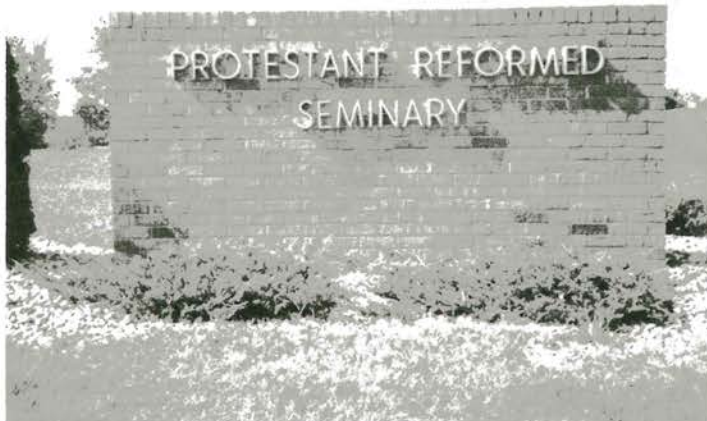


# The **STANDARD BEARER**

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE



## SPECIAL SEMINARY ISSUE



*.....a greenhouse,  
or seed plat, where  
plants are pro-  
duced for later  
transplantation  
into our churches.*

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## THE STANDARD BEARER

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

Department Editors: Rev. Wayne Bekkering, Rev. Wilbur Bruinsma, Rev. Arie den Hartog, Prof. Robert D. Decker, Rev. David J. Engelsma, Rev. Richard Flikkema, Rev. Cornelius Hanko, Prof. Herman Hando, Rev. John A. Heys, Mr. Calvin Kalsbeek, Rev. Kenneth Koole, 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.

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

Church News Editor: Mr. Calvin Kalsbeek  
1313 Wilson Ave. S.W.  
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49504

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Mr. H. Vander Wal, Bus. Mgr.  
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## MEDITATION

## Seeing the Light

Rev. C. Hanko

*"In thy light shall we see light." Psalm 36:9.*

The sweet singer of Israel is singing a hymn, a song of praise to God under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Throughout the ages the church has repeated this song of praise, even as we do today in the well-known words,

Thy mercy and Thy truth, O Lord, transcend  
the lofty sky;  
Thy judgments are a mighty deep, and as the  
mountains high.

Lord, Thou preservest man and beast; since  
Thou art ever kind,  
Beneath the shadow of Thy wings we may a  
refuge find.

With the abundance of Thy house we shall be  
satisfied,  
From rivers of unfailing joy our thirst shall be  
supplied.



The fountain of eternal life is found alone with  
Thee,  
And in the brightness of Thy light we clearly  
light shall see.

Who can fathom the animated joy that floods the soul and comes to expression in this hymn? It provides us with a foretaste of the eternal song of Moses and the Lamb, standing, as it were, at the very portals of heaven. We sing to our Almighty God, Whom we worship and adore. We sing to Jehovah, our eternal, unchangeable covenant God, Who keeps covenant forever. We declare before Him in humble worship His glorious perfections as we experience them from day to day in our lives. God's mercy is the keynote of our song. It is higher than the heavens, transcending all human thought or imagination, as God in mercy bestows upon us the riches of His salvation. God's faithfulness covers us as a protective cloud by day and a cloud of light by night. God's righteousness is as steadfast as the mountains, founded on holiness and truth. Therefore His judgments are just judgments, punishing the wicked according to their sins and bestowing blessings upon His people in abundant mercies. How precious is that mercy of our God, far beyond anything that we could cherish in our hearts here below. We are abundantly satisfied with the spiritual bounties of God's House, bounties of spiritual bread and wine in covenant fellowship with God at His table. From the throne flow rivers of pleasure, filling our hearts with joy unspeakable and full of glory. The climax of our eulogy is reached in the confession, "With thee is the fountain of life: in thy light we shall see light."

"God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all" (I John 1:5). When we look for a definition of light we search in vain. Just as a definition for life escapes us, so also a definition of light defies our understanding. We can say something about light, even about the effects of light, yet even so we have not yet expressed what light really is. We speak of light as movement, vibration. We know it produces heat and warmth. We need it to see and to move about. Dark objects take on shape and form as the dawn of a new day spreads its light over the earth. Colors appear in the light. In the light we see one another, have contact, fellowship, and communion. Therefore we can say that light is life. Yet, even so, we still ask, what is light?

Scripture directs our attention to God. *God* is Light. The light that God created on the first day of the creation week is an earthly picture of the light of God. The sun that was made the light-bearer on the fourth day is a constant reminder to us of Him Who is the Light of life. God is Light! Who can fathom that? As mere creatures of the dust we worshipfully confess that God dwells in the

dazzling brightness of His own glorious perfections. Before Him the angels hide their faces, the saints bow in adoration. Holy is His Name! He is the Holy One of Israel Who is holy in all His dealings with His people and with the wicked. Righteousness and truth belong to Him. He thinks righteous thoughts, speaks righteous words, and deals righteously always. In Him is infinite knowledge and wisdom. He is eternal, immutable. He is self-sufficient, sovereign over all His wide and vast creation. He is *God*. The one, only true and eternal Light.

This brings to mind the words of the Savior, "I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life" (John 8:12). The first creation was made with a view to the coming of Christ and the new creation. God had eternally appointed His Son to be the Christ, the Firstborn of every creature to bring many sons to glory through the dark yet glorious way of sin and grace. All history was planned to serve that purpose even from paradise to Paradise. It was with that in mind that God created this present world, bringing forth light out of darkness by the Word of His power. This light was the light of life. Adam also was created a living soul, in the image of God in true knowledge, righteousness, and holiness. He had the light of his eye whereby he could see the amazing splendor of God's creation. With the light of his understanding he saw the hand of the Creator in all things, so that he must have cried out: My God, how great Thou art! With the spiritual light of love in his heart, which controlled his whole being, he was devoted to God as God's friend-servant. In devotion to God he consecrated his whole being to his God, with all the earthly creation. But through the fall of Adam abominable sin and horrible darkness settled upon this world. When Jesus declared Himself to be the light of the world He plainly implied that the whole world lies enveloped in the darkness of sin and death. Darkness stands antithetically opposed to light. Light is holiness, darkness is vile rebellion; light is righteousness, darkness is defiance of God and of His laws, transgression; light is knowledge, darkness is spiritual blindness, the lie; light is life, darkness is the isolation of death. To sinners born in this world of sin and death Christ proclaims the glad tidings, "I am the light of the world." He does not merely say that He brings light into the world, He *is* the light. He does not allow for the possibility that there might be other sources of light. He *is* the light. He comes into this world of sin and darkness to bring the light of salvation. He enters into the very depths of our darkness to bear the wrath of God against our sin in the raging torments of hell to deliver us and bring us to glory. He is the Captain of our salvation Who through the darkness of death



and the grave marches onward to life and victory in glory. From heaven He sends His Spirit into our hearts to draw us out of death into life and out of darkness into His marvelous light. We who once were darkness are now light in the Lord (Eph. 5:8). He restores in us the image of God in true knowledge, righteousness, and holiness. We are spiritually enlightened so that we may see with our eyes and know with our minds the wondrous majesty and glory of our God as revealed in all the works of His hands and in the Holy Scriptures. Our hearts are renewed so that we can devote ourselves to God with heart and mind, and with our whole being. We know the mercies of God that transcend the lofty skies, and His judgments which are deeper than the sea and higher than the mountains. We are satisfied with the abundance of God's house and drink from the rivers of living waters which continuously flow to us from our Savior Jesus Christ.

Thus we become disciples, followers of Jesus, walking in the light as children of the light. We experience God's approval, having fellowship with God and with the saints, for God's people are our people, and their God is our God. We take the Holy Scriptures as our guide, our road map to lead us along the perfect way that leads us to life with God in His glory. We confess, "Thy word is a lamp before my feet, and a light upon my path" (Psalm 119:105). That Word is in our hearts as the message of God Himself to us, revealing to us His eternal mercies and grace as the God of our salvation in Jesus Christ. God promises to us, as the heirs of salvation, the riches of grace in Christ Jesus. He instructs our hearts and minds in wisdom's ways, so that in Him we trust, upon Him we wait, in Him is all our joy, our expectation, and our longing. To live apart from God is a conscious experience of death. Of this we become deeply aware when we sin. God's approval means more to us than our earthly existence. Now we see as in a mirror dimly, soon we shall see our God face to face; now we know in part, soon we shall know as we are known.

This knowledge of God is the basis, the principle of all true knowledge. For it is in God's light that we see the light. All true knowledge is knowledge of God, theology. It is true that there is a certain knowledge in the world of unbelief, a remnant of natural light that remains after the fall of paradise. The natural man knows, not merely that there is a god, but that God is God. He cannot escape the fact that God's law is good and that God must be served. He knows very well the difference between good and evil, as is evident from his reaction to those who offend him. He knows that it is to his own advantage to remain a bit close to keeping the law. He takes advantage of the discoveries and

inventions God opens up to him in His creation. He discerns the laws that are basic for mathematics, science, languages, etc. He applies this knowledge to his own life in the world. Yet, even so, he suppresses the truth in unrighteousness, for he walks in darkness. Knowing God he defiantly asks, "Who is God, that I should obey Him?" He determines for himself what is right or wrong. The consensus of opinion becomes the criterion for what is proper, even when it violates all God's holy law. Knowing God he works his own condemnation, so that he stands eternally before God without excuse.

True knowledge of God is a God-centered knowledge. This we confess before the face of God when we declare, "In thy light we shall see the light." This implies that all knowledge in every field of learning is based on God's revelation of Himself in the Scriptures. We are not misled by those who argue that there are many interpretations of Scripture, and therefore none can be exact. Scripture is its own interpreter. The Holy Spirit Who testifies through the Scriptures does not speak to one differently than to another. It is our duty prayerfully to search the Word of God from day to day. We must approach that Word with a docile, receptive heart, asking, "Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth." Only then are we spiritually qualified to see the light and to walk in it.

This is more than a confession. It is our prayer to God that He may enlighten our understanding, give us receptive hearts for His Word, and give us grace to be shining lights in our families, in the church, and in the midst of the world. In answer to that prayer God feeds us with the fatness of His House. We drink of Jehovah's stream of life with joy unspeakable and full of glory. Thus we also live in anticipation of that day when with the multitude before the throne we will declare in perfection of glory: "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! ... For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen!" (Romans 11:33, 36).

**THE  
STANDARD BEARER**  
makes a thoughtful  
gift for any occasion.



## Editor's Notes

### Special Issue

For the most part, you will not find the usual departments in this issue of our magazine. This is a special issue, designed to acquaint our readers with our Theological School and its activities. We hope the contents of this issue will indeed serve to acquaint you, near and far, a little more fully with our school. By the way, visitors are welcome at the school. This holds true both for visitors from the Grand Rapids area and for visitors from our outlying churches.

### Write Our Missionaries

As some of you (who wrote) have learned, Rev. and Mrs. den Hartog were overjoyed at the large

number of letters they received recently. Let's keep it up. And while we're at it, let's include our home missionaries on the mailing list. I am sure that Rev. and Mrs. R. Van Overloop in Birmingham, Alabama and Rev. and Mrs. S. Houck in East Lansing, Michigan will not spurn your letters. You can find all the addresses in the Yearbook, found in the back section of the 1980 Acts of Synod.

### Join The RFPA Book Club

We remind you again that the next RFPA publication, *The Voice Of Our Fathers*, will go to RFPA Book Club members at a special first-time-only discount of 30% off the regular price of \$18.95. But you *must* join the Book Club *before* the book gets on the market. Hurry!

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## EDITORIALS

Prof. H.C. Hoeksema

## The "Greenhouse" on Seminary Hill

Officially the name of our seminary is the Theological School of the Protestant Reformed Churches. But often we simply refer to it as "the seminary" or "our seminary." This issue of our *Standard Bearer* is designed to tell you something about our school, to tell you not only who are there, but also what is accomplished there and what the purpose and goal of our seminary is.

If you consult our Church Order you will find no mention of any mandate to establish and operate a seminary, nor any mention of its purpose. You will find mention, however, of the office of professor of theology and mention of the task of such a professor. The latter, of course, presupposes the existence of a seminary, or school, in which such a professor teaches. Hence, our Protestant Reformed Churches have from their beginning insisted upon establishing and operating a Theological School, and they have insisted that the operation of such a school is the calling and task not of any private organization, nor of a society of parents (as is the case with our Christian day schools), but of the church institutionally. Essentially, it belongs with the calling to preach the Word. The establishment,

operation, and supervision of a seminary is part of the official work of the church. And no church or group of churches can long exist and maintain its identity as church, i.e., continue to manifest the mark of the pure preaching of the Word, unless it can turn to a seminary for ministers trained to preach in faithfulness to the Word of God and the confessions of said church.

All of which brings us to the subject of the nature and purpose of a seminary.

If you consult a good dictionary, you will discover that the word *seminary* comes from the Latin noun *seminarium*, which in turn is related to the Latin word *semen*, seed. And the primary meaning of the word, now obsolete, is "a piece of ground where a seed is sown for producing plants for transplantation; a nursery; a seed plat." From thence it has come to have its meaning of "an institution for the training of candidates for priesthood or ministry." Our Dutch forbears recognized this idea of a seminary already as long ago as the time of the Arminian controversy, prior to the Synod of Dordrecht, when they expressed concern about the "*plantsoenhof*" of the Dutch churches



being corrupted by a teacher such as Arminius.

So that is the idea of a seminary. It is a greenhouse, or seed plat, where plants are produced for later transplantation into the churches.

One could, of course, expand on that idea and stress several elements in the figure of speech implied in the name "seminary." For example, it is a *sheltered* place, where the plants (students) can safely grow without being exposed to the adverse influences of the elements until they are strong enough to withstand them. It is a place with a salutary atmosphere, designed as to soil and air and water and light and heat to produce *healthy* plants, that is, doctrinally and spiritually sound and capable preachers. Then again, a greenhouse is a place designed to induce forced and rapid growth, so that plants for transplantation will be produced quickly and on a timely basis, as they are needed. And thus one could go on and point out several similarities between a greenhouse for plants and the "greenhouse" of the churches.

But rather than enter into detail in this fashion, having pointed out the idea of a seminary, let me quote from our official Bulletin/Catalogue as to the description, the basis of instruction, and the curriculum of our Theological School:

#### THE SEMINARY...in brief...

At the very beginning of the Protestant Reformed Churches, the need was recognized for a theological school in which men could be prepared for the ministry of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Although the need was obviously recognized and met because the Protestant Reformed Churches believed it to be their solemn calling to prepare men for the ministry, nevertheless, the establishment of a separate seminary was also closely connected with the reasons for the organization of the Protestant Reformed Churches as a separate denomination. This denomination was formed to maintain the truth of Scripture against the errors of Arminianism particularly, which have for many years vitiated the ministry of the Church. The seminary is therefore dedicated to preserve and develop the truth of the Word of God and to provide an education in this truth in all branches of theology. More specifically, the seminary maintains this truth as it has been historically maintained since the time of the great Protestant Reformation, especially the Reformation of John Calvin. There is no need therefore for apology in pointing out that these principles and truths of the Calvin Reformation form the heart of all the instruction offered.

#### Basis of Instruction

The truths upon which this seminary therefore stands are briefly:

- 1) The infallible inspiration of the Holy Scriptures and their absolute authority in doctrine and life.
- 2) The five points of Calvinism:

- a) The sovereign and unconditional election of God.
- b) The total depravity of man.
- c) The particular and complete atonement of Christ made only for the elect.
- d) The irresistible power of the grace of God in the work of salvation.
- e) The preservation of the saints.

3) The everlasting and unconditional covenant of grace established by God with His elect people and their elect seed in Jesus Christ.

Further, the Three Forms of Unity historically maintained in the Reformed Churches (The Heidelberg Catechism, The Belgic Confession and The Canons of Dort) are the confessional basis of the Protestant Reformed Churches and of the Seminary.

It is apparent that, while these truths are the great truths of the Protestant Reformation and subsequent Reformed theology, they are, at the same time, most generally ignored and denied in this day. In this the Church has been unfaithful to her Reformation heritage.

It is further apparent that the sturdy defense of these truths is the urgent calling of the Church—a calling which comes with increased force in these troubled times.

The Seminary of the Protestant Reformed Churches stands firmly committed to these truths of God's Word, seeks diligently to defend them and develop them further, and founds all the instruction offered in the school upon them. In this way can the Seminary serve the preservation of the truth in the midst of the Church and be an instrument, under the blessing of Almighty God, to prepare men for the ministry of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

#### Curriculum

A complete course in all the branches of theology is offered. As appears from the catalogue, the emphasis in the curriculum is on Dogmatics and Exegesis. This is not without good reason. Dogmatics is important inasmuch as all the life of the Church flows out of sound doctrine and a clear and concise understanding of the faith "once delivered to the saints." Sound and effective preaching is preaching of the truth. But Exegesis is no less important inasmuch as there can be no true Dogmatics except the truth be gleaned from Holy Writ. The strength of the Church of Christ is her preaching; and the strength of her preaching is exegesis since the Word of God alone must form the content of all the preaching of the gospel.

The remainder of the curriculum is not decorated with subjects which can be called "frills"; nor are subjects included which are only indirectly related to the preparation of men for the ministry; the subjects themselves and the material offered are conducive to study and research, are composed of solid material able to qualify one intellectually and spiritually for the work of the ministry.

A student graduating from the school and receiving his diploma may expect that the diploma indicates a



full seminary training which will equip him to labor with the rich heritage of Calvinistic and Reformed thought.

Further, the desire to offer our potential ministers as much distinctively Protestant Reformed education

as possible, along with the continuing spiritual decay evidenced in existing public and private postsecondary educational institutions, has prompted the Protestant Reformed Churches to expand its offerings in the Theological School to include pre-seminary, college-level, work.

## Our Pre-Seminary Department

Almost from the beginning of its history our Theological School has included a pre-seminary department, at least a partial one. Besides, more than once in our history our churches decided, either at the General Classis or later at Synod, that our school should include such a department. During the 1950's and early 1960's, for various reasons, among them the fact that most of the students came to seminary with a college degree, the pre-seminary division died out. But through a combination of circumstances, as well as out of the conviction that it was necessary for the welfare of school and churches, the pre-seminary division of the school was revived and expanded.

What we now require of entrants into our seminary is the equivalent of a complete college course, or 125 credit hours. But among these required hours there is a large number of hours of required subjects, subjects which we deem important as basis and background for seminary training. These include Latin (which a student must obtain elsewhere), Greek (taught by Prof. Hanks), Dutch (Prof. Hoeksema's department, though it is currently being taught by Rev. C. Hanks), Philosophy (shared by the three professors), Logic, English Grammar and Literature (both of the latter must be obtained elsewhere), Public Speaking (taught by Prof. Decker), Psychology (taught by Prof. Hanks), World History (taught by Prof. Decker), and first-year Hebrew (taught by Prof. Hoeksema).

Just a few words about this aspect of our school.

In the first place, why do we maintain a pre-sem department? The basic reasons are given above in the section quoted from our catalogue. And we do not hesitate to say that the quality of our pre-sem department by way of comparison with other schools is high; this alone justifies its existence. Besides, there is the intangible benefit that students are under our guidance and training and in the atmosphere of our own seminary for three or four years before they ever begin seminary.

In the second place, you probably ask the question how our small faculty manages to teach

these subjects in addition to an already crowded seminary curriculum. There are various answers. One is that we think the goal is worth the additional work. Another is that we schedule pre-sem subjects in alternate years, so that no professor teaches more than two pre-sem subjects at a time. A third



is—and this gives me the opportunity to introduce him—that for the last few years we have had assistance from Rev. C. Hanks, who has been appointed by the faculty and School Committee to give instruction in Dutch, thus relieving Prof. Hoeksema of this task. This year Rev. Hanks is teaching both Dutch Grammar and Dutch Reading, which means that he is at school every morning. Let me assure you that he is there promptly at 8 o'clock in the morning, too. How's that for a retiree! We enjoy his assistance and his fellowship very much. Usually he stays around for coffee time and chats a bit with faculty and students. He also takes his turns leading our weekly chapel service. Besides, he admits that this contact helps to keep him young!

In the third place, a few years ago we moved first-year Hebrew from the seminary to the pre-seminary curriculum. Traditionally, for some reason, Hebrew has always been taught at the seminary level, though Greek was taught at pre-sem level. The result was that there was considerable delay in the ability of students to handle the Old Testament in the original language. This was a handicap for both professor and students. Hence,



senior pre-seminarians now have a year of Hebrew, and this is followed by a second year at seminary level. The change has been for the better. Perhaps some day we can move all Hebrew instruction to the pre-seminary division.

In the fourth place, in recent years our students have been able to obtain credit toward their B.A. degree for the courses which they take at our school. This is an added incentive for our students to get their degree, and we encourage them to do so.

## Office Assistants

For many years our school just seemed to run by itself. There was no office. There were no records, except in the files of the Theological School Committee or of Synod. The school didn't even own a typewriter.

All that has changed within the past ten to fifteen years, and it changed even more when we moved to our present building on Ivanrest. It changed partly because life at the seminary simply became busier and more complicated; and it changed partly, too, because of licensing requirements by the State of Michigan, and the consequent necessity of record-keeping.

Hence, at school we have a couple office assistants of the kind that are virtually indispensable but nevertheless seldom mentioned, nor appreciated the way they ought to be.

I refer, first of all, to Mrs. R.H. Meyer, our office secretary. But she is more than a secretary. When occasionally she cannot be at school, things don't seem to run normally. Mrs. Meyer is our secretary, our bookstore manager, our book-keeper, and

sometimes, I suspect, a kind of mother-confessor to some of the students. She began working for us before we had an office; she typed in Prof. Hoeksema's home office when he was at school. Now she works every morning when school is open, and sometimes when it is not. In addition to all the usual office chores and correspondence, she acts as secretary to all three faculty members. They are furnished with Dictaphones and bring their material to her to be typed. There is many a lecture that has passed through her typewriter, and almost all our syllabi have been prepared by her. I venture to say, too, that incidentally to her work she has gotten a bit of theological education.

Our other little known helper is Mr. Don Doezema. One of the several hats he wears is that of registrar at our seminary. He takes care of all our academic records, keeps them up to date, issues grade reports and transcripts, and performs many other chores which serve to take the pressure off the faculty.

Our thanks and appreciation to both!



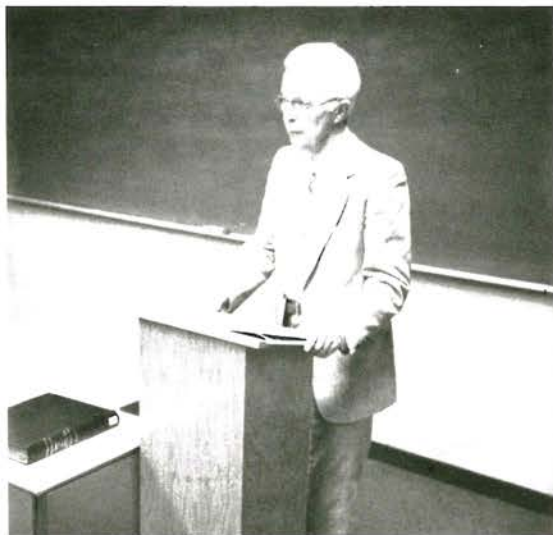
Know the standard and follow it—  
**Read The Standard Bearer**



## SEMINARY DEPARTMENTS

# Dogmatics and Old Testament Studies

*Prof. Homer C. Hoeksema*



When I first came to the seminary in 1959, I felt heir to the Old Testament Studies which had long been the realm of our esteemed Rev. George M. Ophoff. Later, in 1965, when the original dogmatist of our seminary went to glory, some adjustments were made in the curriculum-division, with the result that the Dogmatics department also became my responsibility. About these two departments I am supposed to write a few words.

The Old Testament Studies in our curriculum are actually part of a much larger and very important department in our school, the department of Biblical-Exegetical Studies. To this department belong various subjects which may be termed "tools," first of all. These tools include, of course, a knowledge of the Hebrew language, so that the student-minister may be able to study the Old Testament in the original. These tools also include Hermeneutics, a study of the principles and correct method of Biblical interpretation. This is Prof. Hanko's realm, although our Old Testament Exegesis courses naturally involve instruction specifically in the principles and methods of interpreting the various kinds of Old Testament writings. In a way, to those tools also belong the courses in Old Testament Isagogics (or Introduction) and in Typology, both of which are currently the responsibility of Prof. Decker.

That leaves the courses in Old Testament History and the courses in Old Testament Exegesis to this writer.

There is a saying that goes, "The New is in the Old contained; the Old is in the New fulfilled." The underlying principle in that saying is that the Scriptures are perfectly one, and that the Old Testament is as much the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the revelation of the God of our salvation in Him as is the New Testament. If there was one thing that old Rev. Ophoff never tired of stressing, it was that fact. There is Gospel in the Old Testament! And the chief aim of all our Old Testament Studies is to teach our students to see this Gospel in the Old Testament and to teach them to discover it for themselves, so that they may be able capably and clearly to proclaim that Gospel to the congregation from the Old Testament as well as the New. Old Testament preaching has fallen upon evil times and has even gone out of style in many churches; perhaps it is even too much neglected in our own churches, possibly sometimes out of the fear that it is too difficult. This ought not to be. There are riches of knowledge and instruction in the Old Testament Scriptures, and Old Testament preaching can indeed be both valuable and extremely interesting.

Our Old Testament History courses, four semesters in all, are, as the name suggests, designed to trace the revelation of the promise and the development of God's covenant throughout the old dispensation, the era of types and shadows. These are mainly lecture courses, in which I am systematically developing the material of that history in consecutive lectures, lectures which are then published by our seminary in syllabus form. While the student is expected to master all the facts and data of Old Testament History, each semester we deal intensively with only one segment of that history. At present, for example, I am lecturing on the Era of the Judges. At the same time, as we go along even in this subject I try to furnish the students practical hints and suggestions as to how to preach on the material under discussion.

Our Old Testament Exegesis courses are three in number. One semester is devoted to interpreting historical material, one to interpreting poetical books, and one to interpretation of prophecy. Ideally, I suppose, these courses should include exegetical lectures also, but rarely does time permit this. These classes are mainly learning-by-doing courses. That is, the students are assigned passages



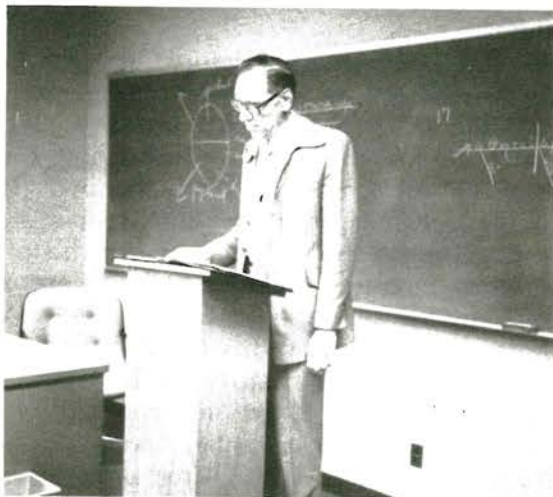
of Scripture which they must exegete, always working, of course, from the original Hebrew. The rule is that the quality and thoroughness of their exegesis must be such that it could serve as the foundation of a sermon. The student-exegesis is then subjected to critique by fellow-students and professor. All of this has the aim of teaching the student to be expert in expounding the Old Testament Scriptures.

The Dogmatical Studies are entirely my department at school, with the exception of one course taught by Prof. Decker at present, Reformed Symbols. For the rest I rotate constantly through the seven courses of this department; and wherever we are in the series when a student begins seminary, at that point he begins studying Dogmatics. The courses, in addition to Introduction, which deals with the name, definition, method, and principles of Dogmatics, are: the Doctrine of God, the Doctrine of Man, the Doctrine of Christ, the Doctrine of Salvation, the Doctrine of the Church, and the Doctrine of the Last Things. Our textbook, as you might expect, is Herman

Hoeksems's *Reformed Dogmatics*. Hence, our students and your future ministers spend a whole semester on subjects which might be covered in three or four catechism lessons or a few Heidelberg Catechism sermons. They must be well-versed and thoroughly founded in the doctrines of the Reformed faith which they must teach and preach in the future. They are expected to have definitions and Scriptural proofs at their finger-tips. But our classes are not spent merely in reviewing and testing in the material of *Reformed Dogmatics*. I always tell the students that anyone can study and master *Reformed Dogmatics* at home and without a professor. We want to probe the riches of the truth and learn to understand as much as possible of it. And we want to learn to think dogmatically. Hence, we go on from *Reformed Dogmatics*. We question, we investigate, we discuss, we argue—sometimes even heretically (as long as both professors and students are orthodox when they pass outside the classroom door)—all to the end of knowing and understanding and appreciating and growing in the riches of the truth as it is in Jesus Christ.

## Church Historical Studies

*Prof. Herman Hanko*



There is an old dictum (I am probably not quoting it exactly) which goes, "He who will not learn from history's mistakes is doomed to repeat them." In a sense, we take this dictum very seriously in the Seminary. It holds true, and was originally formulated with a view to, world history. Nations and peoples who do not know history and have no appreciation for what has happened in the past are ignorant of the sins of long ago. In ignorance of them, the same sins are repeated

again and again—with the gravest of consequences. We see this happening in the world all the time. That which brought the Roman Empire to its knees a millenium and a half ago is bringing upon America and Western civilization the same destruction.

But if this is true in world history, it is much more true in the history of the Church of our Lord Jesus Christ. And the consequences are more serious. We are speaking, after all, of the *Church*, that one body of believers in the world which is so important that all history has to do with it and with it alone. The Church which will not learn from its own history is a Church doomed to make the same mistakes which brought ruin and desolation upon the cause of Christ in the past. How else can one explain that the same old heresies which raised their ugly heads in years gone by are heresies which reappear in today's Church world? Is the true and essential divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ denied today? Indeed it is. But the heresy is no different from that which brought havoc in the Church over 1500 years ago. Arminianism, as our Canons say, is the age-old heresy of Pelagianism resurrected out of hell. Yet Arminianism controls the life of the Church in large measure up to our



present time. The evils are as great; the devastation brought about by it is as terrible.

I suppose that many would be shocked to learn that our Seminary has no fewer than six semesters devoted to a study of the history of the Church. Church History is not considered all that important in today's Theological Schools. This is not to say that there is no instruction in Church History; but, as often as not, this instruction is cursory and considered relatively unimportant. The reason is obvious. Today the plea is made for a gospel which is relevant to our modern times and can address man as he lives in the Twentieth Century, in our modern scientific age—an age when old truths are out-of-date and when new truths are called for. If the history of the Church is studied at all, it is studied because it is always somewhat interesting to erect museums which have on display ancient artifacts and which will satisfy people's curiosity as to how others lived in bygone years. So, presumably, students who aspire to the ministry of the Word ought to have some passing acquaintance with the oddities of the Church of long ago so that, if necessary, they will be in a position to satisfy the curiosity of their parishioners should the question ever arise: "How did people do these things once upon a time?" And so Church History has taken a back seat to more contemporary studies; and, indeed, there is, in many areas of the Church's life, a concerted and deliberate attempt made to disparage Church History and to wean the people of the Church from their heritage.

A total of six semesters! That is a great deal of time to be spending on the past!

What do we do with all that time?

The regular Church History courses are four in number. The first course deals with the history of the Church from the time of the apostles to the time of the Semi-Pelagian controversies of the Fifth and Sixth Centuries. In this course the students are required to learn about the history of the post-apostolic Church, the history of the great trinitarian and Christological controversies which filled the Church with turmoil but brought forth the great creeds of Christendom: The Nicene Creed, the Chalcedonian Creed, and the so-called Creed of Athanasius. They will be exposed to the bitter battle which the great Church father Augustine waged against the heresy of Pelagianism, the father of all Arminianism. They will have to know how the devil sought by devious means to destroy the Church through every conceivable heresy and how God raised up great men who stood fearlessly for the truth though all the world was against them. They will have to learn how the Church argued and fought about the dates when Christmas and Easter would be celebrated; how the saints endured bitter

persecution under the heavy hand of imperial Rome; how the evils in the Roman Catholic Church began in this period already when the calendar of the Church was crowded with holidays for saints, when men sought holiness by sitting for years on the top of poles or letting bugs bite them in the desert sands of North Africa, when a hierarchy of clerics arose in the Church to rob the people of God of their office of all believers.

The second course leads the students into those strange years called the Middle Ages, when popes fought with kings for power and riches, when the truth seemed almost lost in the errors of Romish thought, when those who defended the truth of Scripture were tortured and burned at the stake, when Rome ruled the world and the antichrist sat upon the "throne of Peter." There is much to learn here too, but there is great difficulty in finding the true Church of Christ. It is not always so easy to see that there are always seven thousand who have not bowed the knee to Baal. And just as newspapers record only the bad things that happen, for these things are the news, so history records only the history of a church become corrupt—so corrupt that she lost completely the power to reform herself. But the Church was there, sometimes to be found in the strangest places; God preserves His Church.

The third course deals with the Reformation and concentrates upon the mighty and glorious work of God in restoring the Church to doctrinal purity. The names of the great men of God ring down the centuries: Luther, Calvin, Knox, Beza, Cranmer, Ridley, Latimer, and a host of others.

The fourth course must cover all the history of the Church from the Reformation till today, but it will give to the students most of all a knowledge of their own unique heritage: the Reformed faith as that developed in the Netherlands and in this country. It will bring the students to our own Protestant Reformed Churches and the place in the history of the Church which God has given to us.

Added to these courses are two more which trace the history of the development of doctrine from the time of the apostles till the present. These are separate courses and are intended to concentrate especially upon the truth as the Spirit of Truth led the Church into her confession of that truth. So once again the student is led through the whole of New Testament times, now to look at all this history from the viewpoint of the doctrines which developed until the present.

Why are all these courses so important?

There are many answers to this question, a few of which ought to be mentioned.

Presupposed in all this is a particular view of



Scripture. Those who take the position that history—whether of the Church or of doctrine—is relatively unimportant do so with a definite view of Scripture in mind. This view of Scripture is not always explicitly stated, but it lurks in the background for all that. History is irrelevant because Scripture does not set forth an objective, fixed, and authoritative body of doctrine to which the Church can hold in every age. Just as many of the things taught in God's Word are time-conditioned (the views of the people of Bible times, irrelevant to modern man), so the doctrines which the Church confessed are the passing fads of a particular era, conditioned by the times, relevant for the moment, but ever changing and never sure. The Church today needs new doctrines, new truths, new expressions of her confession if she is to be truly relevant. Gomarus is as outdated as Augustine and Calvin as outdated as Athanasius; Knox is as outdated as Gottschalk and, presumably, Luther is as outdated as Paul.

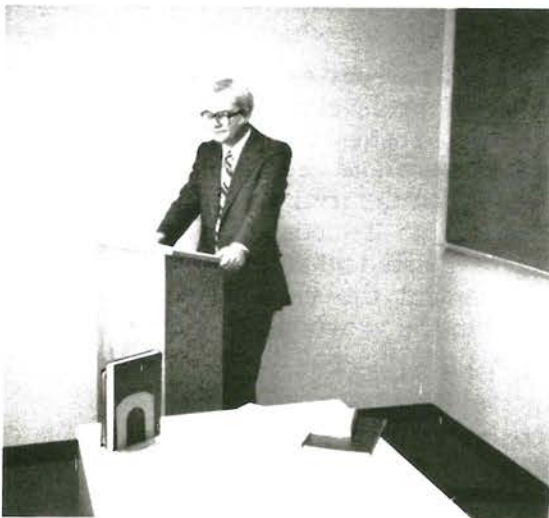
The importance of Church History is based upon the firm conviction that Scripture is the infallibly inspired Word of God which is given to the Church as the revelation of Jehovah God in the face of our Lord Jesus Christ. It contains the whole mystery of salvation which to believe is to be saved. It is everlastingly sure and fixed and relevant for the Church in every age. The history of the Church and of her doctrine is the history of God, through the preaching of the Scriptures and by the work of the Spirit of Christ in the Church, gathering, defending, and preserving His Church until the end as He

leads that Church into all truth. The history of the Church is the demonstration of the marvelous work of grace. It is the exciting adventure of the marvelous work of grace. It is the exciting adventure of the full realization of the work of Christ in the salvation of the elect. Amid the cries of martyrs who loved not their lives unto death, in the crash of the battles for the defense of the faith, through the triumphs and tragedies of a Church living in every age, one comes face to face with the truth: upon the rock which is Christ God builds His Church and the gates of hell cannot prevail against it.

It is necessary to know that truth. When Israel forgot the wonders which God performed for the nation, Israel went apostate. When the Church does not know her heritage, the Church loses her heritage and joins Laodicea in being spit from the mouth of Christ. A Church which has no appreciation for the blood of martyrs will not be faithful until death. A Church which does not understand the subtleties of Satan in his fierce attacks against the truth will be easy prey for every wind of doctrine. A Church which does not appreciate and give thanks to God for the work of the Spirit of Truth in leading the Church into all truths will be a Church that despises the truth and sells her heritage for a mess of worldly pottage. A Church which will not learn from the mistakes of the past is doomed to repeat them. But a Church which lives out of her past is a Church vibrant with life and power in this present age to fulfill her calling before God.

## New Testament Studies

*Prof. Robert D. Decker*



In the Protestant Reformed Seminary there is a great deal of emphasis on Biblical-Exegetical studies. There is good reason for this. No one can function in the ministry without a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures and the skill to expound and apply those Scriptures to the needs of the church. The minister is the servant (the Apostles called themselves "slaves") of the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ, the Great Shepherd of the sheep, cares for the sheep through the office of the minister. This means, among other things, that the minister must feed the flock of God and care for the flock of God with the Word of God. He must bring to the sheep the Word of Christ and nothing else. This is what the people of God need. If the minister is to do this he must know the Word of God and he must be able to explain and apply the Word of God to the



concrete needs of the people of God. It is the aim of the Biblical-Exegetical studies to prepare the student for this work.

Before a student is able to exegete (explain, interpret) the New Testament he must acquire the proper tools with which to work. For this reason there is heavy emphasis placed on the study of the original language of the New Testament, the Greek language. Beginning already at the pre-seminary level, students are trained in Greek grammar and syntax. Their study of Greek grammar and syntax continues in the first year of Seminary with special emphasis on syntactical-exegetical points. In this one-year course the student gains experience in reading selected passages from the Greek New Testament. Also in the first year of his study the student is given a two-semester course in Biblical Hermeneutics. This course is a study of the principles and correct method of Biblical interpretation. Included is an introduction to the principles and methods of textual criticism. The views of the liberal higher critics are presented and criticized. Prof. Hanko teaches the above subjects.

The student also receives two years of instruction in New Testament Exegesis, one year from Prof. Hanko in the Pauline Epistles and the book of Revelation and one year from the undersigned in the Gospels, Acts, and General Epistles. Passages are assigned to the student who must interpret them and present his material in class for discussion and criticism by the professor. In addition the professor presents exegesis of his own on selected passages. The value of these courses is

inestimable. Exegesis provides the basis and content of a sermon. In these courses the student acquires the skill he needs to interpret the Scriptures correctly in order to proclaim the gospel.

Two more courses are taught in New Testament studies, both of which are taught by the undersigned. The first is a one-semester course in Isagogics. This is an introduction to the books of the New Testament. Subjects covered are the date of composition, authorship, and contents of each of the New Testament books. But emphasis is placed on the canonical significance of each book. How does each book fit into the whole of the New Testament? What is the unique message of each book? The second subject is New Testament History. New Testament History begins with a study of the inter-testamentary period, the four hundred years preceding the birth of Christ. This period spawned the many sects and institutions and philosophies of which we read in the New Testament. Among these are: the Pharisees, Sadducees, synagogues, Herodians, the Epicureans, and Stoics. The course covers the history of the Gospel narratives, the history of the Apostolic Church in the Book of Acts and the historical passages of the Epistles. The necessity of these courses ought to be self-evident. The purpose is to give the student a working knowledge of the New Testament. This will benefit the minister in every sphere of his work. It will be of special benefit for the minister's catechism teaching and his leading of Bible study societies in the church.

## Practical-Theological Studies

*Prof. Robert D. Decker*

All of the courses in this branch of the curriculum, with the exception of two, are taught by the undersigned. Prof. Hoeksema currently teaches Homiletics and Prof. Hanko teaches Catechetics. When the seminary initiates the new four year curriculum in the 1981-1982 term these will become the responsibility of the undersigned. All of these courses, as is indicated by the name of this branch of study, are practical in nature. They deal with the practical aspects of the minister's work and calling. And they deal with the life of the church: its preaching and teaching, its mission work, its government and discipline, the care of its individual members in crisis (e.g. sickness, grief, etc.). Finally, all of these courses are theological in

nature. Practice must always be rooted in the theological principles of the Word of God.

What is Homiletics? The name is of Greek derivation and refers to the art of preaching. What, therefore, is Homiletics all about? A man may have a theologian's mind, a vast knowledge of the doctrines of the Word of God. He may possess a keen insight into the Scriptures. He may even possess the ability to exegete the Word of God. If, however, he lacks the ability and skill to convey the message of the Word of God to God's people he will be a failure in the ministry. He needs the skills necessary to "...declare the whole counsel of God publicly..." (Acts 20:20, 27). This is what Homile-



tics is all about. The student learns the history, principles, and methods of preaching. Emphasis is placed on the latter. The student learns how to formulate the content of his exegesis into a sermon which can be effectively delivered in the pulpit. He is taught how to find the theme of a text or passage and how to divide that main thought logically (in Reformed circles that is usually three points). The student learns how to construct a sermon outline. He needs an outline that is orderly and logical, otherwise he will have difficulty preaching. The fruit of all this instruction (or lack of it!) becomes apparent in the Practice Preaching course. This is taught all six semesters under the present curriculum by the faculty under the chairmanship of the Rector, Prof. Hoeksema. Each student must prepare and deliver two sermons per semester on texts assigned by the faculty. The student delivers the sermon before faculty and students. The sermon is then criticized extensively from both a positive and negative point of view. The student's delivery is also evaluated. When the student has progressed to the point where the faculty deems him ready, he is licensed by the faculty to speak a word of edification in the worship services of the churches.

Catechetics belongs to the Practical-Theological branch of studies. This course is a study of principles of catechetical instruction and teaching methods employed in the training of catechumens. Emphasis falls upon the importance and necessity of catechetical instruction in the church and its place from the viewpoint of the catechumens as the seed of the covenant. The membership of the church consists of believers and their seed. According to Scripture God establishes His covenant with us and our children (cf. Acts 2:39). For this reason the instruction of the children of believers is a crucial part of the official work of the minister. Theological students must be trained in this highly significant aspect of the ministerial calling. Through this means God brings the children of the covenant to the consciousness of their faith so that when they arrive at years of discretion they may confess their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. By means of catechetical instruction (the means of grace) God gathers His church in the lines of the generations of believers. To prepare the student for this work is the purpose of catechetics.

In a course called Liturgics a study is made of the Liturgical Forms used in the Protestant Reformed Churches (Baptism Form, Lord's Supper Form, Ordination Forms, etc.). The history, content, importance, and doctrinal teachings of these Forms are covered. Included in this course is a study of the Biblical principles of worship and a study of the various elements of the worship service: prayer, Psalm singing, offerings, preaching, etc. The

purpose of this course of study is quite obviously to prepare the student to lead the congregation in the proper worship of God Who is a Spirit and Who must be worshipped in spirit and in truth (cf. John 4:24).

"Poimenics" is a word derived from the Greek which means to shepherd. It is the name of a course which purposes to instruct prospective ministers in the art of pastoral care of the sheep of God. The principles of pastoral care, as these are taught in the Scriptures, are taught as well as the more practical methods of pastoral care. This course deals in a rather practical way with such duties of the minister as visiting the sick, family visiting, comforting the sorrowing, visiting the widows and widowers, caring for those who have emotional problems such as depression or anxiety, counseling those with marriage problems. In our stress-filled, pressure-packed, fast-paced, and exceedingly immoral and sinful age more and more of these problems are surfacing in the churches and occupying more and more of the minister's time. Partly for this reason the seminary has expanded this course so that, beginning in the 1981 term, it will be a full-year course of instruction.

In Principles of Missions the student is taught the principles of Scripture upon which mission work is based. Included in this is the Biblical basis for mission work, the definition of mission work, the character, purpose, and necessity of this work in the present day. In the light of the open doors which God has given to our churches, this course has become a very significant one in the seminary curriculum. Our churches will need in the future men trained not only for the pastorate but also for work on the mission fields, both foreign and domestic. This course too has been expanded and, beginning in the 1981 term, will be a two-semester course of study. The second semester will concentrate on the Biblical methods of doing mission work.

Finally among the Practical-Theological studies is a course called Church Polity. This course covers two semesters and is a study of the principles of church government as taught in the Word of God and relating to the institutional life of the church on earth. An article by article study is made of the Church Order adopted by the Synod of Dordrecht, 1618-1619, and used in the Protestant Reformed Churches. God is a God of order and "all things must be done decently and in good order in the churches" (I Corinthians 14:40). The aim of this course is to prepare the student to lead the church and to govern the church together with the elders according to the principles of government found in the Scriptures.

It is our prayer that the seminary may continue



as it has in the past to train adequately and properly young men to be under-shepherds of the Great Shepherd of the Sheep. In that way our congrega-

tions will flourish and the name of God will be praised. To that end we earnestly covet your prayers.

## Introducing Our Student Body



### Seminary Department

From left to right: Kenneth Hanko, Thomas Miersma, Everett Buitter, Deane Wassink, Barry Gritters, Lau Chin Kwee (our Singaporean student), and Jeffrey Nesbitt (a student from the Free Reformed denomination). Not pictured: part-time student Richard De Ruiter.



### Pre-Seminary Department

From left to right: Charles Terpstra, Russell Dykstra, Kenneth W. Kuiper, Brian Dykstra, Steven Key.

## A STUDENT'S VIEWPOINT

### Attending Our Seminary

*Thomas Miersma*

What is it like to attend our seminary, to sit in class, and to study there as a student? In one sense, these are easy questions to answer. It is much like any other school. We have classes from Tuesday to Friday mornings, Mondays being reserved for practice preaching. We usually have coffee break at about ten o'clock and on Wednesdays, attend chapel. The rest of the time is devoted to homework, study, and preparation. This description is somewhat deceptive however. In the first place, the course load at our seminary is generally much heavier than at many schools and seminaries. Secondly, much more is demanded of students in the way of individual study. The material which we learn at our seminary is not simply handed out in





the form of class lectures with perhaps some supplemental reading. Rather, it is gathered through much study and careful and gradually more precise exegesis. These student efforts are brought to class where they are criticized, evaluated, and brought together in a unity. The nature and amount of this work varies naturally with the type of course and the subject material.

What is more difficult to describe about attending our seminary is the nature and character of the classroom instruction. There is a unity of thought and purpose which runs through all of the classes. This has its focus in the Scriptures as the infallible Word of God. The Bible is the center of all our studies. It is the authority before which we must bow in all our labors. God's Word is constantly open in class. Further, it is approached with reverence and not with a sterile intellectualism. The Scriptures are studied in their unity, in their diversity, and in their central focus in the revelation of God's purpose in Christ. This means that much of our work is exegetical and in connection therewith involves much use of the original languages of Scripture. This aspect of Biblical study, of exegesis, of respect for the Scriptures as the Word of God, is one which makes study at our seminary both enjoyable and rewarding spiritually. This element which is sadly lacking in much of the reformed world around us is central in our seminary. There is a fine line between preaching and lecture. The lectures we receive often have a definite sermonic character, and it is not an exaggeration to say that some of the finest preaching in our churches occurs in the instruction in our seminary classrooms.

Intimately connected with this is the consistent and pervading Reformed emphasis of our instruction. There is a unity of Reformed understanding and vision at our seminary. Our rich Reformed heritage is studied as to its origins, development, and content. The creeds and confessions are often before us in class. We seek to explore the riches which our Reformed fathers were led to see in God's Word, to build upon that foundation, and to appreciate our distinctive heritage as Protestant Reformed Churches. While in many Reformed seminaries the heritage of the reformation is a dead tradition which is being discarded, at our school it is a living, vital, and dynamic reality, a world and life view which colors the whole of our work.

There is also a basic unity and integration of instruction at our seminary. This often manifests itself in class. Often an aspect of the truth of the Word of God which is being considered in one discipline will also be considered in another class. As a result, the same idea is discussed from several different points of view and in relation to different areas of study. A question, for example, which

comes up in Dogmatics class is liable to be considered also from the point of view of its place in church history, or in the unity of the Scriptures, or in its practical application to the idea of catechism instruction. This makes studying at our seminary a rich and challenging experience.

The instruction at our seminary is directed to preparing men for the ministry in our churches. This means that there is a pastoral direction and focus to our studies. The focus is not scholarship as an end in itself, but it is the work of the ministry which receives the emphasis at our school. As a result, while our seminary indeed stresses the need for careful scholarship, it does not lose itself in remote academic study, but relates doctrine to life, and instruction to the work of the ministry. Our studies all come together therefore in Exegesis and Practice Preaching. It is in these classes that the hours of student study crystalize. Student presentations in class and practice preaching are thoroughly evaluated and criticized. This is done with a view to the improvement in precision and accuracy of Scriptural interpretation, clarity of presentation, and quality of delivery. This aspect of our school-work is the most challenging and sometimes the most discouraging part of our work. This is so because it is here that the question of one's own calling to the ministry comes most clearly to the foreground. Head knowledge at this point is not enough. Usually one's own sharpest critic is oneself, and the encouragement and direction of the faculty and the mutual support of fellow students play a vital role at this point. Criticism is both positive and negative, occasionally sharp, but done out of Christian love and concern, not only with a view to the welfare of the student preacher, but also with a view to the needs of our churches for well-grounded and thoroughly furnished ministers of the Word. Throughout there pervades a sense of purpose and devotion to the cause of God's kingdom and the welfare of His Church.

Because of the amount of work connected with being a student at our seminary—roughly 90 hours a week in a good week, more when tests or sermons are due—one would think that the seminarian's social life would be somewhat limited. While this is true to some extent, yet this is partially offset by the size and closeness of the student body. Ours is a small seminary and classes are also small. There is therefore a close fellowship of students and faculty, both in and out of class. Because of the small class sizes, the discussions in class take on a personal character, and there is room for student questions and concerns. There is further the daily coffee break together, prayer together, and chapel worship. In addition, there is the mutual sharing of problems and difficulties among the students, the



occasional after-school football game, and visiting with one another. In addition the students and faculty occasionally gather for a potluck or picnic. We also have a student club, which was revived last year, at which students and faculty gather to present papers of theological interest and for discussion.

Still it must be acknowledged that the daily routine class and study leaves little in the way of free time. There are the normal problems of life, finances, home and church which also demand attention. Hence it is that if any one thing perhaps characterizes the students' life it is business and work. As most of the students, both seminary and pre-seminary, are married, it is often the wives and children who are overlooked. When the flesh grows weary through much study, the encouragement of our wives who must often carry on the duties of the household without us, is a source of

great strength and help. The words of encouragement and interest expressed by members of our churches are also greatly appreciated.

Attending our seminary is a time of spiritual growth and learning. The basic tools necessary for the work of the ministry are being acquired, and a basic foundation in the Word of God and Reformed truth is being laid. One becomes aware as one studies of the many depths and riches in the Reformed heritage and the Scriptures which one has not yet explored. As a result, one becomes aware that seminary is only a beginning, the beginning of a lifelong work. That work is done in a spirit of prayer and reflection upon one's calling to that work, that if it be God's will, He may have a place for us in His Church in the work of the ministry. To that end we covet the prayers of our churches, that God may bless the work of our seminary, that we may be thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

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## FROM THE THEOLOGICAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE

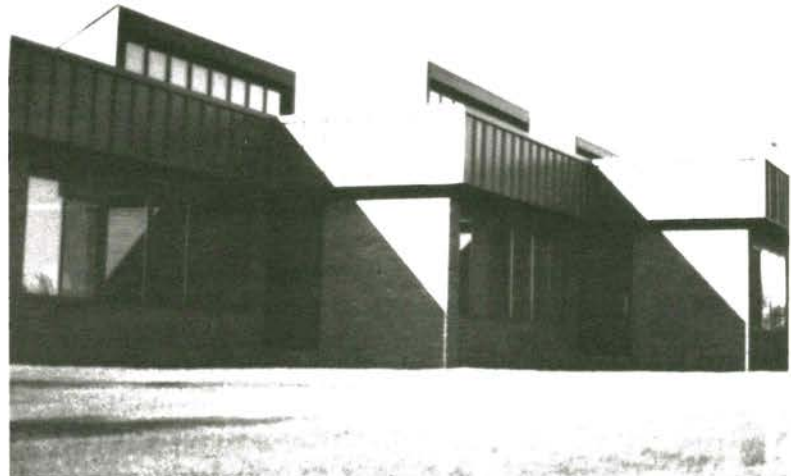
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# The Seminary: The View from the TSC

*Mr. Jon Huiskens*

When I was appointed to the Theological School Committee seven years ago, I was assured by the "old guard" members that the committee met just four or five times a year, that its meetings were short, that the work and time required would be minimal. What a surprise that turned out to be! The Theological School Committee now meets on a very regular monthly basis, with an agenda that is usually full, with meetings that have, on occasion, lasted beyond reasonable expectations.

All this was occasioned by the fact that the period from 1973-1980, during which time I have served on the TSC, has been marked by change. In fact, the key words in my involvement with the seminary as a member of the TSC have been "transition" and "change." Several things are of note here. Most obvious, perhaps, has been the change of sites. Since its inception in 1924, with a minor break during the 1953 controversy, the seminary held its classes in the basement of First Church, Grand Rapids—nearly fifty years of existence without a real place to call its own. The new building on Ivanrest in Grandville changed all that. The transition from basement dwellers to dwellers on a hilltop not only was a notable one but, to its occupants, an enjoyable one.



This physical move certainly did occupy the time of the TSC. Under the able leadership of Mr. Tom Newhof, Sr. and with the excellent work of the Building Fund Treasurer, Mr. Dick Teitsma, however, the task seemed to most of us to be of no great magnitude.

Work is seldom, however, without its reward. There seemed to be a new interest, a new zeal for a



time among our people and congregations for our seminary. For many it was the first time that they had visited the place where our young men are trained for the ministry. This enthusiasm made the work of the TSC seem much easier.

The physical move from First Church to the seminary building on Ivanrest came just in time. For God would have it that our student body grew to its all-time high shortly after the building was finished. This, too, was a marked change from previous times. It was common in years past to have but two or three students enrolled for courses. Who would ever have dreamed that the numbers would be in the teens?

With higher enrollment came an increased burden upon an already overloaded faculty. This necessitated more change. The faculty size was increased by one with the addition of Rev. Robert Decker, whom Synod called to be Professor of Practical Theology and New Testament.

With this, too, the TSC busied itself. Finding a house, dealing with reassignment of course loads, and evaluating this new situation fell upon the TSC.

New building, new students, new professor—one can easily see that the seminary was in a period of change and transition. And, it was a joy for me as a member of the TSC, to see the excitement "on the hill." It was a privilege to serve on the TSC and to participate in its work during this period.

Remarkable, I think, too, is the fact that just as the seminary and its personnel were going through change, so too was the TSC itself. As was mentioned above, meetings have become regular, lengthier, with agenda of substantive issues. Because of this, the TSC was required to take a much more active part in the operation of the seminary. What had for the most part been done by the faculty alone was now being done in conjunction with, and oftentimes with the leadership of, the TSC.

One item alone, I believe, substantiates this fact. In 1976, Synod had received a request for yet another professor. Synod did not accede to this request but answered instead with a mandate to the TSC to prepare a long-range study on the seminary. For three years this issue was before the committee. Proposals, counter-proposals, drafts of reports and, eventually, final documents were considered at length by the faculty and the committee. The point is that the work was accomplished through joint effort by the faculty and the TSC.

This cooperative effort had good results. The first result was that there developed a much closer association and relationship between the faculty and the TSC. Both came away from these meetings with a better understanding of the problems and situa-

tions of the other; but particularly important in this regard is that the TSC had gained a much better insight into the needs of the faculty and the seminary. A second, probably more important, result is that there is more change yet to come. The final product of these deliberations is that, beginning with the 1981-82 academic year, the seminary program will be expanded to four years with new courses, new faculty assignments, and new opportunities for our students.

Transition and change have indeed brought work to the faculty of the seminary and the TSC—problems unique to new situations had to be addressed, policies had to be made, planning for the future had to be done. One worries sometimes about change in any institution, but the result of all this activity on the part of the TSC and the faculty, the occasion of which was transition and change, has been, I am convinced, *progress* for the theological school of our churches. When change brings progress, change is for the better. I say this not because I was involved; but because, upon reflection, one can see that God through His Spirit caused this all to be. God's grace has been abundant in the work of our faculty and of the TSC.

But, this is not just a subjective feeling on my part. That progress can be measured objectively. One certainly can not argue, for example, that the construction of the new facility was regression. To those who knew the old and now have seen the new, this is an obvious fact. There has been progress, moreover, in other areas as well. There has been progress with regard to the academic program and with regard to the quality of that program. The addition of Prof. Decker relieved an obviously heavy load from Professors Hanko and Hoeksema so that they, in turn, could devote more time to the courses which they were assigned to teach. There was progress also as measured by the acceptability of pre-seminary courses for transfer to the degree programs of institutions such as Calvin College and Hope College. Our young men no longer need to forfeit the A.B. degree but may work out a program with these institutions. This has put the stamp of approval of quality institutions of higher education upon our pre-seminary course. Further, the new four-year seminary program, although not yet implemented, will also prove to be, I am sure, a step forward. Still more. Students keep coming to the doors. Not only our own students but also those from other denominations and from other countries. The name of the seminary, the quality of the academic program, and the unique perspective which its training has and gives have become known to others.

All this so far has been pretty upbeat and positive. For good reason. Most of the activity with



which I have been associated has been exactly that.

The work, however, has not been without its anxieties and disappointments. As an example, consider that during this year the TSC was faced with two professors with calls and one who had to make the important decision about permanent tenure. Some anxious moments were spent over these matters. Then, too, there were the worries over students who did not perform well academically; and there are always those worrisome problems about budget and finances.

All this, however, has been overshadowed by the fact that God has richly blessed our seminary these past years and He has not only supplied our needs but has caused us to prosper and progress. Thus the view I express of the seminary from the vantage point of the TSC is a very positive one. The experience thus far has been exceedingly rich with great spiritual rewards.

What about those of you who do not have as great a contact with the seminary as those who work directly with it? My hope and prayer is that you remember often the seminary in your prayers and with your material gifts. The seminary must prosper at all costs. The future spiritual health and strength of our churches depends upon it. The people of God must insist upon quality programs and quality student-products. We must see to it, in this regard, that our professors are given the time and the means to "develop the truth" as they are mandated to do by the form of installation.

One of the duties of the TSC members is to visit the seminary for the purpose of evaluating the work done there by faculty and students. It is always an enjoyable experience. One can tell that the professors and students appreciate our presence because there is interest being shown in the important work of the seminary. The invitation is open to all of you to do the same.

## Our Theological Journal

*Prof. H. Hanko*

I recall vividly the time, at a rather informal faculty meeting, when Prof. Hoeksema and I talked a bit about the possibility of publishing a Seminary Journal. The time was about fourteen years ago, and we hesitated long before entering this new field. We wanted to publish a Journal which would be somewhat more "scientific" in character than the *Standard Bearer*; i.e., which would deal more technically with matters of theology than would a paper with greater popular appeal. But our hesitancy was born out of fear that due to time and ability we would not be able to sustain the publication of such a paper; and we wondered long and loudly whether it would have any appeal at all in the ecclesiastical world.

It was with trepidation, therefore, that we ventured into this field some thirteen years ago. We put out a very modest paper, in mimeographed form, bound with plastic binding and with soft covers. We mailed out about 75 copies, mostly to our own ministers and to various men within our Church whom we thought would be interested in receiving the paper. We did not know how long the *Journal* would last or how well it would be received.

But God put all our fears and doubts to shame. He has blessed this modest venture beyond our boldest imaginations and has given to the *Journal* a place of some importance among theological papers.

Because the *Journal* is distributed free of charge (the financing is borne by our Churches through Synodical subsidies for the Theological School) we never really advertised our *Journal* or made any effort to enlarge our subscription lists. In fact, several years after we began publishing we sent a letter to all the subscribers asking them if they wanted to continue to receive the *Journal*. Those who failed to respond were taken from the subscription list.

Nevertheless, our subscription list has now grown to over 500. Every month brings in new subscriptions along with letters which speak of the appreciation which people have for the *Journal*. A few statistics, while in themselves rather cold, nevertheless give you some idea of the work of our paper. Of the 500 subscriptions about 140 go overseas and the rest to subscribers in this land. Thirty-four different states are represented in the subscription list along with 25 foreign countries. These countries include: Korea, Taiwan, New Zealand, Australia, Singapore, South Africa, Egypt, Germany, Finland, Ireland, Scotland, England, Brazil, Mexico, San Salvadore, and Canada. The denominations represented in the subscription lists cut across every major denomination in this country and abroad. In fact, far over half of the *Journals* go to subscribers outside our own Churches.



How new names are added remains a puzzle to us. We receive letters from many new subscribers who tell us of seeing the *Journal* in the home of a friend, of spotting it on the shelf in some library, of hearing about it from an acquaintance, of seeing some reference to it in other ecclesiastical periodicals. God works in strange and unexpected ways to bring the *Journal* into the homes of others.

As those of you who receive this paper know, the format has been radically altered a couple of years ago. The *Journal* is no longer mimeographed and bound with plastic but is printed professionally and stapled. The size has been reduced from 8½ x 11 to 6 x 9. This is more professional looking and makes mailing much easier.

One problem which we constantly face is the stream of requests for back issues. Only seldom are we able to supply these requests. We usually print more than are needed, but this supply is surprisingly soon exhausted. We therefore have to fall back on copying on our copy machine; but this is a costly and time-consuming process. In some cases, where the demand for back articles was especially great, we have made reprints and made them available to all who are interested.

An interesting project which we just finished was the republication of part of Turretin's "Dogmatics." Although Turretin's original work was in Latin, through the cooperation of Rev. Engelsma we obtained for our use an English translation of

Grandville, Mich.  
October 1, 1980

Prof. H. Hanko,  
Grand Rapids, Michigan

Dear Prof. Hanko:

As the student body of the seminary, we wish to express to you our heartfelt congratulations on your completion of twenty-five years of labor in the ministry of the Word in our churches.

We thank you especially for your work in the seminary and pre-seminary departments of our school during fifteen of those twenty-five years. God has used you and is still using you to prepare men for the ministry. We greatly appreciate your diligence in your work and the excellence, not only academic but also spiritual, which characterizes both your own work and the standard of the work which you demand of us.

Most of all, we give thanks to our merciful God Who has called you to labor these years in behalf of our churches at large. It is our prayer that He will continue to bless and to sustain you in your task and calling, that you may continue to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, Whom to know is life eternal.

May God give you all that you need to continue your work among us.

Your students and sons in Christ,

Gene Wassink  
Russ Dykstra  
Cesario Buites  
Barry Gritters  
Jon Smith

Alvin Moore  
Jan Van Klee  
Steve Key

Ken Kuiper  
Chuck Segato  
Brian Dykstra  
Jeffrey Meekitt  
Ken Hanko  
Richard A. De Winter



part of Turretin's massive work. This English translation we reproduced and bound—some in hardcover and some in soft cover. This work is now completed and a large number of these manuscripts have already been mailed out. Aware that the demand would not be great, we printed about 150 copies of this work; but to our surprise, the demand has been greater than we anticipated. Although we have not advertised at all yet, already over half of them are gone. And we are beginning to wonder whether we will have sufficient for all who desire a copy.

If any of our present readers would like to have this work, please send in your order. We would prefer that you send your money with the order. It saves bookwork. The cost is our cost; we are making nothing on the project. The soft-bound books are selling for \$12.95 and the hardcover books for \$24.95. Get your order in soon or it will be too late.

We seek from all our readers their continued prayers for our Seminary and, more particularly, for the work of the *Journal*. The work is, finally, God's work, and without His blessing it can never be of profit.

October 1, 1980

Prof. H. Hanko,  
Grand Rapids, Michigan

Esteemed Brother in Christ and Colleague:

This month marks a significant milestone for you and for the churches of our denomination: for it is the twenty-fifth anniversary of your ordination as Minister of the Word and Sacraments in our Protestant Reformed Churches. We take this opportunity to congratulate you on this occasion, to express our thanksgiving to our covenant God for having given you to our churches for these twenty-five years, and to wish you God's blessing in the future time of your ministry.

What is especially significant to us as your colleagues, however, is that September marked another anniversary, the fifteenth anniversary of your installation as Professor of Theology at our seminary. For fifteen years you have served our churches--frequently beyond the call of duty--in the important work of training young men for the ministry in our churches. One of us has co-labored with you for all of those fifteen years, and the other for seven of those years. We have, therefore, been thrown into closer contact with one another than are most ministers in our churches. During all of our contacts we have come to esteem you highly as a brother and real friend in Christ, as a faithful and diligent co-laborer, and--not the least--as a champion of the Reformed faith. We take this occasion publicly to express our appreciation and esteem, as also our thanks to God for His gifts in you. May the Lord in His good providence continue to sustain you in faithfulness to His Word and to the heritage which He has given us as churches, and thus make you a blessing to our churches through your seminary labors in future years.

With love in the Lord Jesus Christ,

Robert H. Becker  
Homer D. Jackson

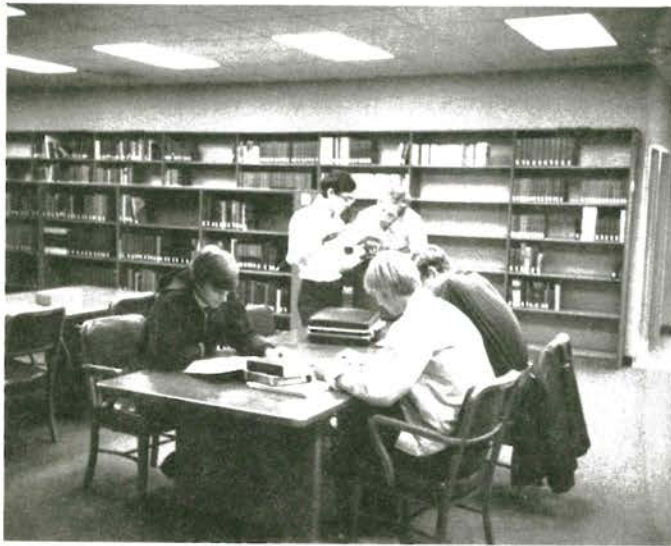


# Our Growing Library

*Prof. H. Hanko*

During the many years the Seminary had its home in the basement of First Church, very little was done to the library. This was due simply to the fact that the facilities in the basement were so small and cramped that there was no space for books. The little library that the Seminary had was composed chiefly of standard works which every student soon bought for himself.

Shortly after the Seminary moved to its present location on Ivanrest, plans were made to begin a major expansion of the library. During the years that followed, literally hundreds of books were purchased so that at present there is no comparison between the library of former years and our library today.



There are several news items (if such they may be called) concerning our library which may be of interest to our people.

In the first place, even though our Seminary program has been expanded to include Pre-Seminary courses, we have limited the books which we have purchased almost exclusively to theological subjects. The library is for the Seminary, not for Pre-Seminary studies. We did this, first, because the Seminary was the most important, and that branch of the library needed expansion before anything else. We hope the time comes when the other areas of our library can also be begun and developed, but that time is not yet. Secondly, because our students are still taking much of Pre-Seminary work in other colleges, they have access to the libraries in these colleges and do

not have a pressing need for our own library facilities in these areas.

Secondly, while Synod has appropriated a certain amount of money each year for library expansion, the support of the library fund has come mainly from private gifts. This has been a wonderful encouragement for the Seminary and we take this opportunity to express our thanks to all of you who have donated so graciously to the cause of the library. Books are expensive and it seems as if money does not go very far when books are ordered. Will you continue to remember the needs of the Seminary Library?

Thirdly, while we purchase for the library all the worthwhile new books which are published, our main purchases consist of the acquisition of old books from book dealers in this country and abroad. We try, as much as possible, to keep up on what is available through catalogues from book publishers and book stores mainly in America, Netherlands, and Great Britain. Insofar as funds allow, we purchase what is available and what would be worthwhile additions to our library.

Finally, when we first began to expand our library, we put the whole library on the Dewey Decimal System. It became increasingly plain, however, that this system was by no means ideally suited to a theological library. After some lengthy investigation, especially of libraries of other Seminaries in the country, we decided to change over the library to the Library of Congress numbering system. This is the system followed by almost all the Seminaries in the country, and being a part of the system would help us to have access to books difficult to find which other libraries possess. All the major libraries are being put into a central computer system which will list books by the library of Congress system. Much of this work was done this summer by some of the students, and Calvin College was very helpful in getting this system introduced into our library.

It will also be of some interest to our readers to know that the library has begun an archives program. Already a reader-copier has been purchased which will enable the library to make use of microfilm. Work is being done to begin a collection of all material which will be of historical interest in our Protestant Reformed Churches. Much work must still be done in this area but a beginning has been made.



**ANNIVERSARY CONGRATULATIONS**

The Theological School Committee extends to Professor H. Hanco our hearty and sincere congratulations upon the completion of 25 years of faithful ministry of the Word of God in the churches, the last 15 years of which have been spent as Professor in the Theological Seminary.

We give thanks to our faithful, covenant God who has given him this great privilege and opportunity, and has furnished him with grace to serve in this glorious ministry.

Our prayer is that our Lord may bless and provide for Professor and Mrs. Hanco as they continue to serve in the midst of the Kingdom.

Theological School Committee  
of the Protestant Reformed churches  
Rev. M. DeVries, President  
G. Feenstra, Secretary

**RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY**

The Martha Ladies Aid Society of the Hull Protestant Reformed Church wishes to express its sincere sympathy to Mrs. Bernie Driesen in the passing of her mother, MRS. JOHN HOEKSTRA.

"For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." (II Corinthians 5:1).

Rev. R. Cammenga, Pres.  
Mrs. Egbert Gritters, Sec'y.

**RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY**

The Ladies Society of the Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church expresses its sincere sympathy to Mrs. John B. Lubbers in the loss of her sister, MRS. DAVE EMELANDER.

"The Lord knoweth the days of the upright: and their inheritance shall be forever." (Psalm 37:18).

Mrs. H.W. Zwak, Sec'y.

**RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY**

The consistory and congregation of the Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church express their sincere and heartfelt sympathy to the children and grandchildren in the death of their mother and grandmother, MRS. CHRISTINE VOS.

For she was a mother in Israel. She and her husband, the Rev. Gerrit Vos, have a special place in the hearts of all our people.

"I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in Him will I trust." (Psalm 91:2).

The Consistory of the Hudsonville  
Protestant Reformed Church.  
Rev. G. Van Baren, Pres.  
H. Boer, Clerk

**WEDDING ANNIVERSARY**

On October 7, 1980 our parents, MR. & MRS. PETER FISHER celebrated their 35th wedding anniversary. We are thankful to our covenant Lord for these fine Christian Parents and their Christian instruction.

We pray that the Lord will continue to bless them in years to come.  
their children & grandchildren,

Barbara Fisher  
Albert & Joyce Fischer  
Christopher & Michael  
Eugene & Kathleen Braaksma  
Erika, Erin & Peter  
Henry & Marlene Van den Top  
Henry Derek

Randolph, Wisconsin

**NOTICE**

Reformation Day lecture by Prof. H. Hanco.

Subject: "Reformed Yet Always Reforming"

Date: Oct. 30 at 8:00 P.M.

Place: Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church

# Report of Classis West

September 16, 1980

Classis West of the Protestant Reformed Churches met in Pella, Iowa on September 3, 1980. Eleven ministers and twelve elders represented the churches of the West. Rev. G. Lubbers and Rev. R. Van Overloop were present and were given advisory vote.

Rev. R. Cammenga, president of the previous Classis, led in opening devotions and in the constituting of the Classis. He spoke to the Classis on I Cor. 15:58: "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."

Several elder delegates signed the Formula of Subscription: D. Abma (Pella); O. Boonstra (Lynden); and T. Jansma (Hull).

The agenda of Classis was light and the work, largely routine. The Reading Sermon Committee (Edgerton Consistory) informed Classis of a need for fresh reading sermons; Classis asked each minister to prepare one reading sermon a year to fill the need. In response to the report of its Board of Trustees, Classis approved that the Board ask for an official inventory and report of an estate willed to Classis.

Classis adopted the following classical appointment schedule for Redlands: Oct. 19, 26, and Nov. 2—Kuiper; Nov. 9, 16, and 23—Cammenga; Jan. 11, 18, and 25—Koole; Feb. 8, 15, and 22—Bekkering. Redlands is advised to seek the help of an emeritus minister in December and, if this proves impossible, to seek the services of Rev. J. Slopsema on Dec. 7, 14, and 21 and supply from the seminary during the holidays.



Hull informed Classis that it has no further need of the special committee of Classis appointed by the March, 1979 Classis to help Hull. Hull thanked Classis for the help that was given. The committee was dismissed.

In executive session, Classis treated the request of a Consistory for Classis' advice on the erasure of a member by baptism. Classis heard the details of

the case and advised the Consistory to proceed with erasure.

The expenses of this Classis were \$4,747.40.

Classis will meet next in Loveland, Colorado on Wednesday, March 4, 1981, the Lord willing.

Rev. David Engelsma, Stated Clerk  
Classis West

## News From Our Churches

Along with the above Report of Classis West, Rev. Engelsma sent the following item of interest:

"Most of the delegates to Classis West came a day early, to attend an officebearers' conference on Tuesday afternoon and evening. The conference was set up by the conference committee, Rev. W. Bekkering and Rev. R. Miersma. The subject of the conference was 'The Law and the Gospel.' Two papers served as a basis for discussion. Rev. G. Lubbers introduced his paper on 'The Law and the Gospel.' A paper by Mr. M. Cimo, a member of the Trinity Prot. Ref'd. Church of Houston, Texas, on 'The Law of God' had been distributed to the delegates prior to the conference. (Copies of these papers are available from Rev. Bekkering.) The discussion was lively, stimulating, and brotherly. The committee is to be commended for arranging the conference and encouraged to arrange similar meetings in the future."

Elected to serve on the Reformed Free Publishing Association Board at the annual meeting of September 18 were George DeVries, Arnold Haveman, and William A. Lafferty. Rev. Schipper spoke on the topic, "The Standard Bearer as a Responsible Witness." In his closing remarks Rev. Schipper emphasized that it is our responsibility to continue the work of the *Standard Bearer* as a faithful witness of the truth, for, he said, "This is the standard we are required to bear in the world." That's quite a responsibility!

So as not to make a liar of our former news editor, who wrote that more on the Spanish letter

would be forthcoming, and not to disappoint Rev. Schipper, who made mention of his interest in the Spanish letter during his speech to the R.F.P.A., we now relay the latest. At the risk of seeming anticlimactic we must inform you that the whole thing was a mistake: The letter's author apparently wrote the wrong post office box number on his envelope. One respondent, who recently returned to the U.S. from El Salvador and now resides in Jackson, Mississippi, sent the following interpretation of the letter to our business manager:

"My dear friends:

Hope you are well. I would like to ask you a favor. I would like to get some sample of your published books. Also if you could get for me a book titled, El Crimen La droga y yo (Crime, drugs and I).

I really need the above title. Have tried in vain to get it down here. Hope you can help me."

Another respondent, this one from Pittsburg, Pennsylvania, even went through the work of composing a response in Spanish which he suggested be sent back to Panama. You may have noticed that at the outset we called this whole thing a "mistake." That the author of the letter from Jackson, Mississippi would disagree with the use of that particular term is clear from the following P.S. in his letter to Mr. VanderWal: "I think this fellow intended this letter for David Vila of CLIE and goofed on the P.O. Box number, but God is so great that who knows? Maybe this might be the way to bring the P.R. down to Central America."

CK