

# The STANDARD BEARER

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

“... But it is in no passive sense that the Bible is the Word of God, according to Luther. It is as the Spirit who inspired it breathes upon it afresh, and applies it to the reader, that God speaks again through the Scriptures, as He spoke when they were first set down. But for Luther, it is supremely in preaching that the Word of God in the Scriptures is made alive in the present. The living Word of God, once spoken through the prophets and apostles, now recorded in the Scriptures, speaks again through His servants who are called to preach.”

From *Captive to the Word*

(see Preaching — the Instrument of Reformation —

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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 Slopsema, 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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Mr. H. Vander Wal, Bus. Mgr.  
P.O. Box 6064  
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**New Zealand Business Office:** The Standard Bearer,  
c/o OPC Bookshop,  
P.O. Box 2289  
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## MEDITATION

## Standing Through Prayer

Rev. H. Veldman

*"Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints."*

Eph. 6:18

The context of this text must not be sought in the latter part of verse 17, where we read of the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God. If this were true then the thought here would be that we must take

this sword of the Spirit with all prayer and supplication. However, this sword of the Spirit is but another part of the christian's armour, the armour of God. Why, then, limit verse 18 to only one part of this



armour, the latter part of verse 17?

This text must be understood, therefore, with the admonition of the apostle in verse 14: "Stand therefore." We must take unto ourselves the whole armour of God, held before us in the verses 14-17. To this armour, however, must also be added the power of prayer and supplication.

We must bear in mind the following. First, we read literally, as in the Holland translation: "with, or through all prayer and supplication." This is the effective means through which our standing in this awesome conflict of the ages is alone possible. Then we read: "praying always in the Spirit and watching. . . ." In these words we have a more detailed setting forth and explanation of the words: "with all prayer and supplication." What a unique way to fight a battle, upon bended knee! One would almost say, if I may use the expression, Is not the Christian a sitting duck? Does this not place him in a hopeless position? Yet, how true is the saying: "Satan trembles when he sees, the weakest saint upon his knees."

\* \* \* \* \*

This prayer is a spiritual prayer. Supplication is one of several forms of prayer. Prayer can and does assume the form of praise, of confessing one's sins and also of thanksgiving. Here we read of supplication. Prayer is not a magic means to get something. To pray ceaselessly, then, would mean to pray until we get it. Such praying is often carnal, to get the things we want. We pray, then, for health in time of sickness, for peace while at war, etc. How impossible is this view! The Christian, fighting this spiritual battle, exhorted to put on the whole armour of God and to stand, would pray for material things, for peace, that the enemy may either surrender or capitulate or somehow stop attacking him? We, then, would pray that this spiritual battle would cease, that we and the enemy of darkness may live together peaceably and amicably? How impossible! Prayer is the address, the reaching out of my soul to the living God, to receive His grace in whatever circumstances He may place me. Prayer does not attempt to change or mould God's will, but it does seek to know and abide by that will of our God.

Prayer and supplication. Yes, especially supplication. Indeed, how deeply we are in need! Indeed, we give thanks to God, praise Him, but always the child of God addresses to the Lord the supplicating plea. How true this is particularly here, in this context, in the midst of this warfare that never stops, never knows of any armistice! How desperately we are dependent upon Him, the God of our salvation!

Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, we must watch thereunto with all perseverance. The expression, "watching thereunto in all

perseverance," refers to what precedes, and especially to the words, "in the Spirit." We will return to this in due time. However, we must watch unto this end, unto the end that we may always engage in prayer and supplication. We must not fall asleep in this spiritual conflict. We must always be on the alert. We must know the enemy. We must never compromise with him. We must always bear in mind the intensity of the conflict, the constant purpose of the foe. Always we must understand our own weaknesses. We must indeed persevere in prayer and supplication.

And, we must pray in the Spirit. The Spirit here is the Holy Spirit. To pray in the Holy Spirit means that we pray in the sphere of the Spirit, that we pray as being in the Spirit and therefore also as influenced by the Spirit. Indeed, this is a spiritual battle.

To be sure, we are not engaged in a battle against flesh and blood! Today we hear much of a social gospel, a gospel that is geared to making this world a better place in which to live, to fight against immorality, debauchery, etc., removing the results of sin without removing sin itself, and without the cross of Calvary. How common today is this social gospel! Be not deceived. It is but an example of the wiles of the devil! If only he may lull the people of God to sleep, persuade them to lay aside the armour of God and join forces with the world to improve all of life here below! How impossible is this view! How demoralizing! We are not called to conquer this world and transform it. We are called to stand, never to renounce our calling, always be witnesses of the light in the midst of darkness.

We must pray in the Spirit. And this surely means, not only that we must be in the Spirit, but also and emphatically that we must pray as in the Spirit, as controlled and influenced by Him. We must pray as Christ taught us to pray, as according to His Word, seeking to be pleasing in God's sight, that we may walk worthy of the gospel, worthy of God, always seeking to glorify Him Who called us out of darkness into His marvelous light. Such is our calling. And only when we thus pray in the Spirit shall we be able to stand in the midst of this fearful battle.

\* \* \* \* \*

This prayer is a constant prayer. The text emphasizes this. First, we read here the word, "always." Literally we read: "in every time, at every moment." We are reminded of I Thess. 5:17. We must pray always, not necessarily audibly, but also silently, as within ourselves. Besides, we also have the expression, "in all perseverance." In all perseverance we must watch thereunto. We must never stop this watching. We must continue this perseverance to the very end, always engaging in all prayer and supplication.

How necessary this is! Visualize, if you will, the



setup here, the church of God as involved in a battle which is to the death. This is a spiritual battle, not for or against flesh and blood, but between light and darkness. And, it is a struggle without compromise. In this struggle we have, first of all, the kingdom of this world with all its man-power and all its resources. Against this kingdom of darkness is the Cause of the Son of God. The church is but a little flock, few in number, and so weak in resources. Besides, please note how we must fight. We must stand, but only in the armour of God. Our only offensive weapon is the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. We may never resort to violence, fight fire with fire; we must put all our trust, never in ourselves, but solely in the Lord. What a hopeless struggle as far as the church of God is concerned!

Now we can understand the admonition to be constant in prayer. What else can the Christian soldier do but pray to the Lord? He can do nothing of himself. Only when we pray can we experience the blessed assurance that the Lord is with us and that we are more than conquerors. Failing to pray, we can never enjoy this assurance. The Lord will never give His glory to another, never share it with another. O, it is so true, therefore, that "Satan trembles when he sees the weakest saint upon his knees." For this reason the Lord willed the utter hopelessness of this conflict, that He might receive all the praise and all the glory.

\* \* \* \* \*

This prayer is an all-embracing prayer.

Indeed, we may not pray for all men or for the world. Shall we pray that all men may be saved? Or, shall we pray for the improvement and betterment of this world? Shall we pray that this bitter struggle may cease, that humanitarian efforts may be employed to produce a better world, an improved society? How impossible! Do not the scriptures teach that the wicked *shall have no peace*? The Saviour Himself does not pray for the world; and in this text this prayer is limited to the saints. Indeed, this battle continues unabated throughout the ages.

We must pray for the saints, and then for all the

saints. They are saints, holy ones. This enables us to understand why the apostle speaks of saints in this text. It is exactly this which explains this conflict. They are saints, separated from sin and dedicated to the living God. For this reason they are hated and persecuted by the world. The world hated Christ and therefore hates them. And now we must pray for them. We remind the Lord, as it were, that they are saints, hated of the world because they love God and that, therefore, nothing less than the glory and honour of God are at stake here. This battle occurs for God's sake, and the Lord is besought to vindicate them for His Name's sake.

And we must pray for *all* the saints. We must have before us all the people of God as they are engaged in this struggle. We must, therefore, keep abreast of the times, remember all God's people in our prayers to the throne of God's grace. May this conflict and the needs of the saints engaged in it, and of all the saints, ever occupy a prominent part in our prayers.

\* \* \* \* \*

This prayer is effective. Prayer is always effective. See James 5:16b, Matt. 7:7-8.

O, this prayer for ourselves and for all the saints is not heard in the sense that the conflict will cease, that we will no longer be afflicted or persecuted. The answer to prayer is never carnal.

But the answer to this prayer is exactly that we will be able to stand, will not succumb, will be able to hold our position in the midst of the battle. Indeed, the blessedness of the armour of God will be ours. We will know that we are righteous, have peace with God, believe that we will attain unto the hope of everlasting glory and heavenly immortality, that we are even now more than conquerors through Him Who loves us and loved us upon the cross of Calvary. We will indeed be able to sing that wonderful song of victory as recorded for us in Romans 8:35-39.

So, let us pray with all prayer and supplication. Let us pray in the Spirit, and for all the saints. And we will know that we are more than conquerors.

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## EDITORIAL

Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

## Preaching - The Instrument of Reformation 2

Last time we saw that the Reformation marked a return to and a restoration of preaching to its proper place — the primary place — in the life of the church. It was this preaching, so heavily emphasized by the reformers, which was the primary instrument in the accomplishment and the spread of the Reformation. More than any other single factor the preaching of the Word by Luther and Calvin and their associates served to call the people of God back to the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

But this could only be true because the Reformation marked a reformation of the preaching itself, first of all. In fact, it is safe to say that preaching could never have been an instrument of reformation if there had not been, first of all, a reform of the preaching itself.

What was the nature of that reformation of preaching?

In a word, through it the preaching of the reformers again became *prophetic*! No, this does not mean necessarily that they preached from the prophetic books. It certainly does not mean that they engaged in trying to predict the future. It does mean that they began again to preach *like* the prophets of old — or like the apostles. And this means, above all, that their preaching was emphatically *preaching of the Word*, the Word of God in Christ.

I wish to illustrate this by referring again to the preaching of Martin Luther. There is a fascinating book about Luther by A. Skevington Wood entitled *Captive To The Word* (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publ. Co., 1969). In it there is an entire chapter on “Luther As

A Preacher,” from which we can learn much about Luther’s reformational preaching.

What is prophetic preaching?

It is first and foremost preaching of the *Word* in the strictest sense of the term. It is *expository*. In the book referred to we read this, p. 89:

“The salient feature of Luther’s preaching was its biblical content and reference. It was subject to Scripture throughout. Luther submitted to a rigorous discipline. He was bound by the Word. His preaching was never merely topical. He could never turn a text into a pretext. ‘I take pains to treat a verse, to stick to it,’ he explained, ‘and so to instruct the people that they can say, “That is what the sermon was about.”’ His preaching was never a movement from men to the text: it was always a movement from the text to men. The matter never determined the text: the text always determined the matter. He was not in the habit of treating subjects or issues, but doctrines. But when he did so, he invariably followed a prescribed Scripture passage step by step. He considered one of the major qualifications of the preacher to be familiarity with the Word. He must be *bonus textualis* — a good man with the text. Luther never dispensed with a text from Scripture, and never approved of the practice in others. ‘It is disgraceful for the lawyer to desert his brief; it is even more disgraceful for the preacher to desert his text.’ ”

Needless to say, the same was true of Calvin, who became known as the “prince of exegetes.”

In the second place, the preaching of the reformers was *antithetical*, as all sound preaching should be. A.



Skevington Wood puts it this way, pp. 90, 91:

"There is thus a distinctly existential quality about Luther's preaching. One feels that through it God is speaking directly to His people, and to those who still reject Him — and this immediacy is conveyed even in the printed record. It was this factor which ensured that Luther's preaching should always be decisive. There was nothing vague or cloudy about it. It was clear-cut and definite. A sense of reality prevailed. Luther was no mystic. Christ and Antichrist, God and the devil — these were objective personalities to him, and this awareness gave a peculiar urgency to his preaching. He believed, as Doberstein expresses it, that "preaching continues the battle begun by the saving event and is itself the saving event." This is made clear in one of Luther's own comments. 'When I preach a sermon I take an antithesis.' This is to say, he never proclaimed God's great Yes, His acceptance of man in the gospel, without at the same time proclaiming His No, his rejection of all man's presumption and pretence. Every sermon for him was a struggle for souls. Eternal issues were being settled in the moment of preaching — the issues of life and death, light and darkness, sin and grace, the kingdom of Christ and the kingdom of Satan."

In this connection, let us remember, too, that the reformers were very *concretely* antithetical in their preaching, both with respect to doctrine and practice. One has only to recall the fact, for example, that Calvin never missed an opportunity to inveigh against the papacy and against the false doctrines and practices of Roman Catholicism. Or recall the fact that he opposed in his preaching the practices of the Libertines in Geneva.

In the third place, the preaching of the reformers was characterized by the call to repentance and faith in Christ. Writes Wood, p. 91:

"... Christ must be preached as the One who lived and died to redeem men from sin. What He did was not for His own benefit, but for ours. 'Christ ought to be preached to the end that faith in Him may be established that He may not only be Christ, but be Christ for you and me, and that what is said of Him and is denoted in His name may be effectual in us. Such faith is produced and preserved in us by preaching why Christ came, what He brought and bestowed, what benefit it is to us to accept Him.' There were preachers of repentance and grace even in his day, Luther went on, but they did not explain how a man might repent and how he might know the grace of God. Repentance proceeds from the law of God, but grace from the promise of God. 'Faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes by the preaching of Christ' (Rom. 10:17). 'Accordingly man is consoled and exalted by faith in the divine promise

after he has been humbled and led to a knowledge of himself by the threats and the fear of the divine law.' "

This is important. For we must remember that the reformation of the church is after all a *spiritual* process. Reformation is not to be compared to a political campaign, in which one seeks by moral suasion and by rational argument to gain adherents and supporters for this or that doctrinal tenet and this or that viewpoint. No, it is distinctly spiritual. It involves repentance and faith. It involves return from the way of the lie to the path of the truth, conversion from the ways of sin to the ways of righteousness, from the path of unbelief to the way of faith in Christ.

However, there was also a reformation of the preaching in the sense that with the Reformation came also a renewed understanding of the nature and importance of the "moment" of the preaching. The reformers understood full well that it was not their word, but the speech of God Himself which made the preaching of the gospel powerful. Their preaching stood in the service of the powerful Word of Christ. They understood that the moment of the preaching of the Word was the moment in which God Himself spoke His Word to the hearts of His people. And it is this that accounts for their strong emphasis upon the necessity of the preaching of the Word, as well as for their confidence that the preaching of the Word would be fruitful. Writes Wood, p. 90:

"... But it is in no passive sense that the Bible is the Word of God, according to Luther. It is as the Spirit who inspired it breathes upon it afresh, and applies it to the reader, that God speaks again through the Scriptures, as He spoke when they were first set down. But for Luther, it is supremely in preaching that the Word of God in the Scriptures is made alive in the present. The living Word of God, once spoken through the prophets and apostles, now recorded in the Scriptures, speaks again through His servants who are called to preach."

This accounts for Luther's stress upon the necessity of preaching. He himself wrote: "The church is not a pen house, but a mouth house. For since the advent of Christ the gospel, which used to be hidden in the Scriptures, has become an oral preaching. And thus it is the manner of the New Testament and of the gospel that it must be preached and performed by word of mouth and a living voice. Christ himself has not written anything, nor has he ordered anything to be written, but rather to be preached by word of mouth."

Or again: "God, the creator of heaven and earth, speaks with you through His preachers, baptizes, catechizes, absolves you through the ministry of His own sacraments. These are the words of God, not of



Plato or Aristotle. It is God Himself who speaks."

\* \* \* \* \*

Now all this is of the utmost importance for today.

If there is to be reformation today, then it can and will be brought about primarily through the means of the preaching of the Word.

And if it is to be brought about through the preaching of the Word, then there must first be a reformation of preaching itself!

And if there is to be a reformation of the preaching of the Word, that reformation must be patterned after the preaching of the Reformation of the sixteenth century.

In a word, that means that preaching must be *prophetic*!

Such sound, prophetic preaching has become a scarce item in the ecclesiastical marketplace today. Even in denominations which are commonly recognized as "conservative" or "evangelical" and even in some of the newer, breakaway denominations, formed supposedly as reformation movements, this is true. And it is one of the chief reasons for the fact that they do not really represent reformations, but, on the contrary, are doomed to failure and have the seeds of deformation and apostasy in them as soon as they are formed. This is a striking fact. It impresses me every time I have an opportunity to hear and observe the preaching as an occasional visitor in other denominations. Frequently my reaction after hearing the preaching in church away from home has been, "If I had to listen to such preaching as a steady diet, I would not go to church." It is not as though no gospel whatsoever is proclaimed — though I have had the experience of being in and out of a church belonging to the Reformed community without having heard any gospel, any sin, any grace, any cross, any Christ, preached at all. But the preaching is not prophetic! It is topical rather than expository. It is vague rather than specific. It is blurred rather than sharply antithetical. It tends to leave one unaffected rather than moving one to repentance and faith. It does not have the ring, the vibrancy, the intensity, the urgency of the pure preaching of the Word standing in the service of the living and powerful Word of Christ.

To such preaching, wherever there has been departure, there must be a return!

No propaganda campaign, no proliferation of literature, however sound and Reformed, no lecture series, no "testimony" or gathering of signatures on a testimony, no sending forth of negatively critical brochures and newsletters, no rise of a great and dynamic leader — none of these will ever serve in themselves to bring about reformation in the church today.

Only the pure preaching of the Word will accomplish it!

There may be many contributory means in the process of reformation. Who would dare to deny, for example, that the invention of the printing press and the resultant spread of the Bible and of the many writings of the men of Reformation times constituted an important instrument in the spread of the message of the Reformation? That does not change the fact that the preaching of the Word was *primary*; and not only was it primary, but it was *central*. Without that preaching there would not have been reformation; in fact, without that preaching the various other means would not even have come into existence and use. It has been said, too, that in all reformation there must be a *leader*, and that what is needed is a great man — a Luther, a Calvin. But Luther and Calvin and all the other "giants" of Reformation times were not great men in any this-worldly sense of the word. They began, in fact, as rather insignificant men. What constituted their real "greatness" was after all the fact that by the grace of God they were faithful preachers of the Word who took their stand on the basis of the Word of God and who proclaimed that Word of God "as love knows how."

But this entails reformation of our understanding of the meaning and significance of the "moment" of the preaching as well. We must learn to understand anew that the moment of the preaching of the Word is the moment in which it pleases the Lord our God Himself to speak His own Word, living and powerful and efficacious, to and in His church. It is not merely a moment in which we hear men speak, even though they speak true words about the Christ. But it is the moment in which we hear Christ Himself speak.

And why is this important with respect to reformation?

The answer is simple. Reformation is pre-eminently a *spiritual* reality. It involves not mere intellectual conviction, and it involves not mere natural devotion and allegiance to a cause. The latter are after all strange fire on the altar of true reformation. No, reformation involves faith. It involves repentance on the part of church and individual. It involves conversion, a turning from darkness to light, from the lie to the truth, from sin unto righteousness, from Belial to Christ, from the service of men to the service of the living God. Reformation is always principally a spiritual process.

But faith, repentance, conversion — these are wrought by God Himself in the moment of the preaching, and that, too, as in no other moment. Why? Simply because it pleases God to work His work in His people through that means of the preaching of the gospel, according to His own appointment.



In conclusion, therefore, if there is to be reformation in the churches, there must first be a reformation of the preaching. Let us remember, too, as Protestant Reformed Churches that reformation-by-separation is but one kind of reformation. There is also such a thing as on-going reformation. In fact, it is characteristic of truly Reformed churches that they are "Reformed, and ever reforming." This also applies to the reformation of the preaching. With regard to it, we, our churches, our elders, and especially our ministers must be Reformed, and ever reforming!

And to those outside the circle of our Protestant Reformed Churches, especially those in churches which are in the throes of apostasy, I say: if you would see reformation, you must insist on reformation in the pulpit, first of all. And if you cannot expect that where you are, then it is your bounden duty — for your own sake, for the sake of your children, and for the sake of the cause of God's church — to seek it elsewhere.

Above all, to preachers I say: be a *bonus textualis*, a good man with the text!

## LEST WE FORGET

# A Word of Introduction

Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

A comparison of the denominational statistics of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America for the years 1952 and 1954 indicates that something of a very severe character happened in the period between those dates. The Yearbooks of our denomination for those years show the following:

	1952	1954
Churches .....	24	16
Vacant churches .....	2	4
Ministers .....	28	14
Home Missionaries .....	1	0
Families .....	1302	563
Total souls .....	5449	2353

Further statistics could be adduced, which would show in greater detail precisely where this attrition in numbers of ministers, families, and total souls took place within the denomination. But the figures cited sharply illustrate that something must have happened in our little denomination.

By some that is called the "split" of 1953. That, however, is a somewhat neutral term. In fact, it could even indicate that there was an amicable parting of the ways among those who agreed to disagree — something which certainly did not happen. Others have on occasion spoken of the "schism" of 1953. And that the sin of schism was committed and that

schism was actually brought about is undoubtedly true. Nevertheless, this description is, after all, rather negative. It is far better to speak of the Reformation of 1953. True, in this instance of reformation our Protestant Reformed Churches were preserved intact as a federation of churches; and it was we, not those who departed, who retained and maintained the precious heritage of the truth as the Lord had entrusted it to us from the very beginning of our history. But a reformation it was, nevertheless: a reformation through which our Protestant Reformed Churches were purged and purified and strengthened in the truth.

It is the purpose of this new department to set down in order the story of that reformation. An entire generation of our churches has grown up which has no knowledge by experience of what happened in 1953 and of the truths which were at stake in that struggle. For them, as well as for those of us who lived through the struggle, it is imperative that this record be preserved. For what happened in 1953 concerned the heart and core of what our Protestant Reformed Churches are all about. It is my purpose eventually to bring up to date the entire historical record of our denomination. That, too, is necessary: for not only is the late Rev. Herman Hoeksema's account of that history no longer in print, but it carried the record only to about the year 1935



(although a second printing was scantily revised to bring our history up to about 1940). At present, however, we shall concentrate on the history of 1953, with the hope that much of this material can be incorporated at a later date, the Lord willing, in a complete and up-to-date history of our denomination.

Further, we shall begin with a kind of catechism on the doctrinal issues involved in that Reformation of 1953; and we shall leave the story of that reformation for a later date. We are beginning with this doctrinal aspect because of its importance and because of the importance of being well-informed about it.

\* \* \* \* \*

### The Doctrinal Issues of 1953

#### 1. What were the doctrinal issues of 1953?

In the broadest sense of the word, they concerned basic doctrinal differences between us and the Reformed Churches (maintaining Article 31 of the Church Order) in the Netherlands. The latter are sometimes nicknamed the Liberated Churches of the Netherlands and are sometimes also referred to as the Schilder churches. Today the immigrants from those churches are organized in the Canadian Reformed Churches, a denomination which has one congregation in the United States, called the American Reformed Church of Grand Rapids. Prior to 1953, however, these immigrants were being advised in the Netherlands to seek admission into our denomination; and we even had a couple of congregations (in Hamilton and Chatham, Ontario) which were made up largely of Dutch immigrants from the afore-mentioned churches. But there were serious differences between them and us, differences which concerned the covenant of grace, the question who are included in that covenant, and especially the question whether the promise of God's covenant is a general, conditional promise for all baptized children, or not.

Secondly, these doctrinal issues came into focus within our own denomination in connection with the Declaration of Principles, a document which our Synod drew up with a view to the organization of new congregations and in which our distinctive Protestant Reformed position was briefly set forth on the basis of our Reformed confessions. The difficulty was that within our own ranks as churches there were those who were violently opposed to the Declaration of Principles, and that, too, for doctrinal reasons — although there were many who hid these doctrinal objections behind other alleged reasons for disagreement.

In the third place, however, the concrete doctrinal case arose in connection with two specific statements made from the pulpit by one of the three ministers of

the First Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, the Rev. Hubert De Wolf. Incidentally, bear in mind that in those years First Church was a congregation of well over 500 families and that they had three pastors, Rev. Herman Hoeksema, Rev. Cornelius Hanks, and Rev. De Wolf. Rev. G.M. Ophoff was officially a minister emeritus of First Church while he labored in our seminary; but he also frequently served as an elder in the Consistory of First Church. The two statements, however, were not isolated instances of heretical statements. On the contrary, they stood intimately related to the broader controversy in the denomination concerning the Declaration of Principles and concerning our differences with the so-called Liberated Churches.

#### 2. What were the specific statements in question?

The first occurred in a sermon in April, 1951: "God promises everyone of you that, if you believe, you will be saved." The second occurred in a sermon in September, 1952: "Our act of conversion is a prerequisite to entrance into the kingdom of God."

#### 3. How did these statements come to be the focal point of the doctrinal controversy in 1953?

First of all, there was a long process of protest and debate in the Consistory of First Church. We shall not recount that history here. Suffice it to say that this process went on in the Consistory of First Church until the spring of 1953. At that point — although the Consistory had at one time condemned the statements by majority vote — the Consistory reached a deadlock.

The result was that the whole matter was appealed to Classis East, which dealt with the appeals in April-May of 1953. The classis appointed a study committee which was to report to the same session of classis at a later date. The study committee, however, became divided into a majority and minority, so that there were two reports submitted. The majority report, in effect, sought to excuse the statements by laying a favorable interpretation upon them. A minority of two elders, the brethren R. Newhouse and P. Lubbers, insisted in their report that the two statements were literally heretical, regardless of what the Rev. De Wolf meant by them, regardless of how he explained them.

After lengthy debate, the majority report was rejected and the minority report was in substance approved. Classis East then formulated its judgment of the two statements, specified the grounds from Scripture and the Confessions, and gave advice to First Church as to how they should proceed in the matter. This decision of Classis East is of crucial importance for the understanding of this history, and therefore we shall quote it in full. This, however, must wait until our next installment.



## MY SHEEP HEAR MY VOICE

# Letter to Timothy

November 15, 1978

Dear Timothy,

It has been a long time since last we corresponded. It seems that the hot summer months, when all the work of the Church lets up somewhat, are not conducive to correspondence, and the result is that our contacts with each other have flagged. But now with the work of the Church in full swing once again, it is time to resume our discussion.

Because the interim has been long, it might be well to try to pick up the thread of our discussion. We were talking about the various offices in the Church: the idea of these offices, their relation to each other, and the work for which Christ appointed them in the Church.

We had discussed the office of minister and were busy with the office of elder. You recall that we talked about the fact that the office of elder was primarily one of rule and supervision within the Church. In our last letter we talked about how the elders had to exercise this supervision over the work of the ministers. In this letter we ought to touch briefly on the supervision which elders are called to exercise over themselves, the deacons, and the congregation as a whole.

First then, the supervision of elders over themselves and over the office of deacons.

We might be inclined to conclude from the fact that elders have this obligation to supervise the work of deacons that the office of elders is some kind of superior office. It is strange that this idea persists in the Church. For some reason, in our denomination, there is always that lingering notion that the deacons

are somehow inferior to the elders. This is so often expressed in the notion that the office of deacons serves as a kind of training ground for the office of elders. If a person is nominated for the office of elder, some in the congregation are bound to raise their eyes and ask: How can he serve as elder? he has never even been a deacon. Or if one has served one or more terms in the office of deacon, then the consistory is inclined to consider his name for nomination for elder, and the congregation thinks to itself that he perhaps ought to be chosen as elder because he has proved himself a capable officebearer in the office of deacon. He has, as it were, undergone a period of probation and testing, and has now shown himself worthy of being "advanced" from deacon to elder. We ought not to think along these lines. It is contrary to the whole idea of the offices. They are on a plane of equality as far as authority is concerned though they exercise that authority in different ways within the Church. While it is true that there are certain men who may possess the qualifications to be either an elder or a deacon, it is also true that there are some men who are eminently suited to be deacons according to the qualifications of Scripture, yet who are not suited to be elders. Nor ought it to happen that only the older men of the Church are chosen as elders and the younger men exclusively as deacons. To my mind, the ideal balance in the diaconate is the balance between younger deacons and older deacons. And it would certainly be for the welfare of the Church of Christ if every diaconate had in it one or more older men who have served in that office before — perhaps many times.



But however this may be, the fact that the elders are called to exercise supervision over the deacons in no way implies that they hold a superior office. Their calling is to rule in the Church. And they must rule over the ministers and deacons as well as over the rest of the congregation.

Before we look into this a bit more closely, there is one point here that we ought to mention. The elders must not only exercise proper supervision over the ministers, the deacons and the congregation; they must also exercise supervision over themselves. The Church Order is quite clear on that point. Article 23 reads: "The office of elders . . . is to take heed that the ministers, together with their fellow-elders and the deacons, faithfully discharge their office."

There is one article in the Church Order which spells out one way in which this is to be done. Article 81 reads: "The ministers of the Word, elders and deacons, shall before the celebration of the Lord's Supper exercise Christian censure among themselves, and in a friendly spirit admonish one another with regard to the discharge of their office." Because of this article it is, so far as I know, the practice in all our Consistories to spend a few moments at the Consistory meeting prior to the celebration of the Lord's Supper, to talk about this among the members. It is sad that as often as not this becomes somewhat of a formality. Near the end of the meeting, the chairman of the Consistory asks each individual officebearer in turn whether he has anything to bring up which ought to be discussed. Van Dellen and Monsma state in their *Commentary* that this practice really has no connection with the celebration of the Lord's Supper even though the article mentions this. However, it is only very rarely that this actually results in some officebearer raising some point concerning the conduct of one or more of his fellow officebearers. And it is not surprising that only rarely is something brought up, because if a consistory member has a matter which troubles him concerning the walk of any one of his fellow consistory members he ought to bring the matter to the attention of his brother privately without waiting for *censura morum* — as it is called. It seems to me that some improvement can be made in this respect in our Consistory meetings. The article speaks of the fact that the officebearers, "in a friendly spirit admonish one another with regard to the discharge of their office." This should be taken more literally. And the time allotted for this in the Consistory meeting ought to be used to discuss mutually how the Consistory as a whole and each member in particular could better fulfill the work to which God has called him in his office. Some time could be profitably spent on discussing whether all the work that needs to be done is actually being done, whether too much of the work is

falling upon the shoulders of some officebearers to the exclusion of others, whether the congregation under the rule of the Consistory is prospering, whether there are any changes which ought to be made in the work of the Consistory to make this labor more effective, whether there are any pressing problems within the congregation which require the special attention of the officebearers, etc. This would make the discussion a profitable one and would give some real content to what is actually often a rather formal matter within the Consistory.

But the supervision of the elders by the elders is broader than all this. Such discussions as mentioned above could perhaps be carried on from time to time within the Consistory. But the point is that the walk and conduct of the elders individually is subject to the supervision of the Consistory as a whole. And the Consistory as a whole bears the responsibility to see to it that the walk of the individual elders is in accordance with the Word of God and the Confessions of the Church. No Consistory may ignore this important part of its calling.

But this supervision extends also to the deacons. There are three different places where this supervision is mentioned in the Church Order. We already quoted Article 23 which speaks of the fact that elders must take heed that the deacons faithfully discharge their office. Article 25, which speaks particularly of the office of deacons, mentions that the deacons "shall render an account (of their work) in consistory." And Article 40 reads: "The deacons shall meet, wherever necessary, every week to transact the business pertaining to their office, calling upon the Name of God; whereunto the ministers shall take good heed and if necessary they shall be present."

Now this latter article seems to put the responsibility for the supervision of the deacons in the hands of the ministers. But this must be taken in connection with the other two articles. The minister is also an elder to whom belongs the work of supervision. And so he too, along with the other elders, has a responsibility for this. But when he attends the meetings of the deacons, he does so particularly in his capacity as elder.

Usually these requirements of the Church Order are met in our churches by appointing one elder to attend the meetings of the deacons. He is present not only for the counting of the money, but also for the whole meeting so that he may hear what work the deacons are doing and what is the nature of their labors. It is not, so far as I know, customary for the deacons to hand in a monthly report to the elders concerning their work, but it is customary for the deacons to bring all matters of importance and all unusual matters to the attention of the elders so that the elders may direct the deacons in their work. And



this is as it ought to be. The deacons ought always to work in close cooperation with the elders and the minister in their labors so that the work of supervision and rule is not hindered.

And so this supervision of the elders extends also to the entire congregation. We need not go into this in detail here because within our Churches the elders are not only very busily engaged in this work, but do, on the whole, an outstanding job. Quite frankly, I am amazed at the work which our elders do in our congregations. You must not forget that these elders, especially some of our older ones, never had the education which most of our children receive today. Nor ought you to forget that our elders work hard all day at their daily tasks in order to earn their daily bread and support the causes of God's kingdom. But they come home weary of a day's work to face the

responsibilities of their homes and families, and, as often as not, they must hurry to get ready — especially spiritually — for work within the Church. That they continue to do such outstanding work within the Church is reason for profound thanksgiving to God. On the whole, God has given to our Churches elders who are eminently equipped for the work and who labor long and hard for the cause of Christ. And God blesses their work too, for under their faithful labors in the congregation, the Churches prosper. We ought to pray for our elders every day.

Well, Timothy, we ought to talk yet about the work of deacons; and we will do this, the Lord willing, next time.

Fraternally in Christ,  
H. Hanko

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## FROM HOLY WRIT

## Exposition of Galatians

by Rev. G. Lubbers

**THE TWO SONS OF ABRAHAM** (Galatians 4:22,23)

Paul calls specific attention to two of the sons of Abraham here in Galatians 4. Abraham had more sons who were born to him by Keturah. (Gen. 25:1,4) The Chronicler writes of this in I Chron. 1:32,33. These sons are here not brought into account as proof from "the law" that we are not under law or bondage of sin, but to show that we are under grace, and, therefore, we are free-born sons of God. Only these two sons come here into reckoning.

Of them there should be careful notice!

These two sons are the basis for the great and deep meaning of the covenant history in the times of the patriarch Abraham, who is the father of all believers. The history here recorded is *real* history. The things here recorded are concerning real people, who actually were born and who lived in the dispensation of God's covenant dealings with Abraham and with his seed. This is not allegorical history, but this is history which has an allegorical *meaning*. This fact we here repeat; it is of great importance, in our day, that this be underscored. The so-called new hermeneutic would like to reason away that this is real history here. But these proponents of the "new hermeneutic" really destroy the evidence here brought forth by Paul in his having us "hear" the law, the Pentateuch. They really deny that Abraham "had" (*eschen*-Aor. indicative) two sons. Paul uses the *fact* tense! Let it be noticed!

It ought to strike our attention that Paul does not name these two sons here. He does not speak here of Isaac and Ishmael, but he identifies these sons as "born from a bond-woman" and "born from a free-woman." Paul is interested in the *legal status* of both Ishmael's mother and Isaac's mother. The legal status

of each mother determined the *legal status* in which the sons were born. The legal status of the father did not determine the status of the children. Such is the clear implication here in the text. Thus it is written in the law.

The first matter which we notice concerning the two sons is that they were the one a bond-child, and the other a free-born child. However, there is here a second element added which we must carefully notice: it is that the manner of the birth was also different. Not only were their mothers different radically, but they had a different coming into this world as to manner.

Let us try to see this. The text says that the one born to the bond-woman was born "according to flesh." He was born just as every other child is born. Except for the great miracle and wonder-work of God which we see in every conception, there was nothing exceptional about this birth. Both Abraham and Hagar had the natural vigor to produce seed. That is why Sarah had said to Abraham, "I pray thee, go in unto my maid; it may be that I may obtain children by her." (Gen. 16:2) And so all that was born was "according to flesh," the natural law of be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth. Nothing happened as for the bringing forth of the fulfilment of the promise to Abraham, "And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth, . . ." (Gen. 13:16-17) Even when God makes a great nation of Ishmael for Abraham's sake (Gen. 16:10; 21:13) this does not bring forth the seed. Shall any of this nation be saved they must be saved in the son of the free-woman. For that which is flesh is flesh, and it profits nothing. (John 3:6; 6:63) The birth of the son of the bond-woman was according to flesh.



How different was the way in which the son of the free-woman was born and conceived. Notice that Paul does not say that this was “according to promise,” but he says that it was “through promise.” The preposition through (“*dia*”) in Greek is instrumental. It means here: by means of the promise. The promise here refers to God’s sure word of what he would do for Abraham and for his seed. Paul referred to this in Chapter 3:8 where he speaks of the Lord preaching beforehand that “in thee shall all nations be blessed.” (Gen. 18:18; 22:17) This is the fulfilment of the great Gospel-promise first revealed by God in paradise. (Gen. 3:15) But there is here one more thing implied and designated with this miraculous birth. It is that the promise here was not merely a fulfilment of what was predicted by the Lord, but it was by the efficacious operation of God in which he fulfilled His promise that Isaac, the son of the free-woman was born. God here raised the dead to life and called the things which be not as if they were. It was upon this power that Abraham learned in faith to hope against all hope, and to look away from the deadness of Sarah’s womb as well as from the deadness of his own body. And thus this child was brought forth in faith. (Heb. 11:11, 12) Thus there was a child brought forth, from one who had died, as the stars in the heaven in multitude, and as the sand by the seaside, innumerable. (Rom. 4:16-21) This is all implied in the short phrase: “born by the promise.” Here we see that with God nothing is impossible. He is God Almighty!

Thus Abraham had two different sons, by two different women!

## TWO DIFFERENT WOMEN-TWO DIFFERENT COVENANTS (Galatians 4:24-26)

We must bear in mind that these two different mothers, in their bringing forth of two different kinds of sons in two different ways, are here presented to us in an “allegorical” interpretation. The term here is not the noun “allegory,” but it is the passive participle, which is *allegoroumena* in Greek. Paul says that the two women here, in their bringing forth of sons, must be classified in the things which are of an allegorical nature. (*atis*). Each of these mothers represent, answer to (*sunstoichei*) a kind of covenant. Paul does not say that Moses in writing of these women in Genesis is writing an allegory. Not at all. He was writing history, the things which must come to pass quickly, the unfolding of the counsel of God, the fulfilment of the promise of God. The force of the passive participle here is that this history and the great implications must be treated as an allegory.

What does this mean?

The study of the term “allegory” is really quite fascinating. Anyone who desires to study this a bit in

depth we refer to Lightfoot’s discussion on page 181 of his Commentary called *Epistle To the Galatians*. Lightfoot points out that the key to understand the implication of this allegorizing is found in the term “answers to.” (*sunstoichei*) We quote the three following paragraphs.

“Literally the term ‘answers to’ means: belong in the same column with. In military language this means a file, a rank of soldiers. The word is here best illustrated by the Pythagorean *sustoicheian* (belong to together) of opposing principles, which stood thus: good-bad, finite-infinite, one-many, permanent-changing, etc., etc.”

“The allegory in the text then may be represented by the *sustoichai* thus: 1. Hagar, the bondwoman — Sarah, the freewoman. 2. Ishmael, the child after the flesh — Isaac, the child of promise. 3. The old covenant — the new covenant. 4. The earthly Jerusalem — the heavenly Jerusalem, etc.”

“The old covenant is thus *sustoichos* (agrees with) the earthly Jerusalem, but *antistoichos* (against the agreement with) to the heavenly. It is not improbable that St. Paul is alluding to some mode of representation common to the Jewish teachers to exhibit this and similar allegories.”

Now let us attend to the text. It is quite clear that we are dealing with two covenants. On the one hand we are here dealing with the covenant of Mount Sinai. This was the covenant of the law-giving by means of angels in the hand of the Old Testament Mediator, Moses. (Gal. 3:19) In our exposition of this passage we noticed that the very manner of the law-giving, by means of angels, indicated that it was a covenant less great than the covenant of the promise in which God spoke directly. This is the covenant which “genders to bondage.” It says, “do this and thou shalt live.” Those who will to be under law, will to be under that manner of obtaining salvation: works of law. But that is bondage. It is the very opposite of the “liberty wherewith Christ has liberated us.” (Gal. 3:12; 5:1) And such is the covenant of Sinai. And that is Hagar. She is a bondwoman, a mere slave in the family, under the do this and thou shalt live. She had only one son. He was born into bondage. Had she received many more sons by Abraham, as did Keturah, still they would be bondmen. They would not ever remain in the house. (John 8:34,35) They would merely be *doers* of sin. The law cannot make alive. (Gal. 3:21) The *law-covenant* is quite different from the covenant of the promise in Christ. Allegorically speaking, Hagar is that Mount Sinai. All her children are bond-children, slaves of sin, without right to the kingdom of heaven.

Now the covenant which is of Sinai is the covenant which is being perpetuated by Jewry and by these false teachers who are disturbing the minds of these Galatian saints, insisting that they must be circum-



cised to enter the kingdom. They must first be in the covenant of Sinai before they can be in the covenant of grace in Christ. They must be under the "do this and thou shalt live" before they can be under the gift of grace which is "he that believes in Christ shall be saved." They must keep days, months, and years and times to inherit the kingdom. This is not clinging to Christ the head, who has nailed this all as a "hand-writing against us" to the Cross. (Col. 2:10-15) Wherefore Paul can write that the old testament law of Sinai, with all its ceremonial duties, answers to "Jerusalem which is now." That was Jerusalem with the glittering temple, its solemn rituals, reflecting the glory of the thunder and lightning of the mount in Arabia. (Gal. 4:25; Heb. 12:18-21) The awesome sight of Sinai made even Moses to tremble and quake exceedingly. This was the pure holiness of God and His justice in His law confronting the naked and guilty and damnable sinner. Here is no hope. It is all bondage. The redeemed must be made free and be married to another. (Rom. 7:1-4)

Allegorically speaking, Ishmael is this son, who is born unto bondage. He cannot ever abide in the

house as do the children. (John 8:39-41) Ishmael does not do the works of father Abraham. He does not walk in the footsteps of father Abraham. As Esau was a profane man, Ishmael was a "mockers" and a "persecutor" of the royal seed, personally and in his generations. (Gen. 21:8,9) This was not some innocent teasing of a big brother toward a little brother. It was the mockery of unbelief, mocking the work of God, His wonder-work in the birth of the free-born child. That is the meaning here of the Spirit. For the words of Sarah to Abraham are not some momentary explosion of an irate mother, but they are the very oracles of God, which Abraham must obey in humble faith, which tries his father-heart greatly. Abraham must love the Lord more than kith and kin, more than the son of his own loins! He must act as the viceroy of the covenant Jehovah, the office-bearer in the church. Shall Ishmael be saved in his *generations* (Acts 2:11) then he must come to the true Jerusalem where the Gospel is heard in his own language. But then he separates from Hagar, from Mount Sinai, and clings to Christ the head of the church, the Jerusalem above!

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## STRENGTH OF YOUTH

# Your Bible and You

*Rev. Ron Van Overloop*

Sometimes we talk with people who are not Christians. Have you done that recently?

I mean, have you recently spoken with someone who seemed not to be a Christian and you tried to speak to him about God, about Jesus, about the truth?

Recently I had the privilege of addressing a group of young people, most of whom did not know the Bible very well. And most of them were not Re-

formed in their religious position.

It was different to speak to them. This was because I could not assume they knew much doctrine, as I know I can assume when I speak to you. After all, you have had at least seven years of instruction in Bible history, and progressively that history of the Bible was taught with its doctrinal significances. And most of you have had a good number of seasons of catechism in the study of Biblical doctrine.



Therefore, if I spoke with you I could assume you know much of the sacred history in the Bible and of the doctrine of the gospel.

But when one is accustomed to teaching Biblically well-informed young people and then must instruct a group which for the most part had not had much instruction, it is difficult to talk with them at first.

Whenever we speak of the truth to someone who has little knowledge of that truth we must be very simple and clear. And we must be very Biblical.

Do you find it easy to do that? I mean, to be Biblical?

Why is it as difficult as it is? Is it because we do not know the Bible well? Do we know our doctrine, but not our Bible?

Where would you look to find the Bible's teaching on creation, besides in Genesis?

How would you prove from Scripture that the days of creation were not long periods of time, but 24 hours in length?

You believe in election and reprobation. Could you show someone where the Bible teaches these important, Reformed truths?

Often we hear that Christ died for all men. Can you, using your Bible, prove that such a position is false?

There are many who say that God loves all men and use John 3:16 to substantiate their position. Would you be able merely to give a logical argument against their position? Or could you show them that Scripture teaches God's love is for a particular, definite people?

Often it seems that we know doctrine, but not the Bible.

\* \* \* \* \*

You can see it in our lives.

That we do not know the Bible as well as we should is manifested in our lives.

The elders of the church hear that some of their young people frequent movies and dances; that some of the young people are avid listeners to rock and other ungodly music; that some of the young people enjoy getting drunk and flirting with drugs; that some of the young people readily desecrate the Lord's Day.

And they (the elders) ask themselves, "Why? Why do they do those things and enjoy them? Don't they know better? Don't they realize the danger and see the evil?"

Many reasons and even some excuses are presented as answers to these questions.

Is not the best reason (never excuse) that those who walk in these evil ways do not walk with God?

Do you walk with God? Can you describe from personal experience communion with the ever-blessed God? How frequently have you walked with God?

Is not the infrequency of our walking with God and living a holy life a direct result of our not knowing Him. And is not this lack of true spiritual knowledge the consequence of not knowing the Bible in which He most beautifully and adequately reveals Himself?

\* \* \* \* \*

We should know our Bible as well as we know doctrine. Maybe we should say, "better."

How often do you spontaneously take your Bible and read it? Why is it so few times? Is it because we do not want the God Who speaks and is spoken of in the Bible?

I realize that most of you have devotions at the evening meal and at school. That is good. But is it enough? Does it give you all you need? Or does it give you all *YOU think* you need? The Bible says that a young person keeps his way clean by "taking heed thereto according to Thy word." (Psalm 119:9).

Take time to read the Holy Scriptures. Alone. Do it every day. Set some specific time of the day aside for this holy activity. Put this activity in its proper place of high priority. You are not too old or too young for this.

And then think about what you have read. If you do not understand it, read it over. Maybe you will have to read it many times. That is okay — can you think of anything better to re-read? Try to find other texts which speak of the same truth.

Then after you have gained an understanding of it, apply the truth. Apply it to life in as many different ways as you can. Do not forget to apply it to yourself!

How many of you take your Bible to catechism? How many of you look up the proof texts given in the lessons? How many of you memorize the texts along with the answers?

Take your Bible to catechism and also to Church. And be prepared to make notes in the margins of your Bible; notes which helped you to understand a passage or give a cross-reference. If you do not want to write in your Bible, then be sure to have scraps of paper handy on which you can make your notes and which you can insert within your Bible.

In this way you will become familiar with God's Word. Never neglect the learning of doctrine, which is the systematic setting in order of the teachings of the Bible.

Know God's Word. Then you will be ready always to give an answer to those who ask why you lead such a holy life.



## GUEST ARTICLE

## The Gracious Call of God

*Rev. R.G. Moore*

Throughout the ages, the church has had to contend for the faith over against many wrong conceptions of the Scriptures. Man, who would exalt self rather than God, sinfully has set forth doctrines that attempt to confuse. But the Bible is simple and clear, and the simple truth of the Scriptures has always brought comfort and strength to God's children. When there is an attempt to introduce error into the midst of the church it is introduced by the setting forth of their devious tenets in the most abstract and confusing language possible. Certainly this has been true whenever the call of God unto salvation has been taught by those who would lead astray. But it need not be! It must not be! Scripture very clearly and simply sets forth the truth of God's gracious call unto salvation. In this article we briefly set forth this truth, precious to God's kingdom people. For it is good to be reminded anew of the precious tenets of our Reformed faith.

When we do consider the call of God unto salvation, we must understand that this doctrine stands on the Scriptural truths of God's sovereign and eternal election, and in time upon the truth of regeneration. Scripture teaches us that regeneration is the first work of God in the child of God after his conception and natural birth. It is through regeneration that the elect receive new hearts and they are given the spiritual ability to see and receive the things of God's kingdom. Further this work of regeneration is alone God's work in His chosen ones by the operation of His Spirit in their hearts. In our new and spiritual birth, God by the Spirit of Christ implants in our hearts the seed of faith, ingrafts us into the body

of Christ, and gives us the ability to see the things of His kingdom and to believe. So that spiritually-ethically we are made alive, who were by nature dead; and we become principally new creatures. This wondrous work is solely of God's grace!

Now in the second place, God does not so renew His Church and then leave them in the darkness of sin and death. But God calls those He has quickened. He calls them out of the darkness of sin and death, and into the marvelous light of His covenant communion and fellowship in Christ. It is now to this efficacious (effectual and working and powerful) calling of our God that we turn our attention.

Turning then to the calling unto salvation we take note at the outset that God is a calling God. He speaks and it comes to pass. We read this literally in Rom. 4:17: "(As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations) before him whom he believeth, even God, Who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were." God calls powerfully, irresistibly. God called into being the heavens and the earth and all that is therein. "He spake and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast." Ps. 33:9. God's word is powerful, and when He speaks, that Word causes things to happen. Again we read in Scripture, "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the Word of God, so that the things which are seen, were not made of things which do appear." Heb. 11:3. This word God speaks in and through Christ, and by the power of His Word He continues to uphold and govern all things, cf. Heb. 1:3.

It surely is peculiar then that, when we come to



God's call unto salvation, man so often will attempt to change all of this. When speaking of God's calling unto salvation, man so often desires to deny the sovereign and efficacious power of God's word. Throughout the ages men have attempted to destroy the sovereign working of God's grace unto salvation. There have been attempts made to take the glory of God unto man. And the church has had to defend the truth over against such attacks. Unto this end the church has been called by Christ the King of His church.

With respect to the calling, the attack against the truth, and thus against the glory of God, has come in the form of a denial of God's powerful, irresistible call unto salvation in Christ. Those of this false conception say that God's word, when concerned with man, really is not irresistibly powerful. Rather, they contend, when God calls His church through Christ, God really wants to save all men, head for head. They say that God wants all who hear His word to repent and believe. Thus, after all, the call of God unto salvation is, according to them, dependent upon man.

But this above position is outright heresy! Be not deceived!

The truth is that when God through Christ and by His Spirit calls His Chosen, they believe, repent of their sins, and are saved. And just as powerfully and irresistibly as God called creation unto existence, so He calls His elect church in Christ out of darkness into the light of His covenant fellowship. God in Christ gathers His church by an effectual call, and those He calls are partakers of His covenant fellowship and promise unto salvation. They are saved! Thus we read in Acts 2:39: "For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." Christ is given from eternity sheep over which He is Shepherd. And because they are His sheep, He calls them by name. And as He calls them efficaciously, they hear His voice and follow Him, and no man shall pluck them out of Christ's hand. Read John 10:27ff. Further, this is the testimony also in II Timothy 1:9: "Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began."

Hence we conclude that God's calling His church by the Spirit of Christ is also the sovereign work of God's grace in saving His elect. Thus, they who were no people are made the people of the living God. It is God's sovereign, effectual, and irresistible work of grace that calls from sin unto salvation!

However, it is well that we take time to answer several questions that often arise because of this truth

of the Scripture. Such questions as, How does God so call His church? or, To whom does God send the gospel call? etc.

The first question we consider is the following: How does God call His Church in Christ? Our answer to this question must be this: by the preaching of Christ! It is through the preaching of Christ that God is pleased to gather His elect church unto salvation. This is the clear testimony of Romans 10:14-15. "How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him (of) whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach, except they be sent?" Also in the Old Dispensation essentially it was the same preaching of Christ through which it pleased God to gather the Church. Only, then, it was the preaching of types and shadows, the sacrifices, etc. But the types and shadows always pointed to the fulfillment by the promised Seed, the Christ. God calls the church through the preaching of Christ!

It is true that God also reveals Himself through His creation. But this revelation is such that, apart from the Scriptures, the creation only reveals God's wrath against all ungodliness. And it is such a revelation that it leaves man without excuse, cf. Rom. 1:18-20. Thus it is alone by the preaching of Christ that God brings His elect out of darkness into the marvelous light of His covenant fellowship.

The next question it is good to consider is this: whom does God call through the preaching? It is obvious that in no way can it be said that God calls everyone. Even in the broadest use of the term "calling," this cannot be! There are many men and women who have been born, lived, and died without ever hearing the gospel of Christ. And this is not by chance, but by the will of God! And in the way of their sin, as they stand before the testimony of God in creation, they are left without excuse in judgment!

But what of the rest of men? Does God call generally to the rest? When we consider this question, we must make a distinction between the call of the preached gospel in an external sense, and that call which comes inwardly to the regenerated heart of God's elect. Both elect and wicked come under the sound of the gospel, when it is preached. This is true even in the church where it is manifest from place to place, and time to time. Jesus taught more than once that there were tares in the midst of the wheat. And the Spirit through the apostle Paul points out to us in Rom. 9, that not all are Israel which are of Israel. Now because of this, both elect and wicked alike hear the same sound of the gospel. They hear the command to repent and believe. This hearing of the sound of the gospel is sometimes referred to by the Scripture as a call of God. It we call the "external



call,” as we make a distinction. But remember that, when speaking of this, God’s Word says, “Many are called, but few are chosen.” Matt. 22:14. Only God’s elect remnant are gathered under the preaching unto glory. They alone hear the call and obey. They are saved, for God irresistibly calls them out of darkness into the light.

But, what then of the wicked. Is God’s word lacking power? God forbid that we should ever say this! Paul says in Rom. 9:6, responding to the same thought, that it is not as though the Word of God had taken none effect. God’s Word always has effect! And the Spirit goes on to point out to us in Romans 9 that the Word proclaimed serves God’s eternal decrees of election and reprobation. Isaiah teaches us that the Word never goes out to return void. The preaching has the effect by God’s counsel and purpose to harden the wicked in their sin. The preaching according to God’s purpose is also a savor of death unto death to the wicked. II Cor. 2:15-16. When Christ is purely preached, many stumble at the Word. And Scripture points out to us that unto this end they were appointed by God. See I Peter 2:8. Thus God uses His Word to harden the hearts of the wicked

unto greater damnation.

But, wondrous grace of God!

God’s beloved church in Christ He saves through the preaching of the gospel of Christ. This call is very particular. It is personal, and it saves! It is the work of God’s grace, and it is rooted in God’s eternal love and mercy for His church in Christ. The result of this call of God applied by the Spirit of Christ to their hearts is redemption and glory. It is only for His elect in Christ. Thus we read, “But now thus saith the Lord that created thee, O Jacob, and He that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not; for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine.” Those called are those redeemed in the blood of Christ. They are the chosen. And God’s Word further says that those whom God calls He also justifies, and whom He justified, them He also glorifies, cf. Rom. 8:28ff. When God so calls His church there is salvation. His sheep hear His voice and they do follow Him. For God has given them to His Beloved Son, and no man can pluck them out of His hand! Gracious, calling God!

May all our praise be given unto Him!

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## THE VOICE OF OUR FATHERS

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# Holy Baptism

*Prof. Robert D. Decker*

“We believe and confess that Jesus Christ, who is the end of the law, hath made an end, by the shedding of his blood, of all other sheddings of blood which men could or would make as a propitiation or satisfaction for sin: and that he, having abolished circumcision, which was done with blood, hath instituted the sacrament of baptism instead thereof; by which we are received into the Church of God, and separated from all other people and strange religions, that we may wholly belong to him, whose ensign and banner we bear: and which serves as a testimony to us, that he will forever be our gracious God and Father. Therefore he has commanded all those, who are his, to be baptized with pure water, “in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost”: thereby signifying to us, that as water washeth away the filth of the body, when poured upon it, and is seen on the body of the baptized, when sprinkled upon him; so doth the blood of Christ, by the power of the Holy Ghost, internally sprinkle the soul, cleanse it from its sins, and



regenerate us from children of wrath, unto children of God. Not that this is effected by the external water, but by the sprinkling of the precious blood of the Son of God; who is our Red Sea, through which we must pass, to escape the tyranny of Pharaoh, that is, the devil, and to enter into the spiritual land of Canaan. Therefore the ministers, on their part, administer the sacrament, and that which is visible, but our Lord giveth that which is signified by the sacrament, namely, the gifts and invisible grace; washing, cleansing and purging our souls of all filth and unrighteousness; renewing our hearts, and filling them with all comfort; giving unto us a true assurance of his fatherly goodness; putting on us the new man, and putting off the old man with all his deeds. Therefore we believe, that every man, who is earnestly studious of obtaining eternal life, ought to be but once baptized with this only baptism, without ever repeating the same: since we cannot be born twice. Neither doth this baptism only avail us, at the time when the water is poured upon us, and received by us, but also through the whole course of our life; therefore we detest the error of the Anabaptists, who are not content with the one only baptism they have once received, and moreover condemn the baptism of infants of believers, whom we believe ought to be baptized and sealed with the sign of the covenant, as the children in Israel formerly were circumcised, upon the same promises which are made unto our children. And indeed Christ shed his blood no less for the washing of the children of the faithful, than for adult persons; and therefore they ought to receive the sign and sacrament of that, which Christ hath done for them; as the Lord commanded in the law, that they should be made partakers of the sacrament of Christ's sufferings and death, shortly after they were born, by offering for them a lamb, which was a sacrament of Jesus Christ. Moreover, what circumcision was to the Jews, that baptism is to our children. And for this reason Paul calls baptism the circumcision of Christ."

*The Belgic Confession, Article XXXIV*

The previous article spoke of the sacraments in general, emphasizing their ordination by God to seal to us His promises. This article discusses what we believe and confess concerning the sacrament of holy baptism. The subject of baptism has always been an important subject and one about which a great deal of controversy has swirled in the church. As important as it was at the time of the Reformation when this article was penned, it has not decreased in importance today. In our own Protestant Reformed history this subject in connection with the doctrines of the covenant and promise was the subject of serious controversy in the late nineteen forties and early nineteen fifties. What is more, the same errors which our fathers denounced in the *Confession* are still present today. This article was written overagainst the Anabaptists who made the sacrament dependent upon man's faith and denied infant baptism and insisted on re-baptism. The Article also confesses the Reformed faith overagainst the Roman Catholics who teach that the power of the sacrament is in the water itself.

*The Confession* begins by emphasizing that it is Jesus Christ Who has instituted the sacrament of baptism. It does this in a rather striking way, not by speaking of the historical circumstances surrounding the institution of baptism, but by speaking of Who the Savior is. Jesus Christ Who provides us with this sacrament is our gracious and all-sufficient Savior. For us He is "the end of the law," Who: "hath made an end, by the shedding of his blood, of all other

sheddings of blood which men could or would make as a propitiation or satisfaction for sin. . . ." Christ has paid the penalty for our sin and fulfilled for us the whole law of God. Salvation, therefore, is the free gift of grace. Nothing can or may be added to His finished work. He gave us baptism as a testimony that our life is complete in Him.

*The Confession* finds the basis for the entire doctrine of baptism in the fact that baptism has come in the place of circumcision, the Old Testament sign and seal of the covenant. It is pointed out that Jesus Christ is "the end of the law." That is an almost literal quotation from the Scriptures which state, "For Christ is the end (*telos*) of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." (Romans 10:4) This does not mean that Christ is the termination of the law, but that He is the purposeful end, the aim, the goal of the law for righteousness to the believer. In other words the law does not cease to be with Christ. The law finds its fulfillment in Christ. Therefore Christ, by His own perfect and bloody sacrifice on the cross, is the end or fulfillment of all the sheddings of blood prescribed by the law. This means that the sign of circumcision, a bloody sign belonging to the law, found its fulfillment in Christ. Thus baptism was instituted by Christ in the place of circumcision.

The meaning of all this is clear. Circumcision was an Old Testament sign which God gave to Abraham and his generations to seal to them the promise of His covenant. (Cf. Genesis 17:7-14) Christ instituted



baptism when He commanded His disciples to go into all the world and preach the gospel to all nations and to baptize in the name of the triune God. (Matthew 28:19) Circumcision pointed to the necessity of the shedding of blood as an atonement for sin. As such the rite of circumcision was prophetic, that is, it pointed ahead to Christ and His bloody sacrifice for sin. When Christ came and made atonement through the shedding of His own blood on the tree of the cross, the need for a bloody sign passed away. Thus circumcision was fulfilled in Christ. That for which it stood and to which it pointed was accomplished by our Lord. Thus too baptism, a sign of the washing away of our sins through Christ's blood, was instituted by the Savior in its place.

Furthermore, that baptism is come in the place of circumcision is evident from the fact that both rites have precisely the same meaning. As to form, the two are different, but as to meaning, baptism and circumcision are the same. Both signify the putting away of sin and the renewal of the heart by grace. Genesis 17:7-14 teaches that God instituted circumcision as the sign of His covenant between Himself and His people and their children. The spiritual meaning of circumcision is taught in Deuteronomy 30:6 which speaks of Jehovah circumcising the hearts of His people and their seed to love Him with all their heart and soul. Romans 4:11 teaches that the sign of circumcision is "a seal of the righteousness of faith." This is exactly the significance of holy baptism. By baptism we are buried into the death of Christ and raised with Him in order that we should walk in newness of life. (Romans 6:3, 4) Perhaps the clearest passage in this regard is Colossians 2:11, 12 which mentions both baptism and circumcision: "In whom (Christ) ye also are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ: Buried with him in baptism wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead." Clearly both stand for the same reality: the putting off of sin, and the resurrection with Christ through faith.

As to its meaning, baptism is first of all, as our *Confession* emphasizes, an emblem which marks the separation of the believer from the world. Baptism signifies that we have been received into the Church of God by being separated from all other people and strange religions. It is the ensign or banner of Christ which we carry with us all our life long. By baptism we are marked, set aside as the people of God. "God himself welcomes us into the corporate fellowship of the body of his Son, Jesus Christ. The underlying emphasis is clear and comforting. We do not take the first step towards church membership. God opens the way for all whom He recognizes as his people. Baptism therefore is not a guarantee of membership

in the invisible church as such. Much rather because we belong to Christ as the people of God's promise, he unites us with the visible church. As such members we have great spiritual responsibilities and obligations. Yet our membership does not spring from or rest upon our fulfillment of these. It roots in God's gracious disposition to us." (P. Y. De Jong, *The Church's Witness To The World*, vol. II, p. 357)

Therefore we are baptized into the name of the triune God. By nature we are members of the fallen race in Adam, dead in trespasses and sins. Baptism signifies that we are incorporated into Christ, buried with Him into the fellowship of His death and raised with Him to newness of life. By means of this incorporation into Christ we are delivered from the world, from death and guilt, from our own flesh, and brought into fellowship with our Covenant God: The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Baptism signifies heaven for us, everlasting life and glory, righteousness. That is the sign of baptism. Just as water cleanses the body of its filth, so the blood of Christ cleanses us from all our sins and regenerates us from being children of wrath into being children of God. That this is true is clear as well from the Old Testament types of baptism. By means of the flood waters God saved Noah and his family: "... the like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us..." (I Peter 3:20, 21). Similarly Israel was delivered out of Egypt (type of the bondage of sin and death) into Canaan (type of the heavenly Canaan) through the waters of the Red Sea. (I Corinthians 10:1, 2)

All of this is effected not by the external water itself, but by the Holy Spirit. The ministers are the called servants of God to administer the sacrament, but only God can give that which is signified and sealed: "... namely, the gifts and invisible grace; washing and cleansing and purging our souls of all filth and unrighteousness; renewing our hearts, and filling them with all comfort; giving unto us a true assurance of his fatherly goodness; putting on us the new man, and putting off the old man with his deeds." These blessings are worked not by the power of the water itself, but by the operation of the Holy Spirit. This is written against the errors of Rome. Rome teaches that baptism cleanses from original guilt and puts a man into the state of grace by which he can either accept or reject the gospel. This is effected by baptism itself to all who are baptized. Against these errors the *Confession* stresses that the water has no power in itself, but is only the sign and seal of what God the Holy Spirit accomplishes in the hearts of His elect.

Finally, these blessings of the sacrament of baptism are ours not only at the moment of baptism but all our life long.

*to be continued . . .*



## Book Reviews

**IN ZIJN ARM DE LAMMEREN**, by Cornelius Lambregtse. I. Wever B.V., Franeker, Netherlands. 349 pp. (Reviewed by Rev. C. Hanko)

This book is in a sense a biography, in which the author relates his own experiences, as is evident from the fly leaf in which he relates, "In precious memory of my only son CALVIN JOHN who at the age of three years and seven months had finished his earthly sojourn and on the day of his departure said: 'I am going to Jesus. Don't cry, Daddy.'"

The setting of the story is in the Netherlands, in the province of Zeeland. The story itself centers about Fransje, whose early experiences in his short life are told with a deep insight into the thoughts and life of a small child. Fransje is in many respects like any ordinary boy of his age, has his companions among children, but seeks also his friends among older people. He is keenly interested in the wonders of God's creation, and at the same time shows a remarkable concern about spiritual matters. He enjoys his Bible Story Book, struggles with his personal sins, burdens his mother with many questions which she finds difficult to answer, and expresses a growing desire to be with Jesus.

The novel is written in an appealing, lucid style, which carries the reader along as an interested observer of the religious life of the community, the spiritual atmosphere of the home and the godly strivings of the parents. One may have a bit of difficulty at first with the dialect of the Zeelanders, which is generously interspersed throughout the book, but the translation of the various words and expressions in the back of the book proves to be helpful. We soon even enjoy the added flavor of the apt remarks of the people so characteristic to that community.

It is refreshing in a time when so many "religious novels" are tainted with a superficial religion and the error of the free-will, to find a book that describes the deep spirituality of a people who live close to the Lord. True, the mysticism of that part of the Netherlands also becomes evident in the story. The characters speak of 'experiences,' of 'inner voices,' and

traumatic conversions. Yet the author points out that the real comfort of the believer is not found in the various experiences, but rather in the testimony of the Holy Scriptures applied to the heart by the Holy Spirit.

The close of the book, where Fransje dies, is the most impressive and absorbing part of the whole story. The family struggles to be submissive to God's will and finds comfort in the assurance that the lad is in glory, based partially on his own confession, but also on the covenant promise of Psalm 105, and the passage from Isaiah 40:11, from which the title of the book is taken, "He shall gather the lambs in his arms, and carry them in his bosom." There is, of course, an even deeper comfort in the assurance of faith, that God is just in all His works, and good in all His dealings with His people.

This book can be strongly recommended to all who can still read and enjoy the Dutch language. In fact, one looks forward to more from the same author.

**The Child's Story Bible**, by Catherine Vos; revised by Marianne Catherine Vos Radius; Wm. B. Eerdmans Publ. Co., Grand Rapids, Michigan; 436 pp., \$9.95 (washable buckram) (Reviewed by Gertrude Hoeksema)

This book is a revised edition of the rather well-known work, **The Child's Story Bible**, by Catherine Vos. The revision was capably undertaken by the daughter of Catherine Vos, Marianne Radius, who "has preserved the cherished style and content of her mother's work; at the same time she has brought the language closer to the understanding of today's children, eliminated some repetition. . . ." (Cf. the Foreword)

Written for children from the ages of 3 to 13 years, and adhering rather closely to the text of the Scriptures, the book uses simple, direct, and clear language. The stories are told in a straight-forward manner, and the reader senses the reverence of the



author toward the Scriptures as she interprets them for young children. However, the vocabulary in the revised edition is perhaps better suited to the early school-age child than to the pre-schooler.

The author does not add many insights or interpretations of the history of the Scriptures, as, for example, the reason that God did not accept the offering of Cain (it was without blood) or God's reason why Moses could not lead Israel into Canaan (he was an imperfect picture of Christ); but probably that was not the purpose of this story Bible.

In illustrating this addition, artist Betty Beeby has used discoveries by archeologists for accuracy in portraying life in Bible times. However, her artistic approach is unconventional, and, to this reviewer, distorted and difficult for the young child to understand; and it detracts rather than adds to the dignity of this book.

**THE NEW TESTAMENT TEACHING ON THE ROLE RELATIONSHIP OF MEN AND WOMEN**, by George W. Knight III; Baker Book House, 1977; 76 pp., \$3.95 (paper). (Reviewed by Prof. H. Hanko)

The author, professor of New Testament at Covenant Theological Seminary has brought together in this little book an expanded edition of three articles which he previously wrote on this subject for different periodicals.

The book is concerned with the growing cry, also

within evangelical circles, for women officebearers in the Church. There are several important points which the author makes. 1) The Scriptures emphatically teach that women, because of their subordination to man — a subordination rooted in the creation ordinance —, may not assume a teaching or ruling role in the Church of Christ. 2) That this position of subordination does not, according to Scripture, imply an inferior position in any respect; that, in fact, spiritually, women stand on a par with men. 3) Women, because of their God-given place in the Church, have an important role in the work of the kingdom though they are barred by Scripture from the teaching and ruling ministry. 4) Those who press for women elders and ministers can support their views from Scripture only by denying the full inspiration of Scripture. Thus their position involves an incorrect hermeneutical principle which denies the Scriptures to be fully the Word of God.

Apart from the fact that the author is not clear on the point of whether women may function in the office of deacons (he speaks of deaconesses, but in the sense of helpers to the deacons; and this may arise from a misunderstanding of the office of deacons) the book is an excellent exegetical defense of the Scriptural position on this question. Although it is brief, it is concise, to the point, Scripturally grounded, a sufficient answer to such men as Jewett in his book "Man As Male and Female," and to be recommended to all who are interested in this important question.

### WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On November 24, 1978, our loving parents, MR. AND MRS. RICHARD TEITSMA will celebrate their 40th wedding anniversary. We are thankful to God for the many years of Christian love and instruction they have shared with us. We pray that the Lord will continue to hold them in His care.

Ken and Ellen Teitsma

Kevin

Keith

Annette

Janelle

Rick Teitsma

Jone Teitsma

Homer and Kathy Teitsma

Jean

Cyndie

Karen

Gerard and Libby Teitsma

Laurie

Susan

There will be an open house given in their honor on November 24, 1978, from 7:00 P.M.-10:00 P.M. at their home at 3681 Mohave Dr. S.W., Grandville, Michigan. We invite you to share their joy with us.

### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Council of the Hope Protestant Reformed Church, Grand Rapids, expresses its heartfelt sympathy to two of its fellow officebearers: Elder H. Van Dyke in the death of his mother, MRS. JOHN VAN DYKE, and Elder D. Kooienga in the loss of his brother, MR. ED KOOIENGA.

May these brethren and their families experience in this time of sorrow the nearness of God and His comforting Spirit. God's Word is sure: "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints." Psalm 116:15

Rev. R. Van Overloop, President  
John Huiskens, Clerk

### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Ladies Aid Society of the First Prot. Ref. Church expresses its sympathy to one of our members, Mrs. E. Kooienga, in the loss of her husband, MR. EDWARD KOOIENGA.

May our Covenant God comfort her with His Word and Spirit in the assurance that "all things work together for good to them that love God." (Rom. 8:28).

Mrs. P. Decker, Pres.  
Mrs. C. Pastoor, Sec'y.



## News From Our Churches

During the two weeks preceding the publication deadline for this issue, both Classis East and West met. Classis East met in special session to examine ministerial candidates Bruinsma and De Vries. Our churches rejoice in the fact that God has again given us servants of His Word in the successful examination of these two men. Faith and Southwest Churches were advised to proceed with the ordination of their new pastors. Classis West met in regular session (which was postponed since early September). The highlight of that meeting was the successful examination of Candidate Flikkema. It was the expectation of some (the news editor at least) that this column would be filled with the official reports of these sessions. Next time perhaps?

Candidate Richard Flikkema's installation as the new pastor of our church in Isabel, South Dakota was scheduled for Thursday evening, October 26.

The ordination of Candidate Michael De Vries was scheduled for Tuesday evening, October 31. Rev. Ronald Van Overloop was to officiate and preach the sermon. Refreshments were to be served after the service. The Southwest congregation scheduled a welcome reception for their new pastor and his wife on Friday evening, November 3.

Faith Church installed their new minister, Rev. Wilbur Bruinsma, on October 25. Professor Robert Decker preached the sermon and Rev. Meindert Joostens, the first pastor of the five year old congregation, read the form for ordination. A congregational welcome program for the Bruinsma family was held on Monday evening, October 30.

Faith Church plans to begin use of their new sanctuary in late November. The new building is located at 7174 20th Ave. in Jenison, Michigan.

With the ordination and installation of the three June graduates of our Seminary, there exists but one of our churches without a pastor. Southeast's most recent call to Rev. Van Overloop was declined.

The following note from our Home Missionary, Rev. Robert Harbach, appeared in the Hope Church Bulletin. "The Victoria (Vancouver Island) mission continues, and now with a new radio broadcast out of KARI, Blaine, Washington, on Saturday mornings from 10:45-11:00 under the name of 'Bible Truth Meditations.' We thank all those who sent us cards

and remembrances which arrived right on our 35th wedding anniversary! It was also 33 years ago that I was ordained to the ministry of the Word in the Reformed Episcopal Church. We have been Protestant Reformed now for 28 years, being 23 years on the Protestant Reformed ministry."

At the request of the Mission Committee, Rev. B. Woudenberg and Mr. C. Prince spent about ten days in Jamaica visiting the churches with whom we have been working for about 15 years. This visit took place in late September and early October. The emissaries worked towards the securing of properties for the churches, attended a Classis meeting of the Jamaican churches, worked further to arrange an instruction program and investigated other matters. The emissaries reported a successful trip.

The Michigan area Mr. and Mrs. Societies scheduled their Fall League Meeting for Tuesday, November 7 at the new Southwest Church. Rev. Woudenberg was to speak on the topic of "Foreign Mission."

Rev. Woudenberg also spoke at the annual Reformation Day lecture in First Church. His topic was "Is the Reformation Being Maintained?" A tape cassette recording of this lecture is available. Send your request with \$2 to cover the cost of the tape and mailing to the news editor.

Those of us in the United States are looking forward to our annual Thanksgiving Day celebration on November 23. Our sister congregation in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, celebrated their national Thanksgiving Day with an evening worship service on Monday, October 9.

Among the many other special meetings and regular activities which are again scheduled in our churches with the coming of the fall season are Choral Societies in our churches in Loveland, Colorado, and Hudsonville, Michigan.

A 'Thought for Contemplation' from John Calvin printed in our South Holland Church Bulletin: "Christ does not exercise dominion in the Church like a formidable tyrant who keeps down His subjects through terror, but He is a Shepherd, and treats His sheep with all the gentleness which they can desire."

K. G. V.