

The **STANDARD BEARER**

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

Without contentment there can be no true thanksgiving. The person who is not content is of the opinion that what he has really isn't all that much. His possessions, his social standing, his job, his family, his future really don't amount to much. Neither, therefore, does he appreciate what he has; nor is he thankful to God for what God has given him. No one appreciates what isn't enough. Only those who are satisfied with life can be thankful.

(See Meditation — page 74)

CONTENTS

Meditation —	
Content With Food And Raiment	74
Walking In The Light —	
Moral Aspects of Medical Technology (10)	76
All Around Us —	
Drop-outs, Cults, and Fast Growing Churches	79
Lutherans Unite	80
Women In Church Office	80
"Good Morning, Alice" (14)	81
The Strength of Youth —	
Living Church Membership (1)	83
Taking Heed To The Doctrine —	
The Apostles' Creed (9)	85
From Holy Writ —	
Believing All the Scriptures	87
The Day of Shadows —	
Called Again In Unchangeable Love	90
Translated Treasures —	
A Pamphlet Concerning the Reformation of the Church	93
Report of Classis East	94
News From Our Churches	95

THE STANDARD BEARER

ISSN 0362-4692

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

Published by the Reformed Free Publishing Association, Inc.

Second Class Postage Paid at Grand Rapids, Mich.

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

Department Editors: Rev. Ronald Cammenga, Rev. Arie den Hartog, Prof. Robert D. Decker, Rev. Barry Gritters, Rev. Cornelius Hanko, Prof. Herman C. Hanko, Rev. Ronald Hanko, Rev. John A. Heys, Rev. J. Kortering, Rev. George C. Lubbers, Rev. Thomas C. Miersma, Rev. James Slopsema, Rev. Gise J. Van Baren, Rev. Herman Veldman, Mr. Benjamin Wigger.

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

Church News Editor: Mr. Ben Wigger
6597 - 40th Ave.
Hudsonville, Michigan 49426

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

Reprint Policy: Permission is hereby granted for the reprinting of articles in our magazine by other publications, provided: a) that such reprinted articles are reproduced in full; b) that proper acknowledgement is made; c) that a copy of the periodical in which such reprint appears is sent to our editorial office.

Business Office: The Standard Bearer
Mr. H. Vander Wal, Bus. Mgr. PH: (616) 243-2953
P.O. Box 6064
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49516

New Zealand Business Office: The Standard Bearer
c/o Protestant Reformed Church
B. Van Herk, 66 Fraser St.
Wainuiomata, New Zealand

Subscription Policy: Subscription price, \$10.50 per year. Unless a definite request for discontinuance is received, it is assumed that the subscriber wishes the subscription to continue without the formality of a renewal order, and he will be billed for renewal. If you have a change of address, please notify the Business Office as early as possible in order to avoid the inconvenience of delayed delivery. Include your Zip Code.

Advertising Policy: The Standard Bearer does not accept commercial advertising of any kind. Announcements of church and school events, anniversaries, obituaries, and sympathy resolutions will be placed for a \$3.00 fee. These should be sent to the Business Office and should be accompanied by the \$3.00 fee. Deadline for announcements is the 1st and the 15th of the month, previous to publication on the 15th or the 1st respectively.

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

MEDITATION

James D. Slopsema

Content With Food And Raiment

But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. Having food and raiment let us be therewith content.

I Timothy 6:6-8

Thanksgiving Day is almost upon those of us residing in the States. The saints in Canada have already had their day of thanksgiving.

The key to giving thanks is contentment.

Contentment is satisfaction with your lot in life.

Contentment describes the person who is of the opinion that all his needs are being met and, therefore, is quite satisfied with life. He has enough and has no real desire for more.

How few in our day and age are really content.

Most today are dissatisfied with life. They are dissatisfied with their financial situation, their social standing, their job, their family, their prospects for the future. Very few are truly content.

Without contentment there can be no true thanksgiving. The person who is not content is of the opinion that what he has really isn't all that much. His possessions, his social standing, his job, his family, his future really don't amount to much. Neither, therefore, does he appreciate what he has; nor is he thankful to God for what God has given him. No one appreciates what isn't enough. Only those who are satisfied with life can be thankful.

* * * * *

Having food and raiment let us be therewith content.

Food and raiment represent the basic necessities of life. Food and raiment are contrasted with material wealth. In the preceding context we read of certain evil men who supposed that gain is godliness. In other words, they saw that an outward show of godliness could be a source of great financial gain. And so they put on a show of godliness and gained for themselves a great deal of material wealth. In contrast to the great wealth of these evil men we read here of food and raiment — the basic necessities of life.

Food and raiment are usually the material lot of the children of God. Very seldom are the saints numbered among the rich of the world. Most often they have just enough to get by. They work hard and long; they scrimp and save. But even then there is hardly enough to provide for food, clothing and shelter as well as for the causes of God's kingdom.

Should God in His good providence provide us only with food and raiment, we are therewith to be content. We must not envy the riches of others. We must not be all upset with the little we have and wish for more. No, we must be content with what we have. There must be a perfect equilibrium between what God has given us and our desires. We are to be of the opinion that what we have, even though it be very little, is enough.

And having enough, let us be thankful to God Who has provided for all our wants and needs!

* * * * *

Being content with mere food and raiment is possible only if we first see the limited value of material things.

We brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.

The meaning here is that we enter this life without any material wealth; and that's how we leave this life. When we're born, we're born stark naked. We don't own so much as a suit of clothes. And at death we take nothing material with us. When we die, our loved ones don't pack our possessions into a trailer to be pulled behind the hearse to the grave. All our material wealth is divided among our heirs. This is a simple fact of life.

And this is called to our attention here to remind us of the limited value of material things.

First of all, material possessions, because they pertain only to this life, are of significance only for this life.

Because we do not take our wealth with us through death, our material wealth will certainly not afford us any joy and comfort in the endless ages of eternity. The benefits we derive from material possessions are limited to the few years of our existence on this earth.

Nor will our material possessions be of any benefit to us when at death we must meet our Maker and give account of ourselves. When we sit one day in the seat of judgment, the Lord will care not at all whether we were rich or poor in this life. The Lord is no respecter of persons. He will judge each one of us according to our works. And so if we can present to the Lord nothing more than our riches and wealth in this life, our wealth will be a noose around our neck to drag us to the depths of hell.

Material possessions are of significance only for this life. And how short isn't our earthly life when compared to the endless ages of eternity?

But, in the second place, material possessions are of only limited importance in this life.

The world is mistaken in its assumption that the key to happiness is to possess and enjoy great riches. Nor has God given us material things to enjoy as an end in themselves.

The only value that material possessions have is to enable us to serve God in this life. As long as we are flesh and blood here on the earth, we need food and drink, clothing and shelter, effectively to serve the Lord. As long as the kingdom of God is represented in this world, there must also be material means to support the kingdom. There must be the material means to support the gospel ministry of the church and the training of covenant children in the Christian school. For these purposes alone God has given to each of us the material possessions we have. For these purposes alone they are to be used. They have no more significance than this.

* * * * *

If we will be content with mere food and raiment we must, however, also see the great value of godliness.

Godliness is piety, devoutness. Godliness is to be completely devoted to the service and glory of God. True godliness arises from a heart that is filled with loving gratitude to God for the free gift of salvation in Jesus Christ. What a great treasure godliness is!

Godliness, we are told, is great gain. The meaning is that true godliness is the source of great gain. Godliness brings everyone who walks in it a great gain.

The great gain derived from godliness is sweet fellowship and communion with God. And what joy that is! Many today think true joy comes only from an abundance of material things. The pleasures we derive from material possessions, however, are small and insignificant compared with the pleasures of God's companionship. In God's fellowship there is true joy.

And this wonderful joy of fellowship gained from godliness is not something that is limited to this life. It is ours for all eternity. We don't take our material possessions with us through death to enjoy eternally, but we do take our godliness with us. The godliness of this life is something we take with us into eternity. And in eternity we will enjoy the fruits of that godliness as we never enjoyed them here.

What a treasure is true godliness!

In light of all this, we certainly can and ought to be content with mere food and raiment.

Were material wealth of tremendous importance we certainly could not be content with just food and raiment. If, for example, we could take our material possessions with us into eternity and they would be the only source of eternal joy, no one could be content with mere food and raiment. And if material abundance were necessary to insure God's favorable judgment in the day of reckoning, none could be content until he had wealth untold.

But material possessions are not as important as that. Godliness is! Godliness is great gain. Godliness alone affords us true joy both now and in eternity. Material possessions only serve the purpose of making it possible for us to serve God in this life in true godliness.

And God in His good providence gives to each of us the material possessions necessary to serve Him in godliness. Whether you have much or little of this world's goods, it is just what you need to serve God and find the great joy of His companionship.

Let us set our hearts then on the great riches of godliness and the joys of God's fellowship.

And understanding the true value of things material in relation to things spiritual, let us be content with such things as we have, even if it be mere food and raiment.

And let us be thankful.

WALKING IN THE LIGHT

Herman C. Hanko

Moral Aspects of Medical Technology (10)

[Note. This is a continuation of the subject under discussion at the conclusion of Installment #9, in which Prof. Hanko was quoting from *Bibliotheca Sacra*.]

Even more revolting is another technique which results from IVF to which *Bibliotheca Sacra* refers in the same article.

Almost daily, new advances in artificial reproduction further erode the biblical categories of marriage, procreation, and family. For example researchers

have developed a technique in animals that will soon allow lesbian couples to have children. Already lesbians have used artificial insemination to provide children for their "marriages." A research scientist at Vanderbilt University has developed a technique which, if perfected, would allow doctors to take an unfertilized egg from one woman and fuse it with an egg from another woman and produce a baby girl genetically related to both women. This would provide lesbians with an ability to produce girl children without any male involvement!

John Jefferson Davis, while not flatly opposing IVF, nevertheless brings up a couple of other practical problems resulting from this technique. In fact, his main objection against IVF, a practical one only, is the problem of birth defects. While IVF is too recent a procedure to evaluate this problem statistically, he quotes with approval Paul Ramsey who writes: "A small risk of grave induced injury is still a morally unacceptable risk." And this in turn brings up various legal questions:

Physicians and researchers who are working in the area of IVF could be subject to malpractice suits in the event of the birth of a child with birth defects (Davis, *op. cit.*, p. 88).

Before we turn from this aspect of the problem, we note that some have also called attention to the psychological problems which seem to be an inevitable part of this technique. *Trowel and Sword* (p. 20) writes:

Participation in an IVF program demands a great deal of upheaval of normal life-style and hence dedication. This, coupled with a failure rate of 75-90% is known to cause many psychological stresses which may even be greater than those of infertility alone, hence many couples drop out early. Furthermore, the psychological effect on the children produced is yet unknown. Who knows what trauma the knowledge of being a "test-tube baby" will bring?

But all these objections are more or less of a practical nature. We are convinced that IVF can also be condemned on principle grounds. The practical objections after all deal with *misuses* of IVF; and IVF, if used properly, would still be an acceptable method of having children if no principle objections could be raised against this practice. But if IVF is wrong principally, the child of God may not, before God, make use of this technique.

We are convinced that IVF is wrong for especially two reasons. The first deals with what was called earlier in this article "spare embryos." *Bibliotheca Sacra* speaks of this in terms of a "waste of fetal life."

A major scientific issue centers on one's concern for human life. Procedures like IVF and embryo transfer are wasteful of fetal life and can sometimes result in miscarriages that may pose a medical threat to the mother. An Australian study published in October 1985 shows that 45% of all women who are impregnated through in vitro fertilization fail to give birth. The study also shows that women undergoing this treatment were about three times more likely than other mothers to give birth prematurely. The success rate of embryo transfer is even lower than the success rate of in vitro fertilization.

At the moment these techniques are less effective than normal conception. Therefore the burden of proof must fall on the experimenters to guarantee the safety of the unborn child. A wife may feel she is ready to take the risk in order to have a child, but another life is involved in the equation — the child to be conceived. Do Christians have any ethical responsibility toward children conceived by this method? Further study and research are necessary before Christians could, in good conscience, counsel others to use these techniques (pp. 62, 63).

In vitro fertilization and embryo transfer violate this sanctity in three ways. First, there is the potential loss of fetal life. Even with the newer and more successful techniques, there is still a considerable loss of fertilized ova. Second, there is a general practice of destroying fertilized ova if they appear abnormal. Third, there has been the practice of hyperfertilization. Many eggs are fertilized simultaneously, one is selected for implantation, and the others are thrown away. Until protection of the unborn child can be guaranteed, Christians must question these practices (p. 66).

Here we come to the crux of the issue. IVF can only take place successfully when many ova are fertilized. The rest, if not frozen for future use or set aside for experimental purposes, are discarded. But, if it is correct that a child, a person, a baby, is formed at the moment of conception — and we firmly believe that this is true, then any discarding of such fertilized ova is murder on the very face of it. Even conservative ethicists have argued that this fact is not necessarily true — i.e., that a fertilized ovum is a person. But this position cuts the ground away from abortion, for whether conceived in the womb or out of the womb, such a fetus is then only a glob of tissue, and can be discarded if conceived out of the womb, or aborted if conceived in the womb. IVF involves those who practice it in murder!

The second line of argumentation has to do with the destruction by IVF techniques of normal, God-created family life. Various ethicists have spoken, sometimes eloquently, of this evil. John Jefferson Davies writes (*op. cit.*, p. 89);

Various observers have raised concerns about the impact of such technology on the institutions of marriage and the family. According to Professor Donald DeMarco, "By removing the origin of the child from the personal context of conjugal love . . . a decisive step is taken which necessarily depreciates that love." In a similar vein, Professor Albert S. Moraczewski, another Catholic ethicist, argues the IVF violates the proper family environment for the generation of human beings. IVF "displaces the human act which is the essential bonding act of the family."

In *Bibliotheca Sacra* we find this important statement:

A third theological issue is the biblical view of

parenthood. Human parenthood involves two spheres: the unitive (Gen. 2:24) and the procreative (1:28). These are tied together by the union of sexuality, love, and procreation. "Making love" and "making babies" (to use vernacular terms) are tied to the same physical act. The pleasure of sex, the communication of love, and the desire for children are unified in the same act. Artificial reproduction frequently separates these functions and thus poses a potential threat to the completeness God intended for marriage (p. 67).

While Gareth Jones does not consider this to be a principle objection to IVF, he warns against the evil (*op. cit.*, p. 102):

It is important to realize that IVF converts what is intimate and personal into an impersonal process.

Leon Kass has argued that the laboratory production of human beings is no longer human procreation, because making babies in laboratories is a degradation of parenthood. He writes: "Human procreation is begetting. It is a more complete human activity precisely because it engages us bodily and spiritually, as well as rationally." From this basis he has drawn the following conclusions: "What is new is nothing more radical than the divorce of the generation of new life from human sexuality and ultimately from the confines of the human body, a separation which began with artificial insemination and which will finish with ectogenesis, the full laboratory growth of a baby from sperm to term."

To move away from the physical and sexual is to deprive procreation of its human connotations, because it no longer involves the diversity of factors constituting human love. This may have implications for the family as a biological unity, because the wholesale transfer of procreation to the laboratory would undoubtedly undermine the justification and support which biological parenthood gives to the monogamous marriage. It is in the family that we learn to become persons, experiencing the basic form of human love and caring, and learning to take possession of our capacity to relate in love. To undermine the family, therefore, would be to compromise the ordinary conditions of our growth as persons.

God instituted marriage as a divine institution. He did this because in the marriage relationship husband and wife love each other in the Lord Who binds them together. That love unites them in the unique oneness of "one flesh". That love which makes them one flesh comes to expression also in sexual intercourse, which God has also given for the propagation of the human race in general, and for the perpetuation of His covenant in the lines of generations. In this way the marriage of believers becomes a unique picture of Christ and His Church, and, therefore, a picture of God's everlasting covenant of grace which He established and maintains through Jesus Christ. The unity of marriage, that which makes husband and wife one flesh, is a unity of love, a unity of flesh in inter-

course, a unity of nature in the children God is pleased to give them. By this is formed the family, the basic institution of society and the essential unit of God's gracious covenant. To separate any one aspect of this unity from the other aspects is to destroy the whole. To separate the sexual communion from the unity of love and the unity of procreation is to damage irreparably the whole institution of marriage and its God-ordained purpose. This is why it is not only true, as *Bibliotheca Sacra* says, that IVF and its inevitable results leads to a redefinition of marriage and the family; it is also true that it leads to a destruction of marriage and the family. The conception of covenant children is shifted from the covenant union of love into the laboratory. This will never do.

God sometimes withholds children from covenant parents. We do not by any means intend to minimize the difficult spiritual struggles which such childless couples endure as they seek to reconcile their will with the will of the Lord. Nor do we mean to condemn any medical assistance which such couples seek when medical malfunctions are the cause of childlessness. But God gives children and God withholds them. Couples to whom God does not give children ought seriously to ask themselves the question whether God does not have some special work and calling for them in His kingdom and covenant to which they can devote their time and energies. It may be that God purposely refrains from giving them children in order to use them in some other great and noble task in the Church. But whatever may be the case, let them seek their comfort in their heavenly Father Who knows the ache of their heart, but Whose ways are always higher than our ways in His goodness to His people.

*During this busy
Holiday Season
take the time to
read & study the
Standard Bearer!*

ALL AROUND US

Robert D. Decker

Drop-outs, Cults, and Fast Growing Churches Lutherans Unite Women In Church Office

Drop-outs, Cults, and Fast Growing Churches:

Three different news reports in three different Church magazines at first glance appear to have little in common. Upon a bit of reflection, however, they do have something in common. That something is crucial to the life and well being of the church. The first concerns a ministers' conference recently held in the Netherlands.

The church must neither shut itself off from the world nor accommodate herself and her message to the spirit and thinking of the modern world. This was said by Dr. C. Klapwijk of The Hague at the ministers' conference sponsored by the Confessional Reformed Consultation (CGB). The first approach results in losing all contact with the youth; the consequence of the second tack is that the church forfeits her right to exist.

The theme of the conference was "Church Drop-Out Among Young People, Considered Against the Background of a Godless Culture." Dr. Klapwijk, a retired pastor in the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (GKN), spoke of an explosion of church-leaving. Two-thirds of the young people refuse to belong to any denomination. A major culprit in this development has been modern affluence and the popularization of modern theology.

The best approach, according to Klapwijk, is "to faithfully keep going as church of the Lord . . . Don't be rowing in a pool beside the stream, don't drift along the stream, but row against the stream." (*RES News Exchange*, Oct. 1, 1986)

The second news item appears in the October issue of *Covenanter Witness*, a magazine published by the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America. The title of the article is, "Cult Groups Fed By Churches That Don't Feed Intellect."

Most members of religious cults are not "weirdos who don't take baths and who have a penchant for air-

ports and flowers," a researcher on cults told participants of the International Conference for Itinerant Evangelists.

Rather, cult members are usually above average in intelligence, between 18 and 25 years old, and are most likely to have a conservative religious background, said Jeff Amano, a research associate of Probe Ministries in suburban Dallas, Texas.

Amano said many young people coming from conservative backgrounds become prime candidates for cult groups if the churches they attend do not teach effectively the hows and whys of their beliefs. Churches which don't teach reasons for their beliefs skim only the surface and stress a "milky" rather than a "meaty" comprehension of the Scripture, he said. This causes people to search for further answers, said Amano.

Amano told the evangelists there were more than 3,000 cults in the world. He noted that followers of these groups often do not remain followers for a lengthy time. One study showed that only one-half of one percent of Unification Church members (Moonies) remained Moonies after two years.

Amano said cults usually had these elements: an authoritarian leader; legalistic, highly structured and disciplined guidelines; they deem themselves a sole possessors of truth; are concerned with the end of the world and believe they can use unethical practices to fulfill what they consider the calling or purpose of their movement.

The Church Herald (Reformed Church in America) reports on the fastest growing church in 1985 and the largest single congregation in the United States:

The fastest growing church in North America is an Assemblies of God congregation in Arizona, and the largest is a Baptist congregation in Indiana, according to a survey published in the September/October issue of *Ministries Today* magazine.

The survey was conducted by Elmer L. Towns, president of Church Leadership Institute in Lynch-

Robert D. Decker is professor of Practical Theology and New Testament in the Protestant Reformed Seminary.

burg, Virginia. He has been compiling and publishing annual statistics on large and fast-growing churches for the past fifteen years. Towns is also dean of Liberty Baptist Seminary in Lynchburg, founded by Jerry Falwell.

The fastest-growing church in 1985, according to the survey, was First Assembly of God in Phoenix, Arizona, which gained 2,307 new worshippers for a total of 7,688. "No church in America has had this much growth in a single year since I have been conducting this survey," Towns said. He reported that the Rev. Tommy Barnett attributes the growth to a new 7,000-seat sanctuary and "an aggressive ministry of inviting people to ride buses for Sunday school."

First Baptist Church in Hammond, Indiana, was the largest church in the country last year, with 19,320 worshippers, representing a gain of 620. About 8,000 people come to the church each week by bus.

In a list citing the fastest-growing church in each of the fifty states, thirty-two of those mentioned were Assemblies of God congregations. "This is the first time they have outnumbered Baptist churches in growth," Towns said. Pentecostal churches such as the Assemblies of God are growing, he said, "because they usually provide greater involvement by worshippers in the service and they offer exciting services." (Oct. 17, 1986)

Why do the cults and Pentecostals grow while Reformed churches such as the GKN lose their youth? Pulpit failure! The Bible teaches that the preaching of the Word is the chief means of grace, by which it pleases God through Jesus Christ to gather, defend and preserve His church. Where the Word is faithfully preached and taught (catechetical instruction in the history and doctrine of Holy Scripture) complemented by Christian Schools that are really *Christian* and covenant homes where fathers and mothers teach their children God's fear by word and deed, the church grows. Let us be warned. Let us "hold fast the traditions we have been taught . . ." (II Thess. 2:15)

Lutherans Unite:

The American Lutheran Church (ALC) at its recent 13th General convention in Minneapolis entered into a "new relationship" with the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and the Reformed Church in America (R.C.A.) The relationship includes "occasional joint services of the Lord's Supper" and "the sharing of pastors between our traditions . . . The action means that the ALC formally recognizes the two church bodies from the Reformed tradition as churches in which the gospel is properly preached and which have authentic sacraments and ministries. It reciprocates identical actions by the 3.2 million-member Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and by the 353,000 member Reformed Church in America at conventions in June." (*Calvinist Contact*, Oct. 10, 1986)

The American Lutheran Church also decided by an overwhelming majority to merge with the Lutheran Church in America and the Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches. The latter two denominations also agreed to the merger by big majorities. The new church will be called the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. The membership will total some 5.3 million making it the fourth largest Protestant Church in the United States. The merger will be finalized in 1988. Will the R.C.A. and the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) eventually merge with this large Lutheran church? We think that is likely. Time will tell. Noteworthy is the fact that the more conservative Lutheran churches, the Missouri Synod and the Wisconsin Synod, are not a part of this merger.

Women In Church Office:

This issue continues to plague Reformed Churches the world over. The *RES News Exchange* reports:

In 1982 the Church of Toraja Mamasa (GTM) in Central Sulawesi, Indonesia, decided to open all offices in the church to women. At its synod held this year in July in Ujung Pandang, the GTM admitted a number of women students to training for the ministry. This issue has caused tension with the Christian Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (CGKN) which, in 1924, sent its first missionary to Mamasa. The CGKN is solidly opposed to ordaining women to church office because it believes this is contrary to the teaching of Scripture.

At the recent meeting of the synod of the CGKN the relation between the two churches was discussed and much time was given to women in office. In the presence of two delegates of the GTM a proposal was made to discuss the issue with the GTM, but after some persons declared that this might mean a break between the two churches, a decision on the proposal was postponed. (Oct. 1, 1986)

The Christian Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (CGKN) are the mother denomination of the Free Reformed Churches in North America. Some of the ministers of the Free Reformed were educated at our Protestant Reformed Seminary. We hope that the Dutch brothers do not follow the lead of the Indonesian churches. Our prayer is that they will continue to be "solidly opposed to ordaining women to church office."

*The Standard Bearer
makes a thoughtful
gift for the
sick and shut-ins.*

“Good Morning, Alice” (14)

Gise J. Van Baren

After about a week in the hospital, Alice came home again. Now she could be fed through a tube directly into her stomach. It seemed a strange way of being fed, and Alice herself did not always appreciate it. The insertion of a plastic tube into the small opening into her stomach did not hurt, but seemed to be a bit uncomfortable for her. Not a few times the tube would be inserted too far — and Alice was sure to let us know; or it was not always inserted far enough. But she again received necessary nourishment. Alice could still eat and drink by mouth if she wished — and she did keep trying to drink a bit. But that fear of choking was lessened. The family was reassured in knowing that Alice was not starving to death.

Good Morning Alice:

It's snowing again this morning and cold. We have more bunnies and no cardinals. I don't know where they go in the cold, but they don't come here!

I think these verses (John 15:26-27) teach us a good lesson. As with a lot of John's gospel, we may think Jesus is talking just to the disciples. He is talking to His disciples, but it is still God's Word to us, just like Paul's letters to Corinthians are.

When the Holy Spirit comes into our hearts, sent by Jesus, from God the Father, He testifies in our hearts, (whether that comes before conception or late in life) of the salvation Christ has merited for us.

And although it's true, we were never with Jesus bodily, when we confess we belong to Him, we are also to bear witness of Him even by our actions.

Let us strive to live, that others may see Him living in us.

With love, Your friend

Please read I Tim. 1:14-16

The additional work of tube feeding, plus the increasing amount of care required by Alice, was again placing undue stress on John's family. It was becoming once more a question whether they could continue to bear the brunt of the work. The rest of the family tried to take their regular turns; and regular nursing care helped. But the greatest stress still fell on John's family. Surely it was only by the wonderful grace of our God, and by taking each

day at a time, that all of the necessary care could be given.

Good Morning Alice:

I've been "in" Timothy a couple of times in societies and these verses always strike me.

The grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant!

I, too, say I am chief of sinners. At first I could never see how Paul could say that, but the more I see my own sin, the more I understand. There is no one that I know that sins as much as I do. I can number them all day long. I was impatient, I neglected prayer, again! I wasted time that I could or should have used better. I was selfish (why don't my kids think of my needs once), and on and on and on.

But verse 14 tells me of God's boundless grace; verse 15 tells me how I receive that grace, and verse 16 tells me that my salvation is used as an example to others. And THAT should make me desire all the more to obey.

Oh, that my children, friends, and neighbors can see God's grace in me — to everlasting life.

What exceeding abundant grace we receive, Alice — how thankful we must be because we know what we are saved from!

With love, Your friend

Please read Isaiah 63:7

The daily notes from Alice's "friend" continued to arrive — to her great joy. She looked forward to each one, and, in fact, eagerly awaited the mailman each day. She seemed to know just when the mailman would arrive at this rural mailbox. We never did figure out just how she knew this. She could not look directly out of any window to see his arrival. Somehow she must have noticed a reflection or heard some sound which indicated that he had come. She was pleased always at the other cards she received too. And she would insist on sharing both the note and other cards with her nurse and the rest of the family. And her "friend" especially gave new hope and encouragement for another day.

Good Morning Alice:

It looks like it's going to be another sunny day! It sure does get light earlier and earlier.

The verse I told you about for today really makes me

ashamed. Isaiah says he will make mention. I don't think what Isaiah says here is that he will suggest in passing as we use that word; I think what he says is that he will list often the lovingkindness of the Lord.

I'm sure of that, because he doesn't stop there; he goes right on to describe the wonderful mercies of God.

How we fail! We thank God in our prayers for His love and kindness, and when we discuss with friends, we tell of God's mercies to us; but we fall far short of Isaiah's free way of expressing gratitude.

Maybe it would help to read this verse often, putting our own names in, and truly be thankful.

And again, as always, I've seen how important it is to continually read and search God's Word. When we do, He gives us all we need — and so richly!

With love, Your friend

Please read John 8:36

Alice enjoyed participating in family activities. Though she could not move more than her head and eyes, and could not speak anymore, she enjoyed watching the children and listening to their conversations. And frequently, she would want to contribute something: some minor detail of a story being told, or some report of recent news from South Holland, Ill.; she insisted on correcting anything which was not correctly told. And her ever-present spelling card would be required to spell out, painstakingly, what she wanted others to know. Often, it was rather unimportant information or changes, but she had made her contribution — something which pleased her immensely.

Good Morning Alice:

If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.

The Jews talking with Jesus were very upset with Him when He told them the truth would make them free.

They were Pharisees, Abraham's seed, free already — who said they weren't?

Jesus firmly teaches them that whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin. But then He gives a wonderful promise. If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed. That is living in the circle of that law of liberty we talked about. That is freedom.

We know we are the children of God because of His testimony in our hearts, but we have to be ever watchful that we are not careless with our salvation. We cannot think just because we are elect we automatically live in that liberty.

Yes it is Christ who has made me free, but I must now consciously strive to abide in that liberty by living in obedience to Him that I can know that freedom.

And then I also long for the day that I will be with

Him, and no longer have to battle my "old man" to experience that freedom.

In Him for Whom we wait, Your friend

Please read Romans 8:23-28

(Why don't you read the whole beautiful chapter, Alice?)

Participation could take other forms as well. Alice always enjoyed playing the old and new parlour games: Rook, Trionomoes, Racko, and others. When she could still use her hands, that worked well. Now she could not do that anymore. But ways were devised that she could still play one game: Uno. With a special rack, Alice would select her playing card by nodding a "yes" or "no" as her neighbor pointed to each card in turn. And she really would enjoy making another to "draw four". Frequently Alice would win the game, too.

Good Morning Alice:

When you start reading Romans 8, you want to keep going and then read it over and over.

From verse 1, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus . . ." to the very end of the chapter, "For I am persuaded that nothing can separate us from the love of God which is in Jesus Christ our Lord." But I better stick to the verses that I asked you to read: verses 23-28.

It is explained here so clearly why we don't experience total freedom from sin. It is our hope to be with God, without sin. If we experienced that now, we would no longer have that strong hope to be with God.

But we do hope, and because that hope is so great (life forever with Him, without sin — can you imagine?) we patiently wait for that day.

Just as the Spirit works that hope in us, so He helps us wait!

And He prays for us! Don't you find it so often that you just don't know what to pray for? You ask one thing and then you think: is that what I need? Is that in God's will?

And so often we just don't pray enough. But God knows all and determines all and in His mercy, His Spirit, in unity with Him, makes intercession for us — makes our prayer conform to God's will.

Knowing all this, we know too that whatever comes in our life, it is God's will. He desires — and more — He causes our lives to be the way they are — for our good.

If we can just acknowledge this and trust in Him whatever comes our way, we will face it as the conquerors He makes us.

May you conquer your day in Him, Alice.

In His love, Your friend

Please read II Tim. 4:7-8

THE STRENGTH OF YOUTH

Ronald L. Cammenga

Living Church Membership (1)

There is much misunderstanding and many misconceptions today regarding the church. By the vast majority the church is looked upon as a purely human institution. Others view the church as a Divine institution all right, but a Divine institution on a par with other Divine institutions as, for example, the Christian home, the Christian school, the Christian labor union, and the Christian political party. Others raise the question, in apparent seriousness, whether the church has really not outlived its usefulness, whether it is not out-dated and ought to make room for a more modern institution of more practical benefit to mankind. There are many people who consider themselves to be saved Christians, although they want nothing to do with the church and openly disparage membership in the church. There are others who show their ignorance of what church membership is by the fact that they slight the church. These people do not take their church membership seriously. They do not fulfill the responsibilities of church membership. They are irregular and infrequent in church attendance.

We ought to be clear on our responsibility as Christians to be members of the church of Jesus Christ. We ought to be clear on our calling to be living, in contrast to dead, church members.

The first thing that we must be clear about is that living church membership means membership in a local congregation. The importance and necessity of church membership is the importance and necessity of membership in the visible, instituted church.

Here we reject the notion, widespread today, that for church membership it is sufficient that one be a member simply of the "invisible" church. It is

quite sufficient to call oneself a Christian and to identify in a general sort of way with others around the world who call themselves Christians, without ever joining a local congregation.

This is mistaken thinking. This kind of thinking involves separating what God has joined together. This kind of thinking fails to do justice to the close relationship that God Himself has established between the "invisible" church and the church "visible."

The importance of membership in the visible church is easily proved. The fact of the matter is that the Holy Spirit gathers the church in such a way that the invisible church of Jesus Christ comes to visible manifestation in the world. So closely are the invisible body of Jesus Christ and the visible congregation related, so much are they one, that one joins the Body of Christ in the local congregation when he affiliates with a faithful congregation. And when one leaves a faithful congregation, he is guilty of forsaking the Body of Christ. One's attitude toward the instituted church is his attitude toward Christ's body; one's actions with regard to it are his actions over against Christ's body.

Scripture itself indicates this close relationship between the invisible body of Jesus Christ and the local congregation by calling both "the church." Not only does Scripture refer to the universal body of Jesus Christ, the church invisible as the church. But again and again this is also Scripture's designation of the local congregation. The Apostle Paul addresses his epistles to "the church" in a certain place. In I Cor. 1:2 he addresses himself to "the church of God which is at Corinth." To that local gathering of believers and their children Paul gives the name "church."

This close relationship between the invisible church and the visible church is brought out by the apostle in I Cor. 12. This is the great passage in

Scripture that deals with the unit and the diversity of the church. On reading the chapter we might at first suppose that everything written here pertains only to the invisible church, the universal body of Jesus Christ. This would be a serious misunderstanding of the passage. The apostle himself makes plain that this would be a serious misunderstanding. When he has finished expounding the unity of the church, he says in I Cor. 12:27, "Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular." In clear language the apostle identifies the local congregation at Corinth with the body of Christ — "ye are the body of Christ."

When it comes down to it, the church is the handiwork of God. God has ordained and God has gathered the church. And God is no fool! He hasn't instituted the church for no good reason. He hasn't instituted the church and now leaves it up to you and me whether or not we want to become members of the church. The very fact that God has instituted the church implies the calling that we have to be members of the church.

Other considerations enforce this. Scripture makes plain that the Christian is to hear the preaching of the Word. Christ preached, the apostles preached, and the faithful church today preaches. The believer is called to hear the preaching of the Word for his salvation and his preservation in salvation. Romans 10:14 says, "How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?" Since the preaching is to be heard in the church, since God has entrusted the preaching of His Word to the church, membership in the church is clearly implied.

The same may be said of the sacraments. The believer is to use the sacraments. But who has been entrusted by God with the duty of dispensing the sacraments? Where are the sacraments to be found and enjoyed? Again, the answer is, "In the church." Our calling to partake of the sacraments clearly implies our calling to be members of the church.

It is also the will of God that we submit ourselves to the authority of the office of elder. "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially they who labor in the word and doctrine," I Tim. 5:17. In Hebrews 13:17 we read, "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you." Since we are called to submit to the rule of the elders, and since the office of elder resides in the local congregation, it is clearly implied that we

are to be members of a local congregation, the church institute.

This is also true of the office of deacon. We are called to support this office which Christ has instituted in the church. We are called to contribute regularly so that the deacons may have good means at their disposal to relieve the poor of the church. This is why the apostle enjoins in I Cor. 16:2, "Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come." Our calling to support the office of deacon carries with it the implied calling that we be members of the instituted church in which this office resides.

The *Belgic Confession* in Article 28 teaches the responsibility of church membership in the strongest possible terms. It would be worth your while to read and study that article in its entirety. The article addresses itself to the actual existing situation at the time that the *Belgic Confession* was written. Reformed believers, especially in France and the Lowlands, were prohibited by the government on pain of death from leaving the apostate Roman Catholic Church institute and joining the Reformed Church. Some of these hard-pressed believers argued that they might under these circumstances remain members of Rome and not become members of the Reformed Church. The *Confession* takes a strong stand against this position. We must be members of the faithful church of Jesus Christ in the world. Concerning the instituted church the article states:

We believe, since this holy congregation is an assembly of those who are saved, and that out of it there is no salvation, that no person of whatsoever state or condition he may be, ought to withdraw himself, to live in a separate state from it; but that all men are in duty bound to join and unite themselves with it.

The article goes on:

And that this may be the more effectually observed, it is the duty of all believers, according to the word of God, to separate themselves from all those who do not belong to the Church, and to join themselves to this congregation, wheresoever God hath established it, even though the magistrates and edicts of princes were against it, yea, though they should suffer death or any other corporal punishment. Therefore all those, who separate themselves from the same, or do not join themselves to it, act contrary to the ordinance of God.

Calvin's position agrees with that of the *Belgic Confession*. In *The Institutes*, IV, I, 4, Calvin defends the proposition that the visible church is the mother of believers. Calvin writes:

But because it is now our intention to discuss the visible church, let us learn even from the simple title 'mother' how useful, indeed how necessary, it is that

we should know her. For there is no other way to enter into life unless this mother conceive us in her womb, give us birth, nourish us at her breast, and lastly, unless she keep us under her care and guidance until, putting off mortal flesh, we become like the angels

Calvin concludes by saying:

. . . God's fatherly favor and the especial witness of spiritual life are limited to His flock (the instituted church), hence the abandonment of the church is always fatal.

The Scriptures certainly bear out Calvin's teaching. Hebrews 10:25-31 warns against the forsaking of the visible congregation as an act so serious that it constitutes a despising of the Son of God.

In this article we treated our calling as believers to be members of the visible, instituted church, the local congregation. Next time we'll consider what this membership involves. It's not enough that we are members of the church, but we must be living church members.

TAKING HEED TO THE DOCTRINE

Herman Veldman

The Apostles' Creed (9)

We now continue with our exposition of the first article of our Apostles' Creed as interpreted by our Heidelberg Catechism in Question and Answer 26 of Lord's Day 9. In our preceding article we called attention to the Fatherhood of God in relation to our Lord Jesus Christ. In this article we call attention to this Fatherhood of God in connection with the eternal Son of God. This, too, is fundamental. If our Lord Jesus Christ be not the eternal Son of God He cannot possibly be our Lord Jesus Christ and therefore our Saviour.

Our Lord Jesus Christ is God's eternal Son. What is the meaning of this? That Jesus is God's eternal Son is Scriptural. We quote, first of all, John 1:1-3: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made."

This passage, especially the term "Word," is very significant. As far as we are concerned (our speech, our words) our speech is the expression of what we conceive in our minds. However, as far as our speech is concerned, our speech consists of many words. Then, we speak of many things. Thirdly, our speech is but for a moment. And, finally,

our speech is never causative. It never brings forth. It concerns only matters that are, never cause to be what is not. How wonderful is the Word whereof we read here in John 1! On the one hand, it is obvious in this passage that the Word here is Jesus, and that Jesus here is identified with God. We read in John 1:14, "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father) full of grace and truth." So this Word is our Lord Jesus Christ. And as is evident from verses 1-3, this Jesus is God. On the other hand, however, notice that Jesus here is called *the* Word. He is the Word, the *one* Word, the one expression of the infinite fulness of all that is in God. God knows His own glorious, infinite fulness, and that divine fulness is expressed in the *one* Word. This Word is God's speech concerning Himself — indeed, of Whom shall the eternal, absolute, all-sufficient God ever speak but of Himself? Even creation is God's manifold speech concerning Himself. But the Son of God is His eternal, infinite Word which God speaks of Himself and unto Himself. This we read in John 1:1. We read: "And the Word was *with* God." We read literally: "And the Word was toward God." Thirdly, this Word is the eternal speech of God. This Word is eternal. Our words are spoken, leave us, and are gone. But this one Word is eternal, spoken constantly. Here we have an act

Herman Veldman is a minister emeritus in the Protestant Reformed Churches.

within the divine being, an eternal act. And this is what is meant by the eternal Fatherhood of the first Person of the holy Trinity, eternally generating the Son.

Moreover, Scripture speaks of Christ as God's *only begotten Son*. This expression occurs, for example, in the well-known passages of John 1:14 and 3:16. We need not quote these passages. We will quote John 1:18: "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him." We understand that a better translation is probably: "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten God, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him." And in John 3:18 we read: "He that believeth on Him, is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." This expression, "only begotten Son," is extremely significant. The devil does not speak of a general and creaturely sonship when he tempts Christ in the wilderness, that Christ is a son of God as all men are sons of God, but he speaks of a sonship that is divine, when he says to Him: "If Thou be the Son of God," inasmuch as he assumes that because Christ is the Son of God he expects Him to make bread of these stones. When Jesus declares of Himself to be the Son of God, the wicked leaders of the Jews accuse Him of blasphemy because they understand very well that when He speaks of Himself as the Son of God He uses this term in that distinctive and absolute sense of the word. And this is exactly what the expression means. Jesus is indeed *the only* begotten Son of God; there is none other. He is this Son of God alone. Other passages can be quoted such as Heb. 1:3, Phil. 2:6-8 (Jesus *being* in the form of God, not *was* in the form of God, and that He *is* in the form of God, essentially), John 5:26 (where we read of Christ that the Son was given to have life in Himself — no creature, we understand, has life in himself).

Jesus is God's only begotten Son. To beget is to bring forth a being like unto oneself. Later in the Heidelberg Catechism attention will be directed again to this truth, in Lord's Day 13, in connection with the second article of the Apostles' Creed, where the question is asked: Why is Christ called the only begotten Son of God? Animals, trees, etc., do not beget because to beget is a conscious act of the will, and this does not apply to these creatures. But Jesus being begotten is a unique act of the Father within the trinity. That this is the idea of "begetting" is plain from Gen. 5:3: "And Adam lived an hundred and thirty years and begat a son in his own likeness, after his image; and called his name Seth." Among men fatherhood cannot function alone. Men are fathers only through the

mother; fatherhood requires motherhood. With us the act of generation is but for a moment, but in the trinity the Father generates the Son eternally. With us our children bear our image, likeness, very imperfectly; God's act of generation is complete and absolutely perfect. With us generation means that we produce another person, but that person is also a separate being; with God the act of generation takes place *without the divine being*, and the Person of the Son is essentially one with the Father.

And what is now the implication and significance of this? This has tremendous significance, first of all, as far as the Son is concerned. If Jesus be not the Son of God in a wholly unique sense, He cannot be our Saviour. If He be not the eternal Son of God He cannot bear our guilt and Himself be guiltless. Fact is, guilt is imputed to a person. We are all guilty because we are all personally in Adam. So if Christ be merely a human person, then He Himself would be guilty. Then He must atone for His own guilt. It is only because He is the eternal Son of God that our guilt is not imputed unto Him. The guilt for which He suffered and died was not imputed unto Him because He was personally in Adam, but because He took this guilt upon Himself. Hence, if He be a human person, He himself is guilty with the whole human race. If He be not the Son of God He cannot be born holy and therefore bear God's infinite wrath in perfect love and conscious obedience. We may not be born holy because we ourselves are guilty and therefore deserve a corrupt human nature. And, if He be not the Son of God He cannot bear God's infinite wrath and lead us into everlasting life and heavenly immortality. However, this does not receive the emphasis here and now. The emphasis here does not fall upon the eternal Son of God. But it falls upon the Fatherhood of God. It is in that light that we must see and grasp the implication and significance of this Fatherhood of God in regard to the eternal Son.

However, this truth also has tremendous significance as far as the Fatherhood of God is concerned. First of all, the Fatherhood of God with respect to the "holy child Jesus" has its root and basis in the eternal Fatherhood of the First Person in relation to the Second. God does not become in His relation to the creature what He is not eternally within Himself. It is well that we always bear this fundamental principle in mind. That, we understand, would make God dependent upon the creature. God is the absolutely Self-sufficient One; He has no need of any creature in any sense of the word. Whatever He is in relation to the creature He is first and eternally within Himself. God never becomes what He is not within Himself. Secondly, this also applies to His Fatherhood. He did not become Father through

His relation to Christ as the Mediator nor through His relation to creation in general nor through His relation to His people in Christ Jesus. He is Father, eternally and perfectly within His own being, and all other Fatherhood of God, as in relation to Christ or His people or creation is only a reflection of His own divine and eternal Fatherhood. This truth must be maintained. Besides, if Jesus' Sonship and our sonship are essentially the same, then one of two things must follow: either God is essentially as we are, creaturely, or we are as God is, Divine. In either case, God is denied and only the creature remains.

* * * * *

Our Almighty Father And Creation

Let us notice, first of all, Who is the Creator of heaven and earth. We read: "I believe in God the Father, Maker of heaven and earth." And in Answer 26 of our Heidelberg Catechism we read: "That the eternal Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (who of nothing made heaven and earth, with all that is in them; who likewise upholds and governs the same by His eternal counsel and providence) is for the sake of Christ His Son, my God and my Father.

We must not fail to grasp the wonderful meaning of this. The Creator of heaven and earth is not simply God, the living God, but He is the Creator Who is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ and our Father. This means that He created the heavens and the earth as my Father in Christ Jesus. And this means that He made this world as adapted to that which is to come; this means that He made all things earthy as a symbol of the heavenly, and this means that when He created the world, He made it

with a view to the heavenly, that He made Adam so that he could fall in order to prepare the way for the second Adam, our Lord Jesus Christ.

In the second place, we should also notice what we read here of God's providence. Now it is true that the truth of God's providence is treated in the following tenth Lord's Day. Yet, we would call attention to the following. The Lord upholds and governs the same by His eternal counsel and providence. And then we read of evils which He sends us at the conclusion of Answer 26. So God sends me all these evils. Our afflictions, therefore, are no accident. God willed them. We believe that this must be explained in the supralapsarian sense. The fall of man and whatever is the result of it was willed by God and fulfilled by Him to serve His purpose: the glory and manifestation of His Name, antithetically, in the way of sin and grace, realized, positively in the salvation of His own, in heavenly immortality, unto the glory of God Who alone does wondrous things, and, negatively, in the damnation of those whom the Lord has sovereignly reprobated.

This we believe. We cannot see it and understand it now. But we will understand it one day. Now we know in part, but one day we shall know as we are known, completely and perfectly. And whereas God's counsel controls all things, also man's fall and its subsequent misery and death (also for this reason the child of God can and will never believe in evolution) the church of God is always safe in the midst of the world, and it is so true what we read in Rom. 8:28: "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose."

FROM HOLY WRIT

George C. Lubbers

Believing All the Scriptures

THE CHRISTIAN WIFE PREDICTED (Gen. 3:16)

At first hearing of these words from the lips of Jehovah to the woman who has so deeply fallen, having so grievously disobeyed God and her husband, we might receive the impression that they

are the announcement of the death-knell to this helpmeet of Adam.

Listen to the text from the lips of Jehovah God.

The text reads: "... thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee" (Gen. 3:16b).

Surely we cannot interpret these words as being, at face value, the placing of the sinner-woman under her husband as a punishment for her transgression of deceiving him, tempting him to disobey the "probationary" command of the Lord. Yes, it is a setting of the wife of Adam in *her* place. However, it is not a humbling her to *perpetual bondage* under a man, her husband! Thus Dr. Scofield would have it in his Notes: "The entrance of sin, which is disorder, makes necessary a headship, and is vested in man". Now here we have two errors. The first is that the headship of Adam over his God-given wife was not rooted in creation, but in sin. This is tantamount to the error of teaching that government, too, was instituted by God for the sake of sin. Thus these advocates of this latter view interpret Genesis 9:5, 6. To be sure the headship of Adam over his wife is rooted in the fact that he was created first, and that she was taken from his rib, and thus became bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh.

It deserves only passing notice that the words "bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh" is quite otherwise than the phrase in Genesis 29:14; Judges 9:2; II Samuel 5:1. In Genesis 29:14 Laban is recorded as having said to Jacob, "Surely thou art my bone and flesh". Jacob could by no stretch of even the wildest imagination be in the same relationship to Laban, as was Eve to her husband, Adam, being created out of one of his ribs. Laban was the brother of Rebekah, and therefore was Jacob's uncle. He was near of kin! Nothing more! And this same is true also of Abimelech, Gideon's son by a concubine woman from Shechem. He was merely the kinsman of the Shechemites. In a rather exaggerated overstatement he pleads to be their ruler since he claims, "I am your bone and flesh". Likewise also the sons of Israel, the former followers of King Saul, claim to have equal share in David's house. They say, "Behold, we are thy bone and flesh". They were kinsmen of David, nothing more. Neither they nor Abimelech were "bone of their bone, and flesh of their flesh" in the unique sense that a wife is such to her husband.

It is good Reformed tradition and teaching to relate this unique relationship only to the mystical body of Jesus Christ, the church. The Heidelberg Catechism in Question and Answer 76 teaches this altogether unique relationship in the well-known words: "so that we, though Christ is in heaven and we on earth, are notwithstanding 'Flesh of his flesh, and bone of his bone', and that we live and governed forever by one spirit, as members of the same body are by one soul."

Hence, we must look in another direction for the

proper interpretation of the God-ordained and instituted headship of Adam over his lawful wife. In so doing, we must not fantasize a headship of "men over every women". For the text says to Eve that she shall be subject to *her* husband. Besides, she shall, in so doing, "desire her husband". She shall not have this desire to any male of the human race. That would be adultery and fornication of the purest water and in the highest degree (Exodus 20:14, 17; Lev. 18:21). This would destroy the very fabric and holy relationship within the bond of marriage.

We hold, briefly stated, that Jehovah God is here in mercy placing Eve as a believing wife in the state and condition of being justified from her sins and guilt, sanctifying her unto her holy calling of being a Christian wife, a believing wife unto Adam, her believing husband, as they are now both under the blood of sprinkling, and clothed with the clothing of the sacrificial animal. The shame of their nakedness is removed (Rev. 3:18). She and Adam need no longer to hide from God. In the very distant future the real Lamb of God, the One Who is holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners, will remove their guilt and cleanse their conscience from sin to serve the living God (Heb. 9:9, 14; 10:2, 22; I Peter 3:21).

In this state of being reconciled with God Eve is addressed here. She is addressed within the climate of the Gospel of grace!

Here she will be subject to her husband. She shall be very willing in the day of God's powerful grace upon her. She shall not be merely "subjected" to her husband. Such is the lot of the unbelieving women in the world. There the husbands are tyrants and they are rebels. Such do not marry in the Lord (I Cor. 7:29b). Nor do these ungodly women bring forth children who are by elective grace in the Lord, in covenant mercies.

They are "subjected" under their husbands; slaves of sin they are; the freedom and glory of Christian marriage they do not see, for they cannot see the kingdom of heaven!

Not so with the liberated Eve. The truth of the Gospel has set her at liberty once more, free within the bonds of marriage in the Lord. Thou shalt be subject to thy husband. Glorious, *willing* bondage, which set her free!

Yes, here we see the hope of heaven realized in her life. She is a picture of the pure bride of Christ, reverencing her husband. Yes, all her desire is to her husband principally, and she will sing in ever increasing joy, not the erotic love songs of the wicked women, but she will learn by grace to sing the songs of those who call their husbands, "lord". Of this Eve, mother of the living, the reborn and con-

verted wife of Adam it may be said that she learned to bear children in faith, love, holiness, and sobriety. She learned to smile through her tears in hope of heaven. Thus she must have sung in the hope of the Protevangel, triumphing in the blood of the sacrifice upon the altar. She is no longer a naked, fearful and guilty sinner, but she is clothed in the raiment of the sacrificed Lamb who was slain from before the foundation of the World (I Peter 1:18-20). She obeys her husband in love. Adam's rule and Eve's obedience are in perfect harmony in the covenant of reconciliation with God.

TWO TEXTS WORTHY OF SPECIAL ANALYSIS (Gen. 3:16 and Gen. 4:7)

It is well to have these texts clearly before our mind's eye.

We will quote the pertinent similar words from the mouth of Jehovah God. These words were spoken a number of years apart. The first text is spoken to Eve in Paradise, after the fall, and the second is addressed to Cain, standing by the altar in the church, outside of the garden of Eden.

The text to Eve reads as follows: *"and thy desire shall be to thy husband and he shall rule over thee"* (Gen. 3:16).

The text addressed by the Lord to Cain reads: *"And to thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him"* (Gen. 4:7).

What we are going to say about the idea here of the words "desire" and "rule" is not new, a matter of my invention. It is ever good to learn that others, men of repute as interpreters of the Word, too, have read the Scriptures as I do.

Turning to the Dutch *Statenvertaling*, we notice that those worthies, living in the days of the Synod of Dort, make the following annotation on Gen. 4:7: "It is thus to be understood of Abel, Cain's brother, as if God said to him (Cain): you have no reason to be wrathful toward Abel, because he is willing and satisfied that you as the firstborn remain exalted above him".

On Gen. 3:16 the same *Statenvertaling* has a note which reads, interpreting the phrase "desire to thy husband" as follows: "that is, you shall be held to be joined with desire to the will of your husband, to seek protection under him, to be ruled by his (*beleid*) protective discretionary judgment. I Cor. 14:34; I Tim. 2:11, 12; Titus 2:5".

Let us pause here for just a moment to reflect.

It is quite obvious that "desire, longing" does not mean merely *sexual* desire, *sexual* attraction. There are those, reading only Gen. 3:16, who affirm that this text refers to Adam's masculinity over his wife. Now clearly such is not the denotation of the term

"teshuqah" in the Hebrew text. In certain contexts the term may have such connotation. However in Gen. 4:7 the thought of sexual attraction of Abel, the righteous man, toward his blood brother, Cain, is unthinkable, distastefully repulsive. It appears that the usage of the term "desire" in the Bible must be interpreted as is done by our Reformed fathers!

Is also quite evident that the Reformed fathers conceived of the message of Jehovah to Eve on a higher and more holy level; it refers, even in the case of Eve, the wife of Adam, to her entire life: body, mind, soul, spirit. Basically it was spiritual desire to be obedient to God in obedience to her husband. It was, as we wrote earlier, the longing of new obedience by the blood and Spirit of Christ. The sexual submission was the wife's by virtue of her being created Adam's help meet. She was to be a help meet over against him. She was one flesh with him, bone of his bones, flesh of his flesh.

When the fathers, who annotated the Dutch text refer to this, they refer to the conduct of Christian wives in the Church. They are to be silent, know their place, not talk out of turn as did Eve in the transgression (I Tim. 2:11, 12; I Cor. 14:34). Paul gives a beautiful description of the Christian wife's "desire" to her husband in Titus 2:5: "to be sober-minded, chaste, workers at home, being in subjection to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed".

Yes, there was ever in Eve, as in every believing wife, what the Bible calls "flesh", sinful Adamic nature. There is ever the flesh in which there dwells no good thing. But in the sanctification of the Spirit and the sprinkling with blood, Christian wives, yes also Christian women are raised to the higher level of being the King's daughters.

Such are the King's daughters, all glorious within.

Yes, their clothing is of wrought gold.

Remember the sick and shut-in during this busy season. Your prayers and visits bring joy to those who can't get out.

THE DAY OF SHADOWS

John A. Heys

Called Again In Unchangeable Love

A second attempt means that one failed in one's first attempt. There is no need, no reason, or even possibility of making a second attempt to do that wherein one has already succeeded. It is true, having broken a world's record in running, jumping or the like, one can try to repeat what one did before; but this is a first attempt at duplicating what had already been accomplished. It is not a second attempt to do a particular thing, but a first attempt to repeat what had been accomplished.

However, when God called Jonah a second time to go to Nineveh, it was not because He failed in a first "attempt." God never fails to get His way. He is the Almighty One. A superficial reading of Jonah 3:1 might lead one to conclude that God had to try again, but in light of the rest of Scripture this certainly is not true.

In Isaiah 55:8-11 we read, "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts. For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: So shall My word be that goeth forth out of My mouth: it shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I send it." Because His thoughts are higher than ours, we so often misjudge what He is doing. And we can be sure, if we take hold of the passage quoted above, that He did not fail when He called Jonah the first time, and did not have to try a second time, in order to get His way. His word accomplished the purpose whereto He sent it when He called Jonah the first time. Instead of failing, He

succeeded in every respect. For God *never* attempts anything. He goes out and does it!

This is also taught us in Isaiah 46:9, 10, where we read, "Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like Me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure." There just is no other way to look at Jonah's flight, after God's first call to him, than that it pleased God to have Jonah do that. That does not excuse Jonah. Nor does it mean that God finds pleasure in sin. He hates sin with all His infinite being. But He does — and eternally did — decree sin for the glory of His own name, and for the salvation of His church. Do we not read in Luke 22:22, "And truly the Son of man goeth, as it was determined: but woe to that man by whom He was betrayed!" God determined that betrayal in thoughts far higher than ours, and for the salvation of His church. But His woe to Judas reveals His awful hatred of that deed. He finds pleasure, not in the sinful act as such, but in the purpose which it serves, and in the fulfillment of His eternal counsel. For thereby His name is glorified. In the very first sermon preached to fallen man, God Himself declared what would take place: the seed of the serpent would bruise the heel of the Seed of the woman. The cross was a terrible sin. But it pleased God to have it take place for our salvation. Yea, in thoughts higher than our thoughts, He decreed that cross in order that sin might be completely banished from this earth, and a people might dwell on it that praise and glorify Him in every thought, word, and deed.

So it is with Jonah and his sin. God called him the first time, and He did so because eternally He had determined to have Jonah bring the truth to those sailors on the ship caught in that violent storm. He

had to be a witness to them before he would witness in Nineveh. He also did so to bring Jonah to that amazing confession in the belly of the fish, namely, "Salvation is of the Lord." He did so in order that this whole event might take place, be recorded and preserved for us today, so that we might know and appreciate His sovereign, unchangeable love, according to which He chose His people out of every nation, tongue, and tribe. No, He did not fail in a first "attempt." All transpired, in the smallest detail, exactly as He wanted it to take place. His word to Jonah did not return void. It accomplished the purpose to which He sent it.

And now He comes again to call Jonah to go to Nineveh — not to try once again. God never tries. And He never fails. To try means that there are forces outside of you with which you have to compete. And with God it is a matter of using all the creatures that He made and over which He, as the Almighty One, has such complete control that their very existence depends upon Him. We easily forget that, but He gives us every heart beat. For Him it is a simple matter to prevent us from doing anything contrary to His will. He need not fight us. All He need do is to cease giving us heart beats. He need not pit His strength against ours. All He needs to do is to cease giving us strength. He is the *Almighty* One. All might, all strength, all power in heaven and on earth — but also in hell — comes from Him. He cannot fail, because there is no power that can stand in His way. There is no power that does not come from Him.

But there is something else we ought to appreciate here. What patience and what love of God it was to deal this way with this rebellious prophet! Jonah deserved hell fire, not another opportunity to serve God in His church. This stubborn, rebellious prophet, who not only fled from his calling by means of a ship, wherein he would be in the company of idol worshippers, but who, having been saved in a most wonderful way in tender mercy and powerful grace, and deposited safely on dry land, does not immediately go to Nineveh, but has to be called a second time and told to do as he had been bidden by the God Who saved him.

What love God displays here! What patience is set before us in these verses! He killed Uzzah instantly when he touched the ark David was trying to bring to Jerusalem. He had the earth swallow up Korah, Dathan, and Abriam, who refused to receive Moses and Aaron as God's representatives. But Jonah's life is spared, and a second call comes to him. After Jonah was deposited safely on dry land, and did not at once set out to go and do what he had been called to do, would you have dealt kindly with him? Would you have merely told him to go now and do what he had stubbornly refused

to do? Would you not have thundered from heaven and sent extremely brilliant flashes of lightning all around him, and said to him, "Get going?!"

After the word of the Lord came to Jonah saying, "Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach the preaching that I bid thee", we read this: "So Jonah arose, and went unto Nineveh, according to the word of the Lord." It was God's good pleasure that this time he go; and so he went. What grace on the part of God that He made Jonah obey this time. That word of God has power; and although Jonah still had no interest in preaching in Nineveh, he went. He had been delivered from death himself. He had tasted wonderfully the salvation that God has for His people. He himself was delivered from the punishment that he deserved; but he had no interest in serving the interests of these Gentiles in Nineveh. As far as he is concerned, they can perish in the punishment for which their sins call.

That he arose can be taken literally. He may have been sitting down and taking it easy, or even lying on his couch enjoying the life on dry land that had been given to him. But it certainly is true figuratively. He lifted himself — by the grace of God — from his stubborn position, at least to the degree that he would go and preach. Subsequent history reveals that he still wanted the whole city to perish. He lifted himself above his rebellion and went to the field where he must work.

It was the elect Ninevites that God had in mind. Jonah was the tool, the instrument that God intended to use to bring the gospel to these elect Ninevites. In fact, in that very first sermon preached in the hearing of fallen Adam and Eve, God revealed that He had chosen a people, for the whole world would be divided into seed of the woman and seed of the serpent. Those who want nothing to do with sovereign, eternal, unconditional election may call Genesis 3:15 the Mother Promise — and it is, for out of its womb come all the promises that follow in Scripture. But their denial of unconditional election from before the foundation of the world demands a terrible perversion of this Mother Promise. Instead of reading it as it is, so that God promises to put enmity between seed and seed, it is man who must create his own hatred against Satan and sin. Then it is not as God says, "I will put enmity . . ." It would have to read, "And there will be enmity between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent." God must be ruled out. If man fulfills the condition, then there will be warfare between the church and the world. That is not what God says. In fact when God said this, there was yet no enmity between Adam and Eve and Satan. Did God not say that He would *put* it? And Adam and Eve had not yet confessed their sin. Adam blamed God for giving him this kind of

wife that led him into eating. No, no, it was not his fault. It was God's. And though Eve does say that she was beguiled, she does it in a way that puts the blame on the serpent. She was deceived. She committed no sin, but was used by the serpent as an unwilling tool. Well, there you have the kind of conditions that fallen man can fulfill. And if our fulfilling of the condition of hating sin and the devil, is the prerequisite, there is not going to be any enmity between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent. For God gives this promise after Adam and Eve had died spiritually. As God had said, so was it. They died the *day* they ate of the forbidden fruit.

God had His elect children in Nineveh, and in unchangeable love He is going to make some of the Ninevites have enmity against Satan and all his works, and then save the whole city from overthrow. Jonah cannot see this. But that does not change the truth concerning the unchangeable God. Conditional theology teaches that we change God's mind by fulfilling the condition which He stipulates. Nothing is sure yet, except that God wants to save all who hear the preaching. We are going to decide how many and who are going to be saved. And instead of man being thankful before God for his salvation, God has to say "Thanks" to man for making it possible that the word from God's mouth does not become void, but with man's help accomplished the purpose for which He sent it.

No, Jonah's rising up and going to Nineveh is not a stubborn prophet fulfilling a condition, and so performing an act of helping God. God needs no help, and we can in no way help Him, since we depend upon Him for every breath of life and every heart beat, both physically and spiritually. It is an eternal, unchangeable love of God that saves us and makes us obedient before Him. Because God loved Jonah, and because He loved the elect in Nineveh, God sent His powerful word and Spirit to cause Jonah to rise up and go to Nineveh, that great and wicked city.

God's call was not a request — which a condition always is — but a divine command. Did you ever find anywhere in Scripture that God asked anyone to do something? Was it not always a command? And here is a command that flows forth from an unchangeable love. All the evil Jonah performed, and all the evil in that great city cannot change God's love. Conditional theology teaches that you can change God's love by not fulfilling the condition He places before you. He will then begin to hate you. No, the "I Am that I Am" never becomes I Was. A conditional promise can fail. God's promises never fail because His love is unchangeable.

RFPA Christmas Specials

#1 — Buy any 2 RFPA books at regular price (Book Club discount may be taken), and get *The Wonder of Grace* or *In The Sanctuary* at half price (\$2.50).

#2 — Buy any three books at 40% off regular prices. (*God's Covenant Faithfulness* not included in this special)

Take advantage of one of these offers to enrich your own libraries or for gift giving. A booklist with prices and a postage schedule is printed for your ordering convenience. Offers good until Christmas.

RFPA

P.O. Box 2006

Grand Rapids, MI 49501

Behold, He Cometh!	12.95
Believers and Their Seed	4.95
Come, Ye Children	22.95
The Five Points of Calvinism	3.95
God's Eternal Good Pleasure	12.95
Hyper-Calvinism and the Call of the Gospel	4.95
In the Sanctuary	4.95
Marriage	4.95
The Mysteries of the Kingdom	8.95
Peaceable Fruit	7.95
Reformed Dogmatics	18.95
Therefore Have I Spoken	8.95
The Triple Knowledge Volume I	12.95
Volume II	12.95
Volume III	12.95
Set of 3 Volumes	35.95
The Voice of Our Fathers	19.95
We and Our Children	4.95
When I Survey	10.95
"Whosoever Will"	4.95
The Wonder of Grace	4.95
RETAIL AMOUNT	

POSTAGE SCHEDULE

1. Use the schedule below for orders shipped within the U.S.

2. Use the retail amount of your order to figure the postage rate.

\$9.99 or less	\$1.00
\$10.00 to \$19.99	\$1.75
\$20.00 to \$29.99	\$2.50
\$30.00 to \$39.99	\$3.00
\$40.00 to \$49.99	\$3.50
\$50.00 or more	8% of the total

Foreign countries add 20% of total order.

TRANSLATED TREASURES

Dr. A. Kuyper

A Pamphlet Concerning the Reformation of the Church

(In the previous article Kuyper, in speaking of the present calling of his church to engage in church reformation, has made a distinction between three groups of churches which exist within the State Church. One group of churches has retained a somewhat Reformed character. Another group of churches has become truly the false church. And a group of churches which comprises the third group stands somewhere between these two extremes. Kuyper has insisted that this must be borne in mind as his church considers the need for separation.)

What now concerns the question, in what way the reformation of the Reformed Churches must be undertaken in this land in connection with these three groups of churches, we answer by keeping in mind the three groups of churches which we have described, on the one hand, and the persons or bodies which are called to act, on the other hand.

We make our answer with the following observations.

1) All the children of God in these churches shall do well to bring this sad state of the church before the gate of their own heart in a spiritual manner. The judgment of God over His people in this sad state of the church must be much more recognized than it has been thus far. Not only in the churches which are half destroyed, but also in the churches such as in Amsterdam, the miserable condition of the churches must drive us to prayer and supplication. It must be willed by God that He, because of His holy name, once more shows mercy to His Zion.

2) This spiritual concern for the misery of the churches of God must lead to a personal confession of guilt and to personal conversion on the part of the godly. God's child knows his own guilt as the deepest. Each is in his own eyes the greatest of sinners. Also the individual child of God must rise from that depth. There must be penance, conversion, a renewal of the covenant with the Most High.

3) From the personal life of the child of God this reformation must go over into our households and

the circles of the brethren. First of all, the impulse for a better life must penetrate in that direction. It must be a matter of hope against hope. It must be a turning away from the world to the Lord of Hosts; a turning away from the tent of vanity to the tabernacle of our Lord; a hiding under His wings.

4) From this area of reformation, reformation must proceed toward an open conflict with sin and false teachings. It must be a demonstration of mercy and a making known of the gospel of salvation. The office of believers which still slumbers must once again be shown to be glorious in its ministry. And the most serious-minded, rather than leaving this work to others, must be begged to lead the way.

5) In those churches which according to our third category are entirely dead, we must admonish the believers either to re-establish a church of Christ or join themselves to another church which may exist in their locality, and thus establish a separated church. This must be done provided only that as many as can be gained from that church hold open the possibility of a new church connection with other Reformed churches.

6) In those churches in which, according to our second category, the pure administration of the means of grace is temporarily lacking, although there is still hope of renewal, we would entreat the faithful to establish without delay an aggrieved church; i.e., to bring into existence an administration of the means of grace under the leadership of a believing consistory expressly chosen for that purpose.

7) And in those churches where, in keeping with our first category, the pure administration of the means of grace is still tolerable, the believers will be led to use these means faithfully, to thank God the Lord for His manifestation of grace in these means, and to pray to Him that the administration

will continue among them. Further, the believers are obligated, whether through instruction, family visitation, baptism, or preaching, not to exercise fellowship with such ministers or adversaries in their church as resist the counsel of God.

* * * * *

In the second place, concerning the persons who hold office we say:

1) That preachers, in whose vicinity congregations of these second and third categories exist, shall be bound to bring persons who live in these sub-circles to the knowledge of the gospel by missionary activities. They must also serve the aggrieved churches as moderators in every way in which it is desired.

2) That the preachers in churches where unbelieving co-ministers are found must break off all official fellowship with these men. This must be done in all humiliation with concern for their personal life so that no self-exaltation gives occasion for offense.

3) That preachers have continually to call attention from the pulpit, in catechism, and on family visitation, to the judgment of God which rests on the church. They have to awaken to true penitence and conversion. They have to lead by their examples in a holy walk and an improvement of life.

4) Preachers have to insist upon church renewal according to the Word of God in the gathering of the consistory. And if this does not work, they ought to meet separately with the confessing members of the consistory.

5) Preachers must insist in their Classes that particular attention be given to churches who depart from the confessions and who falsify the administration of the means of grace.

6) Preachers must use all zeal in the Classes of their churches to move the churches to humility before the Lord and to arouse them to a return to God's law and testimony.

7) The elders, in so far as this is the calling of their office, must walk the same way as the ministers of the Word. This is especially true in the churches where there is no minister of the Word. They must feed the congregation with the Word, strengthen it with a substitute ministry and be helpful in the formation of aggrieved churches.

8) The deacons, just as the elders, in keeping with their office, must support the ministers of the Word in the reformation of the church and must arouse others to the work of mercy by a reformation of a love which has grown cold.

(to be continued)

*Remember your friends,
family and neighbors
with a special gift
of the Standard Bearer!*

*Give a gift of the
Standard Bearer today.*

Report of Classis East

Classis East met in regular session on Wednesday, September 10, 1986 and in continued session on Wednesday, October 15, 1986 at the Kalamazoo Protestant Reformed Church. Rev. M. Kamps was the chairman for these sessions.

The main item of business at the September 10th meeting was the examination of the pastor-elect of Southeast, Steven Key. After preaching a sermon on Psalm 25:14, Pastor-elect Key was examined in the six loci of dogmatics, in the knowledge of scrip-

ture and the confessions, in controversy, and in practical matters. The delegates to classis along with the delegates and examina from Classis West gave unanimous consent to the examination and authorized Southeast to proceed with Pastor-elect Key's ordination and installation. By now he is in full harness.

Classical appointments were requested by Hope and the following schedule was adopted: October 5 - Bekkering, October 19 - Gritters, October 26 -

Joostens; November 2 - Kamps, November 16 - Key, November 30 - Kortering, December 7 - Miersma, December 21 - Van Baren, December 28 - Bekkering, January 4 - Gritters, January 18 - Joostens. Rev. B. Woudenberg was appointed to fill the pulpit of Covenant for the Sundays of September 28 and October 5.

Classis also busied itself for a time on September 10th with the consideration of what to do with the protests from six individuals and one consistory regarding Classis' decision on marriage, divorce and remarriage as raised in the Wyckoff case. Classis decided that the protests were legally before it and to appoint a committee of pre-advice to study the protests and bring advice to a continued session of classis on October 15th.

At its October 15th meeting, Classis read the protests re the Wyckoff matter and heard the report of its committee of pre-advice. Classis adopted the analysis and evaluation of this committee and its advice, viz., to sustain the decision of the May classis (for details of this decision see the "Report of Classis East" in the June 1st issue of the *Standard Bearer*).

Expenses for both sessions amounted to \$2094.91.

Classis will meet next on January 14, 1987 at First Church.

Respectfully submitted,
Jon Huiskens
Stated Clerk

News From Our Churches

Ben Wigger

November 15, 1986

Rev. C. Hanko, a former pastor of the First Protestant Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, perhaps said it best. "We build churches not for the past, or the present, but for the future." And judging from the new facilities of First Church, the church building should serve their needs for some time to come.

On Thursday, October 16, the flock of First Church along with many friends and well wishers from surrounding churches met to dedicate what God has so graciously provided. It proved to be both an enjoyable and inspirational evening.

The program for the evening started with an organ prelude by Mrs. Mary Velthouse. This gave many the opportunity to hear for the first time the newly installed Wicks Pipe Organ.

Mr. Edward Ophoff Sr., vice president of the consistory, then opened by reading Psalm 150 and leading in prayer. He also pointed out that the program was being both video and audio tape recorded. It just might be the first time a dedication of one of our churches has ever been video recorded.

Those in attendance then got their first chance to sing along with the Wicks Pipe Organ, which this time had Miss Bonnie Talsma as accompanist.

Mr. Kenneth Vink, chairman of the New Organ Committee along with Mrs. Mary Velthouse then presented the anatomy of the organ, which was a short discourse on the parts and sounds of the new

organ. This particular organ is smaller than the pipe organ on Franklin St., the site of the old First Church. The organ has nine hundred total pipes along with chimes, but only ninety pipes are visible in the front of the auditorium.

The program continued with greetings from two former pastors of First Church. Rev. Cornelius Hanko based his remarks on Psalm 126:3: "The Lord has done great things for us; whereof we are glad."

Rev. Hanko pointed out that God has made this building possible. But He has also done much more than that. He has kept us and our children, and in some cases also their children, in the truth. God has indeed preserved us in our generations. Without God's grace we have nothing. And even though this is a beautiful church, we have nothing to boast of. Rev. Hanko also mentioned that he had been present at the dedication of the first First Church some sixty years before.

Rev. Gise Van Baren also had greetings for the congregation. Rev. Van Baren spoke of the changes First Church has gone through over the years. It used to be a neighborhood church. The vast majority of its members lived within walking distance. Now it is a commuter church; no one walks, everyone drives. He also pointed out the stability of the church. Even though it has seen some difficult doctrinal times, the truth has been maintained. Rev. Van Baren also pointed us to the Word of God found in I Peter 1:8: ". . . ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory". We have joy

unspeakable because of what God has given. However, the church is only a tool to be used to praise our God.

Rev. Meindert Joostens, the present pastor at First Church, also had some remarks to make. He led us to Scripture, found particularly in Psalm 26:8, which speaks of the saints of the Old Testament and the love they had for God's house, the Holy Hill of Zion: the place where God's honor dwelt. Here His glory was revealed. And so it should be for us. Our church is where we are open to the Word of God. Who is great like unto our God?

The dedication program also consisted of several numbers sung by First Church's choir under the direction of Mr. Roland Peterson. A poem written and presented by Mrs. Sue Looyenga entitled "Fitly Framed" and remarks by the chairman of the building committee, Mr. Thomas Newhof Jr., followed.

The program came to a close with Prof. Robert Decker, a son of First Church, who had a few brief remarks to make based on II Thessalonians 2:15. The one fundamental truth we have maintained and must continue to maintain is the absolute sovereignty of God. Without that we no longer exist as churches. We need the pure preaching of the

Word. If we have that, we will continue to be strong. He also challenged the congregation to let those in the neighborhood know who they are. After the program, opportunity was given to tour the building and enjoy refreshments in the basement.

From Southwest we find a note from Rev. and Mrs. Kamps thanking the congregation for their many expressions of love and support during Nancy's time of recuperation from surgery. The meals that were prepared, the cards, prayers, visits, and hours of labor on their behalf were expressions of the communion of the saints.

From Redlands we also learn that Rev. and Mrs. Houck's son, Jeremy, has had a reoccurrence of his kidney infection. Compounding the concern is that he also has developed a hernia which needs surgery, but which must be postponed until the kidney infection clears up.

The Adult Bible Class of Isabel, S.D., has decided to do something this year that neither they nor their pastor has ever done before. Rev. D.H. Kuiper informs us that they have begun the study of the Gospel of Mark instead of an epistle or an Old Testament book. This study will allow the members, in fact, require of the members that they exercise the first rule of Scripture study: compare Scripture with Scripture! What an abundance of truth is uncovered when a passage is studied in light of the other gospel narratives, as well as the Old Testament prophets!

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Consistory of the Pella Protestant Reformed Church of Pella, Iowa, on behalf of the congregation expresses its sympathy to Bertha Van Soelen and family in the death of her husband, CORNELIS C. VAN SOELEN.

"For this God is our God for ever and ever: He will be our guide even unto death." (Psalm 48:14)

Ben Vander Molen, Vice Pres.
Carl Van Donselaar, Clerk

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Ladies Aid Society of the First Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan, mourns the loss of a faithful member, MISS GERTRUDE NIENHUIS, whom the Lord took to glory on October 27, 1986. We express our sincere Christian sympathy to her family and friends.

"I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth." (Psalm 121:1, 2)

Mrs. Peter Decker, Pres.
Mrs. Sidney De Young, Sec'y.

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Ladies Society of The South Holland Protestant Reformed Church expresses its Christian sympathy to Mrs. Tenie Poortenga in the loss of her Mother.

"For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." (Philippians 1:21)

Rev. George Lanting, Pres.
Elaine Van Der Noord, Sec'y.

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Consistory of the Loveland Protestant Reformed Church, on behalf of the congregation, expresses its sympathy to Mr. and Mrs. Leon Griess and family in the death of her brother-in-law, MR. ED MOORE. May the Lord give the bereaved the assurance that all things work together for good to them that love Him. (Romans 8:28).

Rev. Ron Cammenga, Pres.
Mr. Frank Van Baren, Clerk