish to make first of all with respect to the calling of elders.

It is certainly true, as the Form for the Ordination of Elders and Deacons makes clear, that elders too are called by Christ through His Church. The office of believers functions in the call of elders because Christ is pleased to put men into office through the means of the choice of the believers in the congregation. Even this election of elders, though through the office of believers, is under the supervision and direction of the Consistory itself. Our Church Order provides for two methods: The Consistory may present to the congregation either a double number from which half are chosen, or may simply submit a slate of officebearers for approval. In any case, the Consistory exercises supervision, while the congregation makes the choice or gives approval. Here too is part

of the genius of Reformed Church Polity of which we spoke in an earlier letter. Here too there is neither democracy nor dictatorship: both believers and office-bearers have their own assigned role. Both aspects of this are necessary and important.

But what is a striking aspect of this call is its similarity to the call of ministers. In Article 4 of our Church Order, four separate elements are included in the *lawful* call of the ministers of the Word: election, examination, approbation, and ordination. Our fathers considered, rightly, that these four elements had to be present if a minister of the Word was to be called in such a way that it met with the requirement of decency and orderliness in the Church of Christ.

Now, at first glance, we might think that these four elements are not present in the call of elders, and, for that matter, deacons. Nevertheless, a careful examination of Article 22 of the Church Order will reveal that this is indeed the case.

There is a slightly different order here because of the situation which we have in our Churches. In the case of ministers, election precedes the examination. This is because all our students from the Seminary are examined on the Synod, declared eligible for a call if they pass their exam, are elected by a local congregation to be pastors, and then are examined by Classis after the election in the local congregation takes place. But elders are really examined prior to the election.

The same is true of approbation. In the case of ministers the approbation takes place after the election if the Consistory itself chooses a minister; while if the minister is chosen by a vote of the congregation from a trio or duo, then the approbation is part of the election itself. The approbation of elders takes place at the time the nomination is announced, and as the congregation votes for new officebearers or approves of a slate presented to it by the Consistory.

But the elements are all present.

We need not discuss this in detail, except for the matter of examination. One might think, at first glance, that no provision is made for the examination of elders. But this is not the case. Although the Church Order only speaks of "suitable" persons, the Scriptures themselves make it clear that elders must have particular qualifications. These qualifications are especially listed in I Timothy 3:1-7 although they are stated or implied in other passages of Scripture. And it is concerning this matter that I want to say a few things to you.

The first thing that needs saying is that good elders who meet the qualifications of Scripture are of utmost importance in the Church of Jesus Christ. We sometimes call our system of Church government "presbyterian"; and this refers especially to the fact

that elders occupy such an important place in the Church. In a way they are more important even than the minister. I do not mean to minimize the importance of the preaching of the Word, of course. After all, this is the chief means of grace. But the fact nevertheless remains that the welfare of a given congregation is greatly dependent upon the elders who serve in it. In any given congregation, ministers come and go. They never stay very long. And it is good that they do not. But elders are men who are members of a given congregation perhaps all their life. They stay when a minister leaves and a new pastor is called. They are the officebearers who give stability and continuity to the congregation. Upon them, above all, falls the responsibility of the Church over which the Lord has placed them. The spiritual strength of a congregation can often be weighed by the quality of its elders. Others from different ecclesiastical circles, who have never known what the office of elder is really all about, after having learned concerning the idea of the office of elder, stand amazed at the institution of elders as it functions within Reformed and Presbyterian circles. Anyone who minimizes this office either does not understand it or has no regard for the well-being of the Church of Christ.

It is for this reason that good elders must always be chosen. The Consistory has a very serious responsibility here. It is so easy to let other motives determine the nomination when that time comes in the early fall. The Consistory might, e.g., consider putting a certain man on nomination because he is always somewhat critical of the work of the Consistory, and the feeling is that if only he would serve once in the Consistory and realize what the work really was he would cease being so critical. Or the Consistory might put a man on nomination out of some motivation of sympathy because he is overlooked in the congregation, neglected in the life of the communion of the saints, or whatever. Or he may be nominated because he is an outstanding man in the community, a man of influence among his fellow men, a man successful in business with known administrative gifts. And even though such a man may be lacking in the spiritual qualifications necessary to rule in the Church of Christ, he may be put on nomination for these reasons. There are many different reasons why a particular man may be nominated which are not proper.

The Church needs the best possible elders. And the Consistory must take special care that the best possible men are nominated for this work. There must be special care exercised to nominate men who have been endowed by God with the gifts which God Himself has decreed as necessary for the work of this office. The very welfare of the congregation is at stake.

The complaint is sometimes made that Consistories have a difficult time finding enough men for a nomination. There are, I suppose, various reasons for this. Sometimes there are not sufficient qualified men in a congregation. Unless the congregation is very small (and, by the way, the presence of qualified men to serve as officebearers is one prerequisite in the Church Order for the organization of a new congregation), the absence of qualified men is a shame on the congregation. If it is really true that there are no qualified men, then that congregation is a spiritually weak congregation and ought to take steps to correct that condition.

Sometimes there are qualified men in the congregation, but these men, for one reason or another, are reluctant to serve. It is almost impossible to get them to allow their name to remain on nomination. This also is wrong. It is sometimes true that the able men in a congregation are very busy in other work. They are perhaps busy in the School Boards of the Christian Schools or in various committees of the higher ecclesiastical assemblies so that they have little time to add to their busy schedules. They have family responsibilities which require their attention. But the fact is that the calling to serve in the Church of Christ is a calling which is first. It must be considered above other responsibilities as a call of God. While it is true that no father may neglect his family, no other work within the Church is as important as the work of an officebearer. This always comes first. And Consistories ought to remember that they ought not to leave a name off the nomination because such a person is serving on the School Board if such a one is clearly the one most obviously qualified for the work.

But sometimes qualified men simply will not serve. This, for whatever the reason may be, is not good. No man has the right to say No to God. Such a man may, of course, have reasons for not serving of which the Consistory is unaware. Then, if he brings them to the attention of the Consistory, he will be taken off the nomination. But if he has no such reasons, he may not say No. He may feel himself to be unqualified, but this is in every case true of a dedicated child of God. The spiritual qualifications which enable a man to serve are given from God.

The congregation has a certain responsibility also in this respect. Every man must consider the possibility that God may call him to the work of the Church. We have really some strange notions about this. A young man who desires to enter the ministry of the Word must himself take the initiative. He may be encouraged by Godly parents and by understanding officebearers; but the initiative is finally his as he pursues his course of study, applies for entrance into the Seminary, and performs his studies in preparation for the ministry. But for some reason we frown upon

this when it comes to other officebearers.

I know that it is not right for a man to set himself forward and actively campaign for a place on the nomination. This smacks too much of what the apostle John condemns as "loving to have the preeminence." (See III John, 9.) And affairs in the Church of Christ are not political and must never become such. Nevertheless, a man of God deeply committed to the cause of God and of His Church, ought to face the question, in integrity of heart before God's face, whether God has a place for him in the work of elder or deacon. And though he must wait patiently until God calls him to such a work, he must nevertheless prepare himself from youth on for this possibility. He must ponder, as honestly as he can, whether God has given him the gifts necessary for this calling. He must make the study of God's Word a part of his life. He must involve himself in the affairs of the Church and the work of the people of God as much as in him lies. And He must develop those gifts which God has given him so that if the time comes that God calls him to this work, he is ready. It is not only true that there is nothing wrong with this, but this is his solemn obligation. And if each, in his own place, does this, then there will always be men who are ready and able to serve.

It is good, Timothy, that on family visitation and in your work in the congregation you remind your people of this.

Fraternally in the Lord,
H. Hanko

Know the standard
and follow it.



Read the
STANDARD BEARER!

THE VOICE OF OUR FATHERS

Church Discipline (2)

Prof. Robert D. Decker

"In the meantime we believe, though it is useful and beneficial, that those, who are rulers of the Church, institute and establish certain ordinances among themselves for maintaining the body of the Church; yet they ought studiously to take care, that they do not depart from those things which Christ, our only Master, hath instituted. And therefore, we reject all human inventions, and all laws, which man would introduce into the worship of God, thereby to compel the conscience in any manner whatever. Therefore we admit only of that which tends to nourish and preserve concord, and unity, and to keep all men in obedience to God. For this purpose, excommunication or church discipline is requisite, with the several circumstances belonging to it, according to the Word of God."

The Belgic Confession, Article XXXII

There is a woeful lack of church discipline among the churches of our day. Practically anyone, no matter what he believes and no matter how he lives, may be a member in good standing in most churches. Adulterers, homosexuals, heretics, desecrators of the Sabbath, those who neglect the means of grace, and more are not only not admonished for their sins but granted access to the Lord's table and considered to be members of the church in good and regular standing. This same disregard for discipline is making deep inroads into the Reformed Churches both in this country and abroad. False teaching abounds; open attacks upon the *Confessions* are countenanced. Godly practices long observed by the Reformed tradition are now denied. Well nigh "anything goes." The attitude toward discipline is that it is something negative and punitive. Discipline impedes the progress of the gospel and the growth of the church. To theological development and growth discipline is considered stifling. Precisely why this is the case we shall consider later. Suffice it to say at this point that this is certainly not the attitude reflected in our *Confession*.

In view of this sad situation it is perhaps best to begin our discussion of the principles of church discipline as taught in this Article by examining the purpose of discipline in God's Church. The *Confession* speaks of "useful" and "beneficial ordinances" as those "which tend to nourish and preserve concord, and unity, and to keep all men in obedience to God. For this purpose excommunication or church discipline is requisite." The purpose of church discipline is, therefore, to maintain the peace and unity of the church and to keep its members in obedience to God. Discipline is not something nega-

tive and it certainly is not punitive. It has as its aim the preservation of the church and the salvation (not punishment) of its members. So strongly did our Reformed fathers believe this that they went so far as to speak of excommunication itself as the "extreme remedy." (Cf. the *Church Order*, Article 76) Even that "last remedy" was viewed by the fathers as the means whereby God might make the sinner ashamed of his sins and give the church reason again to rejoice in him. (Cf. Form Of Excommunication) When the church disciplines an erring member it does so in order to bring that member to repentance. The church desires the salvation of the sinner. If that sinner remains impenitent and hardened then the "extreme remedy must be applied.

The reason for this latter is that the unity and peace of the church must be preserved. Sin causes a breach; it creates schism in the church. Sin is also like a cancer. If tolerated it will spread and pervade the church infecting the members. The purpose of discipline therefore is the preservation of the purity of the church and its unity in the truth of God's Word. In this connection and this is undoubtedly the deepest purpose of church discipline, the church exercises discipline in order that the name of Christ be not blasphemed but rather praised. The Church after all belongs to Christ. It was given to Christ by God through the election of grace before the foundations of the world. For that Church Christ laid down His life at the cross and took it again in the resurrection. The Church is loved and preserved by Christ and will be glorified by Christ in the new heaven and earth. All this means that when there is offence in the church, the offence of unrepented sin, Christ is offended. Festering sin, whether in doctrine or in life,

brings shame and dishonor to the name of Christ. That offence must be removed in the way of the exercise of discipline according to the principles of the Word of God.

In sum, therefore, it may be said that the purpose of church discipline is this: 1) To keep in the Church of God the believers who are born there; 2) To take into the Church of God believers born outside of it; 3) To put out of the Church of God the wicked who are born there; and 4) To keep out of the Church of God the wicked who are outside but who try to get in. And, all this must be done for the sake of the glory of the name of Christ Who is the Savior and Head of the Church.

For this purpose certain ordinances or rules must be instituted and established by those who are the rulers in the Church, viz. the ministers and the elders. (Cf. Articles XXX and XXXI) These ordinances, however, must not be mere human inventions which "bind and compel the conscience in any manner whatever." This was written, no doubt, with the Roman Catholic Church in mind. The Church of Rome bound the conscience of the saint to the church by all kinds of rules governing all of life; e.g., rules of penance, indulgence, contrition, etc. This must not be. Rather those who are charged by Christ with the rule of His Body must "studiously take care, that they do not depart from those things which Christ, our only Master, hath instituted." The ordinances by which the church is to be governed, therefore, must be based on what Christ has instituted in the Holy Scriptures. Only those ordinances which are directly founded upon the Word of God are valid rules for maintaining the Church of God. Whatever is not founded upon Scripture is mere human invention and has no place in the church. Always we ought to obey God rather than men! This is true of our Church Order of Dordt which implements the principles of the *Confession*. A study of the Church Order will indicate that it succinctly and in a very beautiful way sets forth the ordinances of the Church of Christ in harmony with the teachings of the Scriptures.

But what is church discipline? The answer is: the preaching of the Word. Preaching is the principle way in which the keys of the kingdom of heaven are exercised. The elders of the church bring the Word of admonition and call the erring to repentance. But the fundamental means of discipline remains the preaching of the Word. Preaching is authoritative. Through preaching Christ speaks. That Word never returns void but always accomplishes God's purpose in the saving of the elect and in the hardening of unbelievers. Discipline simply cannot exist where the preaching is corrupted. Likewise, for the same reason, weakness in discipline will inevitably lead to a corruption in the

preaching of the Word and the administration of the sacraments. This is precisely the trouble in many churches today — also in those of the Reformed tradition. The pulpits emit an uncertain sound; the Word is not preached in all its beauty and power. Consequently discipline wanes. False doctrines and disobedience to the law of God are the result. God's people are ignorant of the truth and become confused and thus are easily led astray. In this kind of environment false teachers flourish.

It ought to be understood that the church disciplines only for one sin, that of impenitence. Where there is repentance that is the end of the matter. All the members of the church are sinners, but the impenitent must be disciplined. According to the Church Order (Cf. Articles 71-80) there are several steps which must be followed with an impenitent sinner. The first is suspension from the Lord's table (sometimes called "silent censure.") This not only involves barring the sinner from communion lest the Lord's table be desecrated; but it also involves barring him from all membership privileges. Such a sinner has no right to vote at a congregational meeting, no right to the sacrament of baptism, no right to protest or appeal in matters other than his own case. This meaning of this suspension is that the sinner is barred from the means of grace. By his sin he is separated from the fellowship of the church and the means of grace which Christ has ordained only for the faithful.

If the sinner persists in his ungodly way, a series of three steps must follow. (Cf. Church Order, Article 77) In the first an announcement is made to the congregation informing the members of the obstinacy of the sinner and of the care which the consistory is bestowing upon him; and the congregation is exhorted to pray for him. In order that he be somewhat spared, the name of the sinner is withheld. Next a similar announcement is made in which the name of the sinner is given. Before making this announcement, however, the consistory must seek the advice of the Classis. Because of the seriousness of the situation and because it is tantamount to seeking approval for excommunication itself, the advice of the neighboring churches must be sought. It must be clear that sin has been committed, that the sinner is indeed impenitent, and that the consistory has labored faithfully in seeking the sinner's repentance and reconciliation. Finally the congregation is informed that unless he repents, the sinner will be excommunicated on a certain date. The excommunication takes place, therefore, with the tacit approval of the congregation. The time interval between these announcements is left to the discretion of the consistory. During the entire process the consistory is busy working with the sinner, admonishing him from the Word of God and calling him to repentance.

By this means the church of God is maintained. Its unity in the truth is preserved, and its members are led in the way of obedience to the law of God. May God give us as churches grace to be faithful in the

exercise of church discipline from the pulpit and through the office of elder. In this way and in this way only we shall stand in the truth and in the tradition of the Reformed fathers.

Book Review

A SYMPOSIUM ON CREATION (VI), edited by Donald W. Patten; Pacific Meridian Publishing, 1977; 154 pp., \$3.95 (paper). (Reviewed by Prof. H. Hanko)

This book is the sixth in a series published by a number of scientists who, while holding to creationism in opposition to evolutionism, attempt to explain the catastrophes in Scripture (such as the flood, the plagues of Egypt, the destruction of the Egyptians in the Red Sea, etc.) as well as the pre-deluvian world in terms of natural phenomena. We have read a number of the books published by these men; and, while they contain some worthwhile material, we are struck with the fact that the books do not pay sufficient attention to the miraculous element in Scripture and become lost in all kinds of speculation.

This book contains chapters on the following

subjects: "Paleoclimatology and Infrared Radiation Traps: Earth's Antediluvian Climate," "Millennial Climatology" (a book in which a dispensational millennium is said to be brought about through vast geologic and climate changes), "Catastrophism and Puritan Thought: The Newton Era," "Extraterrestrial Origin of the Ice Age," "Louis Agassiz," "The Place of Trace Elements in the Creation." Some of the chapters are very technical and beyond the understanding of those who are not trained in the natural sciences. The chapters on Louis Agassiz and the place of trace elements in Creation are interesting and worthwhile.

The book is particularly recommended to those who are interested in keeping up on the current creationism vs. evolutionism controversy and the thinking of some well-known creationists in this country. But it must be read with caution.

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On June 11, 1978 our beloved parents MR. & MRS. PETER KOOLE celebrated their 30th wedding anniversary. We are grateful to our heavenly Father for keeping them for each other and for us, their children. We are thankful for the christian home they worked so diligently to provide for us. Our prayer is that God will bless and keep them in His care.

"But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children." Ps. 103:17

Larry and Pat Koole
Scot
Rev. Ken and Pat Koole
Justin
Jim and Kathy VanderKolk
Michael
Jim Koole
Ron and Sherry Koole
Tim Koole

A RESOLUTION OF APPRECIATION

The members of the Southeast Protestant Reformed Church extend their heartfelt thankfulness to Rev. M. Schipper upon his retirement from the ministry of the Word of God after FORTY ONE years of faithful service.

We thank our Heavenly Father for His Covenant Faithfulness in giving us men who remain faithful to the proclamation of His Word.

Our prayer is that Rev. and Mrs. Schipper may continue to experience the abiding love of our Heavenly Father as they continue along life's journey, and that they may experience His promise as expressed in I Corinthians 1:9;

"God is faithful, by whom we were called unto the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord."

Thank you,
Southeast Protestant Reformed Church
Dowie Vander Schaaf,
Richard H. Teitsma

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On July 28, 1978, the Lord has cared for and blessed our parents, MR. and MRS. HERMAN SCHIPPER with 35 years of marriage. He has blessed us by giving us parents who have educated and directed us through His Word. Our prayer is that He may continue to hold them in His care.

Bill and Linda Lafferty
Laurie, Michael and Kathleen
Jerry and Pat Schipper
Becky and Jason

Jenison, Michigan

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Adult Bible Society and the Martha Society of the Doon (Iowa) Protestant Reformed Church extends their sympathy to Rev. and Mrs. Marvin Kamps and family in the recent death of her mother, MRS. CORNELIA VANDER LAAR. May God assure them that He doeth all things well.

"All things work together for good to them that love God." (Romans 8:28).

Mrs. Rod Brunsting, Sec'y.
Mrs. Ed Van Ginkle, Sec'y.

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News From Our Churches

There have been quite a few news items of late concerning our ministers. With the retirement last year of Rev. C. Hanko and this year of Rev. G. Lubbers, Rev. H. Veldman, and Rev. M. Schipper there have been and will be changes in the pulpits of our churches. As of June 3 the following items were on hand: Rev. James Slopsema has declined the call received from Faith Church in Jenison, Michigan. However, from a trio of Rev. D. Engelsma, Rev. R. Van Overloop, and Rev. Slopsema, Rev. Slopsema received a call from Southwest Church in Wyoming, Michigan. Faith Church has formed a trio consisting of Rev. D. Engelsma, Rev. A. den Hartog, and Prof. H. Hanko. Rev. den Hartog has the call from our church in Isabel, South Dakota. Should Rev. den Hartog decline the call to Isabel, the Seminary has informed the Isabel congregation that upon graduation from Seminary, the then Candidate Richard Flikkema will supply their pulpit for the summer months beginning June 25. Isabel's former pastor was installed as the new pastor of our church in Pella, Iowa, on Thursday evening, May 25, by Rev. M. Hoeksema.

Rev. Schipper plans to preach his farewell sermon in Southeast Church in Grand Rapids on July 16. The congregation is planning a special program for Rev. and Mrs. Schipper to be held in the church on Friday, July 14.

A special program was held in our Edgerton, Minnesota, church on May 18. Rev. Slopsema showed slides from his trip to Singapore and informed the congregation of his work there. This trip was undertaken at the request of our Synodical Mission Committee upon the request of a large number of young people in Singapore who desire to learn more of the Reformed truth.

Parents from our congregation in Lynden, Washington, have banded together, formed a school society, and elected a school board. The society has purchased a Grange Hall on 2½ acres which they propose to remodel for use as a school. The new school will be called the Covenant Christian School. About 30 students are expected when the school opens this fall.

The Young People's Societies from First Church sponsored a special program on May 30. Rev. Woudenberg and Elder Prince showed pictures taken on their recent trip to visit the Jamaican Churches and spoke of their work there. This program will probably be repeated in other of our churches. The young people have also been busy of late conducting a clothing drive for the Jamaicans.

Hudsonville Church sponsored a second lecture following up an earlier lecture in April by Prof. Hanko. Hudsonville's pastor, Rev. G. Van Baren, spoke on "The Pleasures of Babylon: Dancing," on May 25.

Spring and early summer is a time for many special activities in church and school circles. There are banquets, mass meetings, graduations, and picnics, to mention a few of the activities announced in church bulletins. Among these seasonal activities we note the following: Randolph scheduled the Annual Spring Church Cleaning on May 13. The ladies were admonished to bring their Spic & Span. Redlands held their Sunday School Wiener Bake on May 12. Faith Church in Jenison, Michigan, held a picnic toy shower for the church nursery on May 3. The Hull, Iowa, young people sponsored their annual Spring Banquet on April 27. Rev. Mark Hoeksema spoke on "Our Proper Use of Leisure Time." The Ladies' League met at 1:00 PM in Doon, Iowa, on April 18. Rev. Kamps spoke on "Mothers and Their Calling to the School." Rev. Hoeksema conducted a question hour after the speech. The Free Christian School PTA of Edgerton, Minnesota, met on April 28. Rev. Kamps was the speaker. After the meeting a shortage meeting was held. During the past two years we have learned about 'tasting bees' and 'bean walks.' Now somebody might explain what a 'shortage meeting' consists of. The Loveland, Colorado, Ladies' Circle annual Auction was held on May 13. Also in Loveland, a Singspiration was held on Tuesday evening May 9. A collection was taken for the 1978 Young People's Convention at South Holland, Illinois.

K. G. V.