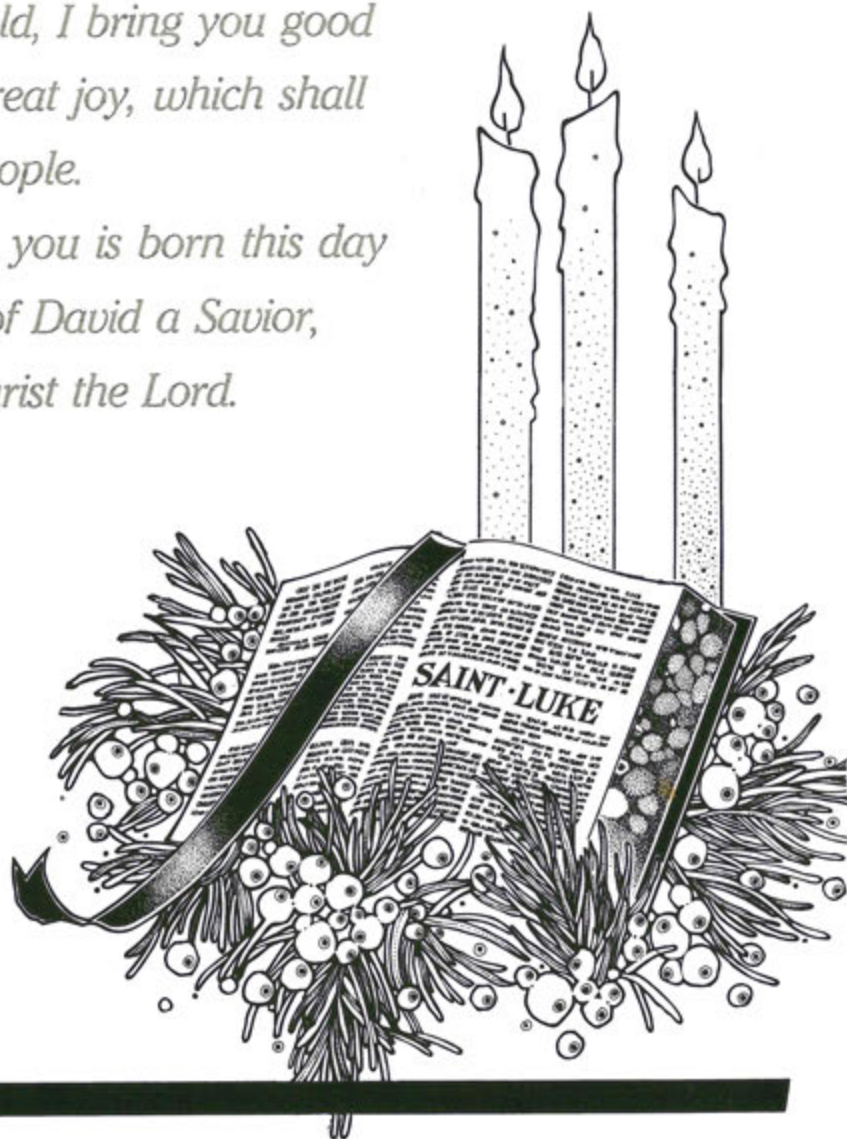


**A Reformed
Semi-Monthly
Magazine**

THE STANDARD BEARER

*... behold, I bring you good
tidings of great joy, which shall
be to all people.*

*For unto you is born this day
in the city of David a Savior,
which is Christ the Lord.*



Vol. 65, No. 6
December 15, 1988

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In This Issue . . .

Several features we wish to draw to your attention. The first is what we consider to be a treat for our lead article, the Meditation. Ordinarily our rubrics are filled by department editors, or guest writers, who write articles as the need for them arises. "Christmas Joy" is an exception. It's an old one. It first appeared in the *Standard Bearer* as Number 6 of Volume 6. That dates back to December 15, 1929, or just one year short of 60 years ago. It was written by the late Herman Hoeksema, whose prolific pen filled, in those early volumes, a good number of "S.B." pages. Those of our readers who are privileged to own a set of bound volumes have easy access to the writings of our beloved fathers: H.H., G.M.O., G.V., *et al.* For the rest of us, we like to think an occasional reprint will not be an unwelcome feature in our magazine.

* * * * *

Also included in this issue is an article by Rev. Marvin Kamps, providing an interesting account of a recent visit to Larne, in Northern Ireland. Himself a member of our churches' Contact Committee, Rev. Kamps has firsthand knowledge of the growing number of requests for help we are receiving "from saints throughout the world." The writer of these lines happens to be a member of our Domestic Mission Committee; so he has occasion to witness the same sort of thing from other sources. May we take this opportunity therefore to underscore Rev. Kamps' concluding comment, that our churches are in urgent need of ministers of the Word. Seldom, perhaps, in our history has the need been *more* urgent. We are unable, currently, to fill all of our own pulpits — let alone respond, with the necessary manpower, to what could otherwise be considered "open doors." Young men, are you listening?

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EDITORIAL COMMITTEE

Editor-in-chief: Prof. David J. Engelsma
Managing Editor: Prof. Robert D. Decker
Editors' Assistant: Mr. Don Doezeema

DEPARTMENT EDITORS

Rev. Ronald Cammenga, Prof. Robert Decker, Rev. Arie den Hartog, Rev. Russell Dykstra, Rev. Barry Gritters, Rev. Cornelius Hanko, Prof. Herman Hanko, Rev. Ronald Hanko, Rev. John Heys, Rev. Jason Kortering, Rev. George Lubbers, Rev. James Slopeema, Rev. Charles Terpstra, Rev. Gise VanBaren, Mr. Benjamin Wigger.

EDITORIAL OFFICE

The Standard Bearer
4949 Ivanrest
Grandville, Michigan 49418

CHURCH NEWS EDITOR

Mr. Ben Wigger
6597 - 40th Ave.
Hudsonville, Michigan 49426

EDITORIAL POLICY

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BUSINESS OFFICE

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

NEW ZEALAND OFFICE

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

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And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. -Luke 2:10

Fear not!

Tidings of great joy, indeed, I bring!

Was it Gabriel, the angel that standeth before God, who so suddenly burst forth in the darkness of the night from heaven's star-studded canopy, and appeared upon the peaceful scene of the shepherds keeping watch over their flock?

We know not.

But the shepherds, we know, instead of expecting a message of gladness and salvation, instead of rejoicing at the appearance of one of the heavenly spirits that are sent for the service of the elect, were filled with dismay. A great fear filled their hearts. They were sore afraid. The sudden appearance of the heavenly messenger wrought within them a dreadful apprehension of some great evil impending.

They feared with a great fear. Generally it was believed by the people that when one saw an angel it meant death for him, a belief that may be regarded as scarcely more than a popular superstition. But here was more than the mere fear of death. It was the fear which sinful mortals experience when they are brought face to face with the glory of the Most High.

Thus the text explains it.

When the angels of the Lord appeared and stood with them in dazzling splendor of heavenly light, the glory of the Lord shone round about the shepherds. The halo of glory the heavenly messenger brought with him from on high, the brilliant light that with him pierced the darkness of the night in the fields of Ephratah, was a reflection of the inexpressible glory that radiates from the very face of the Lord. For this angel (whether it was Gabriel, as is not improbable, seeing it was he who carried the tidings of the expected birth of the Christ and His forerunner to Zacharias and Mary, or whether it was another of the heavenly spirits) came from the very presence of the Lord. From heaven he hailed, where the angels always see the face of our Father which is in heaven. And dwelling in God's heavenly presence, they reflect the heavenly glory of the Lord in

their appearance. Even as the face of Moses, the Mediator of the old dispensation, shone with a similar reflection of the glory of the Lord when he came down from the Mount of God, so this angel suddenly radiated divine glory into the darkness of the night. Where he stood there beamed forth the glory of the Lord! It was a reflection of that glory which, beaming forth from God's presence, is the radiation of the pure beauty of all His virtues, of His holiness and righteousness, of His perfect goodness, righteousness, and justice. Somehow the heavenly light that shone in the darkness when the angel appeared unto the shepherds was vibrant with the very presence of the Lord in glory.

Do we wonder that the shepherds were sore afraid?

What else was this fear but the awful dread sinful men must experience when suddenly they are brought face to face with the Holy One, whose eyes are too pure to behold sin? Is it not this fear that caused our first father, having become wantonly disobedient, to make the vain attempt to hide from before the face of Him whose presence he perceived in the garden? Did not the people tremble at the sight of the faint reflection of this same glory of the Lord as it shone from the face of Moses, so that the man of

God must needs cover his face before the eyes of the fear-stricken people? Did not the king among the prophets, when it was granted him to see the holiness of the Lord as it fills His heavenly temple, cry out in sore amazement, "Woe unto me, for I am undone!"?

The glory of the Lord always judges us!

It lays us bare in His sight, and that in such wise that we become deeply conscious of our nakedness. It exposes us. It reveals to us in awful contrasts what we must be and are not; what we are and must not be. It causes us to feel that we are an open book before Him. It opens up before our own experience the deep and dark recesses of our heart, where there are hidden a thousand sins and corruptions that loudly cry out for our condemnation!

It causes a sudden, keen, profound consciousness of sin, convinces us of our condemnation, gives us an apprehension of final judgment.

Such was the fear of the shepherds in the presence of the glory of the Lord that beamed forth from the angel into the darkness of the night and into the darkness of their sinful hearts.

And it is to remove that fear that the angel speaks: Fear not!

It is to replace that fear of the sinner, in the presence of the Lord, that he brings them tidings of joy!

Great joy, instead of great fear!
In God's presence!

* * * * *

Good tidings of great joy!
Joy for the fear that must strike sinful men in the presence of the Holy One!

For unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Savior, which is Christ, the Lord!

Such was the brief but tremendously significant gospel, the good tidings that must remove

the fear and instill joy instead into the hearts of the shepherds, into the hearts of all the people that realize the misery of their sin before the Lord. A mere account of what had happened in that night, of what God had done for the salvation of His people, brief yet complete, lasting but a moment yet carrying with it eternal joy! Such was the first Christmas gospel to the shepherds abiding in the fields of Bethlehem and keeping watch over their flock at night.

And what a night it was!

All the world seems astir to realize the Promise of Jehovah that the Savior is to be born in Bethlehem, the City of David, though they realize not at all that such is God's purpose. The mighty emperor of the Roman Empire had issued an order that the whole world should be taxed. To this dominion of the world-ruler also belonged Herod's kingdom. And although Roman law would allow everyone to register in the city of his birth, the families of the Jews certainly would turn to the cities of their ancestry. And thus it is that Joseph and Mary leave Nazareth and commence the difficult journey, difficult especially for Mary, to Bethlehem, the city of David. There they arrive too late to find lodging in the inn. And, the little city being overcrowded, they seek shelter in a stable, one of the caves, perhaps, on the outskirts of the city. And then the Lord fulfils the Promise of all promises and the Son of God, sent into the likeness of sinful flesh, is born of a woman, born under the law. Strange and most significant are the circumstances of His birth. The Lord of glory born in a stable, because there was no place for them in the inn — a world that is not at all prepared to allow Him a place in their midst. The Son of God Almighty lying in a manger, a picture of

poverty and rejection — representing a people that are dead in misery because of sin. The eternal God Himself wrapped in swaddling-clothes!

And angels coming down from heaven, announcing to meditating shepherds, no doubt, looking for the Hope of Israel, that unto them is born that day, a Savior, which is Christ, the Lord!

Oh, but such is the joy of Christmas, indeed!

The world may change the joy of the day, the heavenly joy, that unto us is born a Savior, that is able to remove the fear of sin and death and fill our hearts with the gladness of God's covenant-friendship, into a rejoicing in the things of the earth. Let them hide the great Gift of God to His people under veritable piles of earthly presents. Or, again let unbelief never so sweetly speak of the darling little baby Jesus, who was destined to develop into the best man that ever lived on the face of the earth, who would teach us how to be and to do good and fill the world with unselfishness and love. Its joy cannot remove the fear in the presence of the angel that is radiating with the glory of the Lord, because it does not cleanse the heart from sin and deliver the soul from death and liberate the conscience from the oppressing sense of guilt and condemnation. Its joy is not the joy of the gospel.

No, but the staccato notes of the angels in the field of Bethlehem express the everlasting gospel!

Unto you is born a Savior!

There is the gospel of Christmas joy!

What is a Savior? It is one who is able to deliver us from the greatest evil; one who is not only fully able, but who also surely shall deliver His people from all their misery. And what is that greatest evil? It is that which

causes our hearts to tremble with miserable fear of condemnation and damnation in the presence of the glory of the Lord. It is our guilt and our sin, our corruption and our death, our hatred and enmity against the Most High, our darkness and foolishness, our being in the power of the devil and in the slavery of unrighteousness. It is one who, while delivering us from that greatest of all evils, will make us partakers of the highest good. And what is that highest good? It is all that lies at the root of that great joy of which the angel speaks, of that joy which we may experience in the presence of the Lord. It is to be cleansed from sin and clothed with righteousness, to be delivered from the power of the devil and to be subjects of Him that purchased us with the precious price of His blood. It is righteousness and holiness, love, life, light, and eternal glory. It is to taste that the Lord is gracious and to dwell in the fellowship of His covenant-communion, to know Him as we are known, to love Him because He loved us, to see Him face to face and behold His beauty. It is to be heirs of the heavenly kingdom.

Such is the joy of Christmas!
Unto you is born a Savior!
Christ, the Lord!

He, who is ordained from eternity, by God the Father; who does not come on the authority of men, neither in the strength of mere man, but who is anointed and sent by the Father. The Lord Himself! Son of God, very God Himself, Immanuel, who is fully able to bear on His mighty shoulders the burden of our sin and guilt and bear it away; who can fight the battle for us to the end and conquer all the powers of darkness; who is able to give us life and give it to us more abundantly . . .

The Lord, whom all must obey
and whom none can resist!
Our mighty Redeemer!
He is born! Good tidings of
great joy!
Hallelujah!

* * * * *

Joy to all the people!
Joy also for you? For me?
Does the brief gospel-
announcement of the angel in
the fields of Ephratah kindle
within our hearts the response of
grateful joy, because we know
that unto us was born that night
a Savior, Christ, the Lord?

Oh, surely, He was born for all
the people!

In distinction from the
shepherds only, who were
privileged to receive a personal
and direct message from heaven
about His coming into the world,
He is a Savior for all Israel. But,
it is for the Israel of God. And
not all are Israel, that are of
Israel. There are children of the
promise. There are also children
of the flesh. And this Savior, who
is born in the city of David,
which is Christ, the Lord, will
also be set to a falling, as well as
to a rising again, of many in
Israel.

He is a Savior to all the
people.

But He is also a Stone of
stumbling and a Rock of offense!

And many will be dashed to
pieces when they stumble over
Him, and because of His birth
rush into deeper destruction!

A Savior to all the people is
He.

But it is the elect people of
God, the Israel of God of the old
dispensation and God's chosen
ones from all the nations and
tongues and tribes of the earth in
the new dispensation, unto whom
in that night of nights a Savior is
born, which is Christ, the Lord.
Them God loved. Them He pre-
destinated to glory. Them He will
save from their sins. Them He
gave to Christ, His Son. For them

He sent Him into the world. In
their behalf and in their stead He
came under the law, though He
is Lord of all. Their sins He
presently bears on the accursed
tree and drowns them forever in
His precious blood. Them He
delivers from the power of sin
and death.

A Savior unto all the people!

For you and for me?

Oh, yes, we may know!

And in that knowledge the joy
of Christmas may be ours!

For whom He did foreknow,
them He also did predestinate;
and whom He did predestinate
them He also called, called by
the efficacious calling of His
gracious Spirit.

Called according to His pur-
pose!

And when He calls, the glory
of the Lord appears to our heart
and shines round about us. And
in this halo of brilliant glory we
fear as we consider ourselves,
miserable, corrupt, defiled with
sin as we are by nature. When
He calls we behold our guilt in
the light of God's righteousness,
our corruption in the light of His
holiness, our lie in the light of
His truth, our darkness in the
glory of His light, our death in
contrast to His life. And by His
calling we learn to cry out: woe
unto me, for I am undone!
Unclean! God be merciful unto
me, a sinner!

Called by the power of His ir-
resistible grace!

And when He thus calls, He
does not leave us in our death
and misery, in our fear and con-
demnation.

For out of the halo of light,
reflecting the glory of the Lord in
our hearts, prostrating us because
of our darkness and corruption,
also sounds the Christmas-gospel,
the glad evangel of redemption
and deliverance.

Unto you, lowly and contrite,
that have become conscious by
the power of His grace of the

darkness of your nature and the horror of your sin and the misery of being bound in chains of death; unto you, who are filled with holy fear in the presence of the Lord and His glory; unto you, that are heavy laden and weary because of burdens of sin . . .

Unto you a Savior is born, which is Christ, the Lord!

Fear not!

Let not even the glory of the Lord fill your hearts with horror and fear of condemnation in judgment!

For I bring you glad tidings of great joy!

Go, then, to Bethlehem, the city of David, and see this wonder of God, that was first announced to a sin-stricken world by angel's mouth. And seeing let us believe. And believing let us worship.

And give praise to the God of our salvation! □

Editorially Speaking

■ On behalf of the Staff of *The Standard Bearer*, we express to our readers our desire that you enjoy the peace of the first coming of the Prince of Peace and that, in the new year, you live in the church's hope of peace at Jesus' return.

■ Welcome to the newest member of the Protestant Reformed family — the Peace Protestant Reformed Church in Illinois! This daughter of the Protestant Reformed Church of South Holland, Illinois was born at a worship service of the South

Holland congregation on November 11, 1988. Intending eventually to locate in Lynwood, Illinois, the Peace congregation is meeting temporarily in the auditorium of Illiana Christian High School in Lansing, Illinois. A complete report of the organization, with pictures, will appear in a forthcoming issue of *The Standard Bearer*. May God richly bless this new church and cause her also to be a powerful witness to the Reformed faith in the south suburbs of Chicago.

■ We recommend to our readers a new book by Professor

Herman Hanko of the Protestant Reformed Theological School, *God's Everlasting Covenant of Grace*. The book is a thorough, historical study of the truth of the covenant. It will make a fine gift for friends and acquaintances; it would serve well to introduce interested folds to the rich and vital teachings of Scripture on God's covenant with His people. The cost of the 236-page paperback is \$9.95 + \$1.75 postage. Order from the Reformed Free Publishing Association, Box 2006, Grand Rapids, MI 49501. □ -DJE

Editorial

Peace in Church

How precious is peace!
To be spared strife and to enjoy harmony is a great good.

How a nation longs for peace when it finds itself in the agonies of war; or a married couple, in

the throes of severe discord; or a congregation, wracked with dissension. And how unutterably sweet is peace when armistice is declared, when husband and wife are reconciled, when members of the congregation can again exchange the right hand of fellowship, or when, for the individual, a long night of spiritual struggle with the doubts of a hostile or absent God is over and the morning of quiet rest in a gracious God dawns.

For good reason the greeting and farewell of the Hebrews to each other was, "Shalom" — "Peace."

Peace is precious to God. He is God of peace in His own three-personal being. There is no friction among Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, but only harmony and concord — the blessed life of the covenant. He is God of peace to His chosen people. This, He made known in the birth of Jesus. Long before that birth, God identified Jesus and His mission by naming Him Shiloh and Prince of Peace (Gen. 49:10; Is. 9:6, 7). Jesus is heaven's emissary to earth for peace. His mission is a peace-making mission. "Glory to God in the highest," the angels announced in explanation of Mary's newborn son, "and on earth peace, good will toward men" (Luke 2:14).

Celebrating the birth of Jesus Christ, we celebrate peace.

Nor was Jesus' mission a failure. By His satisfactory suffering and redeeming death, He made peace with God for His own out of all nations and peoples: "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself" (II Cor. 5:19). By the gospel of the cross made mighty in the souls of men and women who are naturally estranged from God and at war with Him, the risen Peacemaker brings us into harmony with God, and thus declares armistice in the soul:

"... and came and preached peace to you..." (Eph. 2:17). Believers and their children enjoy peace with God in the forgiveness of sins and the assurance of the grace of God towards them. They live in peace by doing God's will. As regards all the disorder and upheaval of human life which they also endure, they possess their souls in patience, hoping for the Day of their complete redemption, which will also be the Day of the renewal of all things. For although the mission of the Prince of Peace is accomplished, it has not yet been perfected. The peaceful kingdom must be established in all the creation of God. The nations must beat their swords into plowshares. Nature itself, now "red in tooth and claw," must be delivered from the curse, to share in the liberty of the children of God, so that "the wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together..." (and) they shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain" (Is. 11).

This grand Day is coming! It is certain, as certain as the birth of Jesus and heaven's announcement, "... peace on earth..."

In the meantime, there is the enjoyment and manifestation of peace within the present kingdom of Christ, the church. Living in concord with God in the truth of the gospel, the members of the congregation (and, by virtue of the necessary implications of the denominational bonds, the members of the entire denomination) live in harmony with each other. This is the will of our Prince. His saving work includes the "unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:3). His lordly command is, "... live in peace," the glad promise being added that in this way, when this is the state of af-

fairs in the congregation, "the God of love and peace shall be with you" (II Cor. 13:11). Squabbling church members are called to account by the Lord's apostles, sometimes by name: "I beseech Euodias, and beseech Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord" (Phil. 4:2). I have thought that I would not like to have my name in Scripture for such a reason as these two women have theirs in Scripture. But what if the Lord, who sees all in your congregation and in mine, were to commission a letter to be read aloud from the pulpit about the condition of the church we belong to? Would our names appear as disturbers of the peace?

Peace is expected in every church. Every year, the visitors from the classis ask the office-bearers of each church, "What is the spiritual condition of the congregation? Is there unity, peace, and love?"

This is possible by a wonder of grace, a wonder that comes to the church of God straight from Bethlehem. The eternal Son of God, who "thought it not robbery to be equal with God," but emptied Himself, becoming a man and dying the death of the cross, crucifies the ferocious natures of the members of His Body (a wonder far greater even than will be His change of the natures of the wolves and lions at His coming), so that they receive each other, forgive each other, and live together and work together in the church without friction and strife. The minister brings the gospel of peace. The elders rule well in the Name of Him who has the government upon His shoulder. The deacons are a fountain of soothing mercy. Humbled, disciplined, living night and day in the consciousness that their Head made peace for them,

the congregation is not only a peaceful, but also a peace-making, people.

It is an ugly and astonishing thing that fellow-saints hate and strive with each other. No marvel, said Augustine, that wolves devour sheep; but how monstrous that sheep devour sheep. To those who split off into factions and fight, Paul gives one of his sharpest rebukes, "For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk according to man?" (I Cor. 3:3).

What kind of witness is left to the world concerning the kingdom of Jesus Christ?

What position is taken against the Head, the Prince of Peace?

The church is a militant church, to be sure. She fights. If a church does not fight, her peace is the peace of the graveyard. But she does not fight *herself*! "Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation: and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand" (Matt. 12:25). She fights the hosts of darkness; she fights the lie; she fights sin in the lives of all her members; she fights Satan.

If the harmony of her life is disrupted by false teaching or by public unholiness of life imperitously pursued (for her unity is the truth and holiness of her Lord), the church must fight a painful, internal battle. Her motto may not be, "Peace at any price," for she has heard the angels hymn a peace on earth that harmonizes with glory to God in the highest. But the cause of the division is the one who corrupts the faith or who promotes another way of life than that law of God. "I have not troubled Israel," responded Elijah to the accusation of Ahab, "but thou, and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the LORD, and

thou hast followed Baalim" (I Kings 18:18). And the faithful church must fight honorably; she must strive lawfully. She is bound to walk the way of Matthew 18 with the erring brother. She must submit herself to, and use, the government of Christ in the assembly of elders and in the authoritative, broader assemblies — classis and synod. There may be no private wars! All clandestine campaigns are outlawed! A strife of tongues is devilish! Forbidden is a perpetual "cold war" between "conservatives" and "liberals" — hateful labels.

The Protestant Reformed Churches may never countenance these divisive labels in their fellowship. They are not Biblical or confessional. Thank God we know nothing of them. Theologically and doctrinally, we have no "liberals." A theological liberal casts doubt on the inspiration of Holy Scripture and denies cardinal doctrines of the faith, in order that he may live a licentious life. But an ecclesiastical conservative is not necessarily any better. The Pharisees were the religious conservatives of their day; and their legalism was the fiercest foe of, and most dangerous threat to, the gospel of peace. We have only Reformed members — men, women, and children who adhere to the doctrines of the Bible as set forth in the Three Forms of Unity and who walk in the liberty of thankful obedience to the law of God. This is peace, precious peace; and we should esteem it highly and strive to keep it.

To this peace-keeping belongs that the members of the congregation "esteem the ministers of God's Word, and the elders of the Church, very highly for their work's sake, and be at peace with them without murmuring, strife or contention, as much as

possible" (Belgic Confession, Article XXXI).

It is also imperative that every member be on his guard that he not permit minor matters of difference to divide the church. Calvin warned against this: "Do not make a chasuble (a clerical vestment associated with priests — DJE) or a candle to be an obstacle or a difficulty."

May we hear anew the message of the coming of the Prince of Peace. If the observance of the birth of Christ at this time has any real value, it must be that we hear, and reflect deeply upon, the astounding gospel of the purposes of peace towards us of the God against whom we revolted. It calls us, with lordly summons, to be reconciled to this God, in repentance and faith; and it calls us to be reconciled to each other in the church, by confession and forgiveness. That is to say, it calls us to peace. How can we stand at the manger and say, "I will not be reconciled with my wife," or, "I will not make peace with my brother," or, "I will not lay down the weapons of war in the congregation"?

In the church, men and women already beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks.

But only imperfectly so; and, therefore, celebration of the first coming of the Prince of Peace arouses in us ardent desire for His second coming:

Come quickly, Thou Prince of Peace, our Shiloh. We groan because of the bristling weaponry of a world at war. We are weary of the petty, but bloody strife in the church. We are burdened with the disharmony of our own sinful natures. We can live, because of Thy peace-giving Word of pardon and because of our hope of the coming kingdom of peace. But our heartfelt prayer is, "Come Lord Jesus, come quickly." □ -DJE

Contribution

Rev. Marvin Kamps

Larne, Northern Ireland

Late this past summer two of our ministers, Rev. David Engelsma and Rev. Marvin Kamps, labored in the ministry of the Word in this village on the Irish Sea. Larne is located some twenty miles northeast of the troubled city of Belfast. The land of Ulster, another name for Northern Ireland, is torn by dissension between the Protestant and the Roman Catholic citizenry. The overwhelming majority are Protestant in name. They wish to remain governed by England. The Roman Catholic minority are determined to bring Northern Ireland under the sovereign rule of the Republic of Ireland, which constitutes the southern portion of the island. When we were in Ireland we read daily of the demonic activities of paramilitary groups of terrorists attempting to foment fear throughout the land. Armored police vehicles and army jeeps, occupied by four or five heavily armed men, rumbled through the city of Belfast.

The political problems of Northern Ireland, however, did not occasion our trip there. As many of you well know, ecclesiastical problems in the Bible

Presbyterian Church of Larne occasioned our labors. With this congregation we had established sister-church relationships in 1985. The pastor of this congregation had traveled to our country and, in addition to preaching for us, had also presented the urgent request that we establish sister-church relationships with his flock in Larne. The Protestant Reformed Churches in America were faced with their calling to manifest the love and concern of Christ Jesus our Lord to fellow saints in a distant land.

This request, upon the advice of our representatives, was granted; but the relationship did not last. Winds of change began to blow in the church of Larne. The pastor had determined that he should lead his congregation into the fellowship of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland. Several families opposed this new course of direction for various reasons. The fellowship of the congregation was radically disrupted. Brethren were divided. Five families and a few individuals left the Larne Bible Presbyterian Church and its pastor.

Let it be clearly stated that we take no delight in the disruption of the fellowship of this congregation. Church troubles are heart-rending. They are to be avoided at all cost if it is possible. The blessed communion of the saints

should be a most cherished possession. But oh how the Devil labors to set brothers against brother and to silence the witness of the church of Christ.

The five families that had left the Bible Presbyterian Church turned to the Protestant Reformed Churches in America for help. They grieved over the breaking of the sister-church ties, for they had learned to appreciate our churches for our commitment to the Reformed faith, which we believe to be the gospel of God. These five families had lost their church home and sought the Lord's guidance in prayer. They are not bitter but are saddened by the turn of events that cost them their church home, and now look to God to lead them in the establishment of a Reformed congregation.

A request was presented to our Contact Committee, asking if we would send men there immediately to help them. We declined! Again a request for help was presented to our Synod in June of this year. Synod, after deliberation and debate, acceded to this request. What else could we do? These saints offered to provide for all the expenses of travel and lodging. These saints had been members of our sister church in Larne, and they wished to continue in fellowship with our churches. Would God approve, if we simply abandoned

Rev. Kamps is pastor of Southwest Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan.

these parents and their children? Should we not send men to preach for and comfort these fellow saints, attempting to encourage them and to aid them in their determination to be organized as a Reformed church?

The five families did not remain idle, while they awaited help from our churches. They organized as the Covenant Reformed Fellowship, rented a building in Larne in which to hold "worship services," and proceeded with the instruction of themselves and their children and others by means of sermon tapes provided by various of our congregations.

Rev. Engelsma and the undersigned traveled to Northern Ireland separately. We met in Larne on September 3 and spent some ten days there. Our stay was brief, due to the fact that both of us had pressing schedules to keep. Especially was this true of Rev. Engelsma, who would begin his labors as our newly-elected professor in our seminary. Rev. Engelsma found it necessary to return to the States and his home on September 10, while the undersigned remained in Larne to preach for the Covenant Reformed Fellowship on September 11 and then to return home on Monday the 12th.

Though our stay was brief, our labors were many. Worship services were held twice each Lord's Day in Larne, September 4 and 11. In addition, on Saturday evening a speech was given to introduce the Protestant Reformed Churches in America to the public that was invited to hear our messages. Further, every evening Monday through Friday, a sermon was preached.

All our meetings were well advertised by the C.R.F. in the various local papers. We held meetings not only in Larne but also in two villages some twenty

miles distant, Ballymena and Newtownabbey. Flyers containing a schedule of our meetings and the topics addressed were distributed. The C.R.F. had exerted itself in order to call men and women to hear their witness to the Reformed faith.

During the week we gave five sermons on the doctrines of grace, i.e., the so-called tulip doctrines. Rev. Engelsma gave three of the five sermons and the undersigned two. These were one-hour-long sermons, which were thankfully received. The members of the C.R.F. expressed themselves as in full agreement with these messages and found them edifying. All the members of the group faithfully attended all the meetings.

To all our services the public was also cordially invited. When all factors are taken into consideration, we believe the meetings proved very successful. With the exception of the two Sunday morning services, all the meetings were attended by visitors. The largest number of visitors was twenty-two and the smallest was seven. What was especially encouraging was that many of these men attended all the weekday services. After each session they remained for some time to visit and fellowship with us and to pursue some of the points raised in our sermons. We found that the majority of the visitors were, indeed, appreciative of our witness.

What will be the fruit of our labors we do not, of course, know. Will others be led of the Spirit of God to join this fellowship? We certainly pray that this will be the case. But, as in all labor in God's Kingdom, the fruit must be left to God's sovereign determination. We planted and watered; to God be the increase! The Covenant Reformed Fellowship is of the same mind. To pray and work — that is our only task.

There are two families (in addition to the five) that, though not members of the fellowship, nonetheless appear to be dedicated to its cause. One widow lady and her adult son attend every evening service. The other is a married man with two young children from the city of Belfast. Besides, we saw in attendance two young single men who showed great interest. May it please the Lord to lead these saints also to join the Fellowship.

The Covenant Reformed Fellowship members expressed themselves as desiring to establish a Protestant Reformed Church in Northern Ireland upon the basis of God's Word as interpreted in our three forms of unity. They have asked that a missionary be sent to labor among them and their people. Our churches are attempting to send a man there for several months before the Synod of 1989 meets, in order that the situation may again be evaluated at that time.

Your emissaries have reported to the Contact Committee of our churches and have brought specific requests and recommendations to this Synodical Committee for action.

During our brief stay with these believers we learned to love them for their zeal in the faith. We were warmly received into their communion and into their homes. When it was time to leave them, a feeling of sadness came over us.

I cannot conclude this report without commenting about the need for laborers in God's vineyard. We are in urgent need of ministers of the Word. More and more we receive requests for help from saints throughout the world. Reformed preaching is in scarce supply. The world is afloat with preachers of whom the apostle wrote: "For we are not as many which corrupt the word of God . . ." Where are the young

men who prayerfully consider the ministry of the Word as their calling before God? Where are those who are compelled for the truth's sake to give themselves to the preaching of salvation through Christ Jesus according to God's purpose of unconditional election. Many of our own churches are vacant. We hear

daily as it were cries for help. Will the sons of the church and their fathers not give themselves in prayer to God concerning this great need? Do not be so quick to say, the Lord will provide. Surely He will. But it is for us to ask if the Lord is pleased to provide for His church through us.

It was the recommendation of Rev. Engelsma and me to the Contact Committee that our churches exert themselves to help the C.R.F. in any way we can. May it please the Lord Jesus, that great Bishop of our souls, to send one of His servants to Larne for the ministry of His glorious gospel of sovereign grace. □

The Strength of Youth

Rev. Russell Dykstra

Our Worst Enemy

(We welcome Rev. Dykstra to the pages of the *Standard Bearer* — not for the first time as a writer in them, but for the first time as a department editor. He will share this rubric with Rev. Gritters, providing a third of the articles scheduled for the current volume year.)

Have you ever come face to face with the murderous hatred of a bitter enemy? That is a horrible experience, and a terrifying one when the enemy is powerful. Such an enemy is filled with a hatred that often controls him. Every thought concerning you is a plot to destroy you. His every word is calculated to belittle, to cut, to maim. Every deed manifests his hatred and his desire to be rid of you. He will not be satisfied until that has been accomplished. Do you have an enemy like that?

Rev. Dykstra is pastor of the Protestant Reformed Church of Doon, Iowa.

From a natural point of view we certainly can and probably all do have enemies, people who hate us because of what we have done or said, or maybe just because of who we are. From a spiritual point of view all God's people have enemies, powerful enemies. Scripture never tires of reminding us of the adversary of God and His church, namely, Satan. We are warned that our "adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Peter 5:8). A second enemy of the Christian is the world of the ungodly. They are, according to God's promise, abiding enemies: "And I will put enmity between thee [Satan] and the woman [Eve], and between thy seed and her seed . . ." (Gen. 3:15a). God put this hatred there by making the seed of the woman His covenant friends. Thus the world hates us. It is easy for us to forget, in our nearly persecution-free lives, that both Satan and the world are our sworn enemies.

But the third and probably most overlooked enemy is in many ways our worst. That worst enemy is ourselves. We do not mean that in the superficial sense in which that is often used today, as in, "I am my own worst enemy because I am a perfectionist." No, we mean "ourselves" from the point of view of our old nature, our old man of sin. He is a horrible, hate-filled enemy. And if you recall what an enemy is, it might make you shudder — is that what my old nature is to me? Scripture emphatically replies: Indeed it is! The significance of that enemy, especially for covenant youth, we wish to discuss here.

First, the question we must face is this: what is our evil nature? The nature of man is never *defined* in the Bible, but the nature certainly includes man's body, his mind, his will, and even his emotions. Knowing that, we should realize how important is man's nature, for the nature is his contact with this physical world. By it man sees,

hears, and understands the world around him. Through that nature he lives — he speaks, desires, considers, and acts. *Every* activity can be performed only through that nature, even spiritual activities like prayer, worship, and preaching.

But what does it mean that we have an *evil* nature? The source of our evil natures is in the original sin of Adam. Adam was created good. In fact, God created him in His own image and likeness, which means he was righteous and holy and he had the true knowledge of God. Consider what he had! He was righteous, that is, right with God's law, able to keep His every command. He was holy, or pure, which means he was separate from all that is defiled and consecrated to God, the Holy One. And he had a true knowledge of God, a deep, intimate knowledge of God because God established a bond of covenant friendship with him. Adam knew and loved God and served Him with his whole being.

Then men fell into sin and completely lost that image of God. And all the perfections of his nature were turned into their very opposite. Man's ability and delight to obey God's commands became a total inability to do so, and he loathed God's commands. Forsaking his holiness, man was immersed in all the pollution of sin and would be devoted now to seeking evil. And that beautiful knowledge of God was lost, replaced by the lie and a hatred for true knowledge. This is what we call total depravity, of course. Scripture and our confessions teach that fallen man is depraved in all his being, wholly incapable of doing any good and inclined to all evil. His whole being delights in and ever seeks sin. He is in complete spiritual bondage to sin and he loves it.

The child of God has been delivered from that bondage by the power of God's grace. That alone is able to change the depraved sinner. This change begins with the work of regeneration, powerfully accomplished by the Holy Spirit in the elect sinner's heart. That work effectively breaks the rule of Satan and sin in the man's heart. From that moment on, Christ rules in the believer's heart, and the Spirit restores the image of God to him.

However, that work of regeneration is in man's *heart*, which is the spiritual center of man. Scripture does not teach that man's nature is regenerated, even though it is influenced by regeneration. That is why each of us confesses with the Heidelberg Catechism (q & a 5), "I am prone by nature to hate God and my neighbor." What an admission! *I*, a believer, *am*, right now, *by nature*, in body, mind, will, and emotion, prone to hate God and my neighbor. That is my inclination, my desire. The chief characteristic of me by nature is that I hate God.

Thus we have this seeming impossibility: with the heart I face God, love Him, and delight to serve Him in all righteousness; but my nature faces the opposite direction! It hates God and refuses to love and serve Him. That is the condition of the believer, of you and me.

Do you see that this old nature really is our enemy, a bitter foe who opposes everything that is good for us? According to the new man in Christ the believer desires to obey God, to know Him, and to consecrate himself to God. All this is *life*, eternal life from above. But the nature hates that and always pushes in the opposite direction toward disobedience, the lie, and the pursuit of sin. All that is *death*. The nature is our worst enemy! He always

tries to lead us from life back into death.

That enemy has a tremendous effect on our lives. The old nature is a fountain of iniquity which floods the mind with evil thoughts, produces sinful lusts, and perverts the emotions. It even pollutes our very bodies. That explains many things does it not? That explains why the most vile and evil thoughts and desires can pollute us when we are praying or worshiping. It explains how a good desire or a proper motive can so quickly and easily be twisted into evil.

The fact is that in many ways our evil natures seem to dominate because the new man must work through the evil nature. And the nature which we have traces its root of evil back to Adam. It is experienced; it is powerful. That is why the youthful (and more and more the not-so-youthful) ears of Christians find the rock music of the world so much more appealing than the Psalms. The flesh loves the beat and the sin promoted there. For that same reason we can sit contentedly for hours in front of the television, but labor, often restlessly, under the preaching or in catechism. The old man hates the suggestion to read the *Beacon Lights* or *Standard Bearer*, but loves the invitation to the movies. Because the flesh is essentially one with the wicked world, it craves all the evil that the world has to offer and it continuously pulls us toward the same. This is not a pleasant discovery, nor does it make for an easy life. We can sometimes cry with the apostle Paul, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Rom. 7:24).

What must be done to combat this fierce enemy, our own flesh? First of all, we must be more conscious of his existence.

Failure to do so will mean that we will be constantly off guard to this enemy's attacks. Remember, he is our enemy — vicious, evil, hating the life of Christ and doing everything in his power to destroy that life, and therefore to destroy us. And this enemy is never farther away than our own skin. We must ever be conscious of this.

Secondly, we must fight this dreadful enemy. We must not allow his evil thoughts and desires to continue in us, but rather push them out, reject them as soon as they enter. We must

fight the inclination of the evil mind and the sin-prone body. If we do not resist, they will lead us into destruction.

The Scriptures constantly admonish us to *strengthen* the new man in Christ. The catechism tells us that we must daily mortify (kill) the old man and quicken the new (L.D. 33). And never forget that this is impossible in our own strength. The grace of God is the only power that can overcome our evil natures. Pray for that. Equip yourselves also with the armor of faith (Eph. 6).

But one more thing we must know. Our worst enemy is a defeated enemy. He has already *been* crucified with Christ; his power has been principally destroyed by the Spirit of Christ in our hearts. He cannot win over the life of Christ. The victory is ours through Christ. But do not allow that blessed knowledge to make you careless and indifferent. The flesh is still a dangerous enemy. Rather let the full assurance of victory encourage you in the day-to-day battle. Fight, therefore, in hope and in the strength God has promised to His covenant youth. □

Church and State in Article 36 of the Belgic Confession (2)

Prof. Herman Hanko

(This article is a continuation of Prof. Hanko's contribution to the Special Issue, which dealt with the Reformed Faith concerning civil government.)

We ought now to take a closer look at Article 36 and attempt to understand what it is saying and why it is still important.

In order to understand why this article was included in the Belgic Confession to begin with, one has to know a bit about the

situation which existed in the Lowlands at the time the Belgic Confession was written by Guido de Bres (1561).

The Reformation had come into the Lowlands (what is now Netherlands, Belgium, and Luxembourg) and a Reformed church had been established there. But the Reformed believers were being sorely persecuted by the Spanish magistracy which was the arm of Roman Catholicism in the Lowlands and which ruled in that part of Europe called the Lowlands. The Reformed churches were charged, among other things, with being Anabaptistic, a charge which was extraordinarily serious, for it implied the charge of treason. The Belgic Confession

was written in part to show the authorities that the Reformed churches were not Anabaptistic and were not guilty of the crime of treason.

To understand this charge of treason, one must understand just a bit of what Anabaptism was all about. (For more detailed information on the Anabaptists and on this question of the relation between church and state, the interested reader can consult such books as: W.R. Estep, "The Anabaptist Story" and W. Balke, "Calvin and the Anabaptist Radicals.") The Anabaptists, particularly troublesome in their early history in Zurich and Berne of Switzerland, were the "left-wing" of the Reformation. They went

Prof. Hanko is professor of Church History and New Testament in the Protestant Reformed Seminary.

along with the Reformation in its earlier history, but were more radical than the Reformers and eventually parted ways with the Reformers over some important questions. We cannot go into all these questions here, but one of the issues was the issue of the role of the secular magistrate and his relation to the church.

Generally speaking, the Anabaptists (called such because they rejected infant baptism and insisted on the "rebaptism" of all who joined their movement) believed that the state existed only to curb the wickedness of unbelievers and had little or nothing to do with believers. Believers belonged to the kingdom of heaven, after all. They formed a holy community in this world which could and should put into practice, even while in this world, the principles of the kingdom of heaven. Believers, therefore, had really nothing to do with the earthly magistrate, and it was preferable that the community of believers live entirely separate from the surrounding people and from the secular state.

It is true (as L. Verduin points out in his books, "The Anatomy of a Hybrid" and "The Reformers and Their Stepchildren") that the Anabaptists did not all advocate the overthrow of existing governments, and that not all Anabaptists scorned the secular magistrate and refused obedience to them; but the fact is that the logic of their position freed them from obedience to the secular magistrate and brought at least some of them to the excesses of Munster — where an attempt was really made to set up an earthly kingdom which lived independently from the secular authorities.

The Reformers saw this position of the Anabaptists as an extremely serious error (cf. especially Balke's book to learn how serious Calvin considered this error to be). To the Reformers such a position meant a denial of the Biblical principles of Romans 13:1-7, I Peter 2:13-17, etc. It meant a denial that the civil magistrate is a servant of Christ Himself. On the contrary, the Reformers believed that the believer, though a citizen of the kingdom of heaven, exactly reveals his heavenly citizenship by submission to the magistrate; that any refusal to submit to the magistrate on the seemingly pious grounds of heavenly citizenship was a grievous perversion of the believer's calling; that any position which could lead to refusal to submit, to resistance of the magistrate, to the overthrow of the magistrate, was a position entirely out of keeping with God's Word and would bring God's fierce anger upon such who committed that sin; that any kind of scornful or contemptuous attitude towards the magistrate was to be condemned; that, in fact, the magistrate was not appointed by God simply to curb the excesses of a world of unbelievers, but was in the world by God's appointment for the church. These positions were important to the Reformers and were crucial in a time when the Reformation itself was threatened by a "left-wing" which wanted to lead the whole movement into unBiblical excesses and into radical positions contrary to the Word of God.

But in rejecting the "left-wing" radicalism of the Anabaptists and committing themselves and the cause of the Reformation to the principle of the great importance of the civil magistrate, they also were careful to define, not only what the church's obligation towards the magistrate is, but

also what the magistrate's obligation before God is. And in dealing with the latter question, they were convinced that the magistrate was required by God to enforce obedience to the first table of the law as well as the second table. And included in the first table, especially the second commandment, was the obligation to worship God as He commands in His Word. For the magistrate to enforce the second commandment, therefore, required of him that he "protect the sacred ministry; and thus remove and prevent all idolatry and false worship." Where, through the influence of the Reformation, a Christian state was set up (Calvin's Geneva, The Netherlands, Scotland, and England), the Christian magistracy enforced the first table of the law of God as well as the second.

This all was according to Scripture. It ought to be clear that when Scripture speaks of the obligation and task of magistrates, Scripture makes no distinction between the first and second tables of the law — as if the magistrate had to enforce observance of the second table only and not of the first. In Romans 13:1-7, where the office of the magistrate is discussed in detail, the magistrate is described as "the power of God." The magistrate is a "minister of God"; he is a "revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil." In I Peter 2:14 the duty of magistrates is said to be "the punishment of evildoers" and "the praise of them that do well." The Holy Spirit does not say that the magistrate is for the punishment of those evildoers who break the second table of the law. All evildoers are to be punished and all well-doers are to be praised by the magistrate.

That no distinction is made between the two tables of the

law in the duty of magistrates is clear also from the fact that the two tables of the law are really bound together. The Jews asked Jesus what was the *one* great commandment of the law; to which Jesus responded: Love God and love your neighbor. To love God and to love the neighbor is one commandment because one cannot love his neighbor without loving God. One cannot keep the second table of the law without keeping the first table. One cannot require obedience to the second table, therefore, without requiring obedience to the first table. This is true of a parent, a school teacher, an elder in the church, a magistrate in the state.

It is objected that from a practical point of view this will never work. The simple fact of the matter is, so it is said, that throughout most of the world's history the civil power in any nation, country, state, or kingdom is in the hands of wicked men. Only rarely has it happened that a true Christian state ruled in a land. The civil government is almost always anti-christian. The result is that if we would really insist on this practice, the state would enforce a false religion and the church would find it impossible to survive. And this is, of course, exactly what is going to happen in the days of Anti-christ.

We grant the objection. I would even go a step farther. I am thankful to God that we live in a land where we have freedom of religion. I am thankful that the government of the United States does not attempt to enforce one religion which is, in its judgment, the true religion. That would be the end of the church in this land.

But the principle is not changed for all that. The principle remains true.

We ought, at this point, to insist, however, that to take the position that the state is obligated before God to enforce the first table of the law as well as the second, does *not* imply an "established church." That brings us back to Article 36 of *The Belgic Confession*. The footnote adopted in 1910 says that the article "proceeds from the principle of the Established Church." This is wrong.

An established church is a church such as the Anglican Church in England, the *Hervormde Kerk* in Netherlands, and The Presbyterian Church in Scotland. The state officially recognizes and supports one denomination as the approved church. It gives its approval to that one denomination not only, but it does much to make that denomination the official church of the realm. In earlier centuries, the state even required in some instances all to belong to that denomination.

I do not believe that the obligation of the state to support the true religion "proceeds from the principle of the Established Church." In that respect the footnote is wrong. Whatever may have been the opinion of the Reformers (and there is reason to doubt they wanted an established church), Article 36 of *The Belgic Confession* does not say this and such a conclusion cannot be drawn from the article. I cannot find anything in Scripture to support the notion of an established church.

The footnote is right when it says that we ought to feel "constrained to declare that (we) do not conceive of the office of the magistracy in this sense, that it be in duty bound to also exercise political authority in the sphere of religion, by establishing and maintaining a State Church" And we ought also to insist, as Article 36 does and as the foot-

note binds upon us, that "*within* its own secular sphere, the magistracy has a divine duty towards the first table of the Law as well as towards the second" In other words, the government ought to enforce the first table of the law as well as the second; but both tablets must be enforced by the government only in *the civil or secular sphere*. Never may the state encroach upon the church — or, for that matter, the home or school. It has no authority there at all.

You may object once again and insist that it still remains true that this is of no significance whatsoever. Even the limitation that the government must enforce God's law only in the secular or civil sphere implies a Christian government. Again, I agree. And again, I will even go so far as to say that I am thankful that we have freedom of religion in our land and that the government does not attempt to enforce the first table of the law even in its own limited sphere.

But this is not the point. Nor is the question abstract. It is extremely important that we maintain the principle even though it may not have any immediate practical consequences and even though we personally prefer to see a religiously "neutral" government — if indeed there is such a thing.

There are reasons for maintaining the principle. There are good reasons for holding to Article 36 of the *Belgic Confession*. What are they?

The first good reason is to remind us that whether or not magistrates truly enforce the first table of the law, Christ, the King of all, requires of them that they do. Really, the office of magistrate arises out of the creation ordinance. It belongs to the work of God in creation itself. It is an institution of society which has developed organically out of

the family — as have all the institutions of society. God requires of magistrates that within their own God-given sphere they enforce God's law and live in obedience to God. The fact that magistrates as a general rule do not do this does not alter the obligation which rests upon them. Just as God still requires of the totally depraved sinner that he serve God, so God requires of the magistrate that he represent God in the sphere of the state. He shall have to give account for his failure to do this. "Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little" (Psalm 2:10-12). This is important. God must be justified also when all the evil magistrates of all time failed to represent the righteousness of God, but went about setting up their own kingdom.

The second good reason for maintaining this principle is to remind us that God also saves magistrates. And because God is pleased to save magistrates, we are duty-bound to pray for them. "I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men: for kings, and for all that are in authority: that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; who will have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (I Timothy 2:1-4). The point is that we must not become so wrongly Anabaptistic that we simply turn our backs on the magistrate, plead our heavenly citizenship as a reason to ignore the civil government, and consign the whole of the magistracy to the everlasting oblivion of hell. I

Peter is quite clear on the matter: We express our loyalty to the kingdom of heaven and conduct ourselves properly as pilgrims and strangers in the earth when we honor and show respect for the magistrates God is pleased to put over us. And we do so (and even pray for them) because God is pleased to save His people also from their number.

The opposite is always a great danger. If we become Anabaptistic in our attitude towards civil magistrates, the end will be that we no longer submit to them, honor them, obey them when to obey is not in conflict with God's Word; but that instead we scorn the magistracy, mock it in our words and deeds, and eventually end in refusing to submit to its rule.

The third good reason to maintain this principle is the fact that by it we are reminded that the magistrates serve the good of the church.

There is more than one truth implied in this.

In the first place, if magistrates are truly Christian, they will seek the welfare of the church. And we ought to remember that even if a given government is basically un-Christian, Christian men in government can nevertheless so exert their influence that the cause of the church and of the gospel is advanced through government policy and legislation. One example is surely the matter of labor unions. Although the government may be un-Christian, Christian men in government may so influence legislation and government policy that the power of labor unions is curbed and various right-to-work laws are passed which enable God's people to earn their daily bread. In given instances, Christian lawmakers can influence legislation so that pornographic houses are closed, abortion clinics are shut down,

stores are prevented from opening on the Lord's Day — all of which is conducive to the welfare of the church.

Paul, in the passage in I Timothy 2, speaks also of this. When urging upon us the necessity and importance of praying for our magistrates, Paul gives as a reason: "that we may live a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty" (vs. 2).

In the second place, however, the principle is always true — and we ought to remember it: Christ always rules sovereignly through the magistracy. If, therefore, the magistracy becomes the enemy of the church, becomes Anti-christ, turns in the fury of persecution against the saints, still it serves the good of the church. Christ uses the blood of the martyrs also as the seed of the church.

But even this does not negate the principle that Christ is often pleased to rule in such a way through the magistrate, even though he may be wicked, that peace and well-being is the lot of the church. Christ is pleased to do this so that the church may be about her business of preaching the gospel, bringing the gospel to the mission fields of the earth, working in the great tasks of the kingdom — work which she would be unable to do if she were being persecuted. To this end, the church holds to Article 36, prays for the magistrates, and is thankful when the Lord is pleased to rule through the magistrates that we may live quiet and peaceable lives.

Article 36 is important for the confession of the church, especially in these days when many temptations press in upon us to take an un-Biblical view of the magistracy. We need this article and we ought consciously to make it an important part of our confession. □

The Two Natures of Christ: The Union of the Human and Divine Natures

*Taking Heed
to the Doctrine*
Rev. Ronald Hanko

4. The Definition of Chalcedon. (continued)

The union of the two natures of Christ is defined by the Creed of Chalcedon with the four words, "inconfusedly," "unchangeably," "indivisibly," and "inseparably." We have already examined the first of these words and turn now to the second.

b. Unchangeably.

The second of these four words establishes the truth that the two natures of Christ are joined without change. This particular term is actually very closely connected with the previous term and is included by way of rejecting some of the heresies we have already discussed in that connection.

Eutychianism and Monophysitism, two of the heresies against which the first term, "inconfusedly," was used, implied in their teaching that not just one,

but both of the two natures of Christ were substantially and really changed by their union, being fused into a third new substance that was neither truly divine nor truly human.

The seriousness of this error, of course, is that it takes away Christ as Savior, since He must be a real man to suffer for man's sin, and true God to be able to finish that suffering and to earn for us and bring to us the righteousness of God and eternal life. In order, therefore, to maintain as strongly as possible the distinction between the two natures, the term "unchangeably," was included along side of and along with the term, "inconfusedly."

What is most striking, however, is that this term exactly fills the need for a statement over against a more modern heresy, the Lutheran heresy of the ubiquity of Christ's human nature. From the very beginning, Lutheranism has taught that Christ's human nature after the resurrection was essentially changed in one regard, that is, that it became everywhere-present, or ubiquitous.

The Heidelberg Catechism, for example, though it does not

name the Lutherans, is dealing with this error in XVIII, 47 when it explains the ascension to mean that "with respect to His human nature, He (Christ) is no more on earth." The same is true of question 48, where the Heidelberg Catechism asks, "But if His human nature is not present wherever His Godhead is, are not then these two natures in Christ separated from one another?" The emphasis in both questions and answers is on the fact that Christ's human nature is *not* everywhere present.

The Lutheran theology of the Lord's Supper demands this doctrine of the ubiquity of Christ's human nature. That doctrine, in other words, does not exist in a vacuum. Insofar as Lutheranism teaches a physical presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper, that is, that Christ's body and blood (humanity) are physically present in the supper, it must also of necessity teach that the body and blood or humanity of Christ are not only in heaven, but also on earth, and present everywhere the Lord's Supper is administered.

It should be added to all this that Luther and the Lutherans explicitly reject the heresy of

Rev. Hanko is pastor of the Protestant Reformed Church of Houston, Texas.

Eutychianism and deny that their doctrine means that in some way the human has become divine, or even that it is everywhere-present in the same way as the divine nature. Nevertheless, they clearly violate this second statement of Chalcedon by teaching that the human nature has been changed, and not just in the sense that it was glorified. Rather, it was in the sense that it actually took on something that belongs to the divine. And no matter how one may argue, the attribute of omnipresence is not a human attribute, and a change from being limited locally to being omnipresent is an important and essential change.

That this is the Lutheran teaching is clear from one of the Lutheran Confessions, the Formula of Concord. Here we see not only the teaching that Christ's human nature is ubiquitous, but its close connection in Lutheran theology to the Lutheran doctrine of the Lord's Supper:

Secondly: that the right hand of God is everywhere, and that Christ, in respect of His humanity, is seated thereat, and therefore as present governs, and has in His hand and under His feet, as the Scripture saith (Eph. 1:22), all things that are in heaven and on earth (VII, Affirmative, v).

The teaching is rejected:

That Christ's Body is so confined in heaven that it can in no mode whatever be likewise at one and the same time in many places, or in all the places where the Lord's Supper is celebrated (VII, Negative, xi).

In this connection, they speak, too, of an actual transfer of properties or attributes from the divine to the human (a *communicatio idiomata*). This does indeed, then, involve a change in the human nature. It is not the same human nature that it was before the exaltation. Reformed

theology also speaks of such a transfer of attributes, but not from one nature to the other. In Reformed theology this transfer is the transfer of all the attributes of both natures to the one Person of the Son of God. In other words, He is personally, fully, and really all that belongs to the human nature and all that belongs to the divine. As the Lutherans themselves state, this is not Eutychianism, strictly speaking, and yet it comes very close to that in that it violates the second term of the Creed of Chalcedon. Nor is it a small error, for it really does confound the human and divine, blurs the distinction between them, and denies, to the destruction of our comfort in Christ, His continuing real humanity.

These criticisms are, of course, apart from all criticism of the Lutheran doctrine of consubstantiation and the presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper. It should be added, however, and this helps show the seriousness of the Lutheran error, that their doctrine of the ubiquity of Christ's human nature really makes both the ascension and second coming of Christ mere forms. If Christ according to His human nature is everywhere present, how can He in any real sense ascend to heaven or come again from heaven? We, therefore, believe that the human nature is not changed by the resurrection or in any other connection, but that He continues true man. Nor are we afraid to say that according to that same human nature, He ascends to heaven and comes again at the end of all ages.

The Lutherans, at this point, have always accused the Reformed of another error, the error of Nestorianism. But as we shall see in discussing the third of Chalcedon's terms, this is an unfair charge.

The point that needs making in this connection is that the confession of the real humanity of Christ may not in any way be compromised. The Lutheran teaching does that. The glory Christ receives through His exaltation in no way involves any change in His humanity, so that He is in some respect different from us; for to the degree that He is unlike us, we have no place in Him. And no more than we can conceive of ourselves as being omnipresent, either on earth or in heaven, no more can we conceive of Christ as an omnipresent man, without losing our confidence in Him.

As we pointed out in the previous article, this blurring of the distinction between the human and divine by ascribing what are, in fact, divine attributes to the human nature of Christ, is characteristic of much modern theology, if it can even be called "theology." To the degree that Lutheranism blurs this distinction it goes along with the modern trend of making no distinction between God and man.

This "theology," which is not theology, is such a grave danger to the church that it cannot be ignored. The idea that I am the only one who really matters, and that my feelings, my needs, my gifts, my rights, and my desires are not only to be recognized and used but catered to has gained such a stranglehold on the life of the church that it seems sometime that the hold can no longer be broken. Now this is not to say that modern "theology" is explicitly Eutychian. Modern theology is explicitly nothing at all. It is only to say that the failure to teach clearly the two natures of Christ and the distinction between them is part of the trend that so completely eradicates the distinction between God and man, that man

himself becomes the only god that men know today.

Along the same lines and over against such sanctified humanism, the church must not only contradict various false doctrines, by pointing them out for what they are, but must also fight against it by teaching sound doctrine, par-

ticularly the sound doctrine of the incarnation. For the church to fail at this point, or for the members of the church to be ignorant of these doctrines of Christ, is to open the door both to the teaching of the sects and to that of modern liberalism.

Let us maintain, then, the confession of our own creed, that

Christ is *and continueth* true man, and let us know what that means as far as the incarnation and the union of Christ's two natures is concerned. That His two natures, the human and the divine, are joined without change means for us that He is unchangeably our Savior. □

Reformed Church Government — A Reformation Heritage

Rev. Jason Kortering

(The following is a condensed form of the Fall lecture given by Rev. Kortering in Grandville, Michigan on October 27, 1988. Intentions are that it be published also in pamphlet form in the future.)

What the skeleton is to the human body, so proper government is to the church of Jesus Christ on earth. The bones form a framework of strength which enables the organs to remain in place and muscles to function. Without a skeleton, the body collapses into globs of tissue and pulsating organs. Nothing functions. The hands cannot reach and the legs cannot walk. There is complete uselessness.

So it is in the church, unless there is proper government. By government, we mean rules, principles, laws that indicate how

each member of the church ought to behave, how office bearers are to conduct themselves, how the local congregation must act in relation to other congregations.

A GLORIOUS HERITAGE

Admittedly, any system of church government is subject to abuse. We are the inheritors of the *Reformed-Presbyterial* system of government which recognizes the local congregation, with its office bearers, as well as a federation of churches. There are other systems, such as the *Hierarchy* of the Roman Catholic Church (higher offices with greater authority from the top, the Pope, down to the door-keeper) or the hierarchy of the *Episcopal*, the Church of England, which does not recognize the pope but has higher offices with specified authority; the *Congregational* which has no office bearers, but each member participates in all decision making; the *Independent*

system which isolates the local congregation from any meaningful federation of churches. Abuse of church government can be compared to a cancer which attacks the body through the blood stream and soon all the body is diseased. If a church falls under the corrupting influence of higher criticism of the Bible (Liberalism), it doesn't take long and the whole church suffers — even to the corrupting of its system of church government. But the corruption can also come from the system of church government itself. In this sense it is like osteoporosis of the bones: the calcium is out of the bones and they become spongy and soon collapse. As in the body, when the other organs may be healthy but the bones suffer, so the church may be healthy in many respects but the system of government itself is wrong, and this contributes to the evil in the church.

Rev. Kortering is pastor of the Protestant Reformed Church of Grandville, Michigan.

At the time of the Reformation of the sixteenth century, both aspects applied to the church of Rome. She suffered from the cancer of evil that spread throughout the entire church; she emphasized scholarship rather than Scripture; she preached righteousness by works rather than justification by faith in the blood of Jesus; she taught spiritual relief through the veneration of saints and relics rather than a sanctified walk of faith. As a result, immorality abounded both among the members and the clergy. The system of hierarchy was affected by this. It too came under the evil influence. Martin Luther wrote Pope Leo X, "I have truly despised your see, the Roman Curia, which however, neither you nor anyone else can deny is more corrupt than any Babylon or Sodom ever was, and which as far as I can see is characterized by a completely depraved, hopeless, and notorious godlessness It was your duty and that of your cardinals to remedy these evils, but the gout of these evils makes a mockery of the healing hand and neither chariot nor horse responds to their rein." Besides this, the system of the hierarchy itself was a contributing factor to the evil within the church. From the Pope on down to the local priest, there was power in the office. Those who held the office could strike fear in the hearts of men; they secured themselves in their powerful offices. Imagine that the Pope could lay claim to succession from Peter, and that he possessed the power to exercise the keys of the kingdom. Within that corrupt system there was no way to bring about change. As God worked within the heart of Luther and brought him to the Word of God at Erfurt, Luther soon learned there was no hope of reform within the system of

hierarchy. In the end he was excommunicated by the Papal bull. The bones of the church had collapsed; she could not function as a church. Hence God used him to re-form the church.

During this time God also raised up John Calvin. He too experienced the full brunt of the blows that came from the hierarchy. It was not rhetoric, it was willingness to lay one's life on the line. He, with those who joined the Protestant movement, experienced persecution. Blood flowed around them. The apostate church of Rome was determined to put an end to the Reformation. Such men had to be men of principle. They searched the Word of God to be sure that what they believed was right and worthy of death. The regulative principle of the Reformation, *Scriptura sola*, was written in blood. This applied to their ideas of church government as well. As a young man of 27 years of age, John Calvin expressed his views of the church in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Book IV. Later, upon his return to Geneva, he was able by the grace of God to put into practice those principles and be part of a church that instituted Biblical ideas that were so different in that age.

It is hard for us to imagine the contrast. There were only three offices in the church. Each one was distinct, yet there was equality. The members of the church participated in the election of pastors and were involved in church government. Little wonder that this breath of fresh air brought new life into the church, and that the Reformation movement spread effectively throughout Europe and into the British Isles. In England these principles were tested over against the hierarchy of the Anglican Church. The Puritans emphasized an independent church. In Scotland, Presbyterian-

ism took root; and there the ideas of the Reformation were developed into what we call the Presbyterian system, expressed in the Book of Church Government 1645 and the Westminster Confession 1647. The same was true in the Netherlands. Having passed the test of Arminianism, the Dutch churches expressed their Reformed system of government in the Church Order of Dordt 1618-1619. Along with the other Reformed Confessions, these church orders served the churches confessionally. **DISTINCTIVE FEATURES OF REFORMED CHURCH GOVERNMENT**

The Reformation restored the office of believer to its proper place. Hierarchy had destroyed any possibility of the members of the church being involved in anything. All they could do was trust the church. The Holy Spirit speaks of the members of the church as living stones, a living priesthood, offering up spiritual sacrifices unto God (1 Peter 2:4, 5). Under the preaching of the gospel, the Holy Spirit anoints each believer to function as prophet, priest, and king. How frequently Calvin spoke of the priesthood of the gospel. The sword of the Spirit slays the heart of the believer and offers him as a sacrifice of thankfulness unto God. A system of church government that gives credibility to the believer also provides a way to express this. Hence, through the Reformation, the members of the church are given the right to elect their office bearers (pastors, elders, and deacons) under the supervision of the consistory. They are called upon to evaluate the preaching of the gospel (Acts 17:11). They are to exercise self-discipline and mutual discipline among each other (see Matthew 7, where Christ deals with motes and beams). They are able to deal with issues which they

believe to be wrong in the church. They have the right of protest and appeal (Matt. 18:17).

Also, the Reformation emphasized the autonomy of the local congregation. The Reformers did not encourage a license to believers to turn their backs upon the local church. They viewed the church as a spiritual mother. They wrote into our Reformed Confessions that there is no salvation apart from the church. The reason for this is a proper understanding of authority. God is all authority: He has the absolute right and power to rule the church and to direct its way. This Christ received (Matt. 28:18). Christ exercises this power to rule by Word and Spirit through the office bearers of the church. Their authority is given them by Christ: the pastor speaks as an ambassador of Christ, the elders rule in the Name of Christ, the deacons dispense mercy on behalf of Christ. Though this authority is great, it is sanctified by the instruction of Jesus in Matthew 20:17-28: "And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant; even as the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister and to give his life a ransom for many." That's the antidote to hierarchy. Within this system there is no higher office; there is equality of service.

Finally, the Reformation recognized the legitimacy of broader assemblies. Note: not *higher*, but *broader*, such as classis (presbytery) and synod. Here too, the understanding of authority is important. The local congregation has primary authority from Christ to exercise the keys of the kingdom. These local congregations delegate some of their authority to the broader assemblies, so that for their mutual good the churches in common can attend to matters of discipline that could not be

finished in the local church, and things that pertain to all the churches together (e.g., mission work, theological school). Such broader assemblies are a blessing which independent churches do not have. By submitting to the Word, and understanding that wisdom is broader than the local church (Prov. 11:14), these broader assemblies make decisions that are settled and binding. There are checks and balances included which safeguard the office of believer from any hierarchy.

RELEVANCY TODAY

All through history, tension existed between independentism and hierarchy. The same is true today. Evidences of hierarchy are clearly seen when a church emphasizes scholarship and leaders, or builds barriers between members by way of church boards, in order to lead the church in a different direction. Evidences of independentism are seen in the polarizing of a local congregation, in forming associations, in withholding financial support, and in appealing to the public press.

How do we relate proper church government to these circumstances? We must be sure that our cause is right. Unnecessary disruption of the church for other than Biblical principles is schism. When the need for correction within the church is established, one must use the proper channels of church government to work for reformation within the church. Anything less than this will produce anarchy, and the end will be worse than the beginning. If change is impossible, one must sincerely determine why he should continue in the church. He must consider the matter of corporate responsibility for the evil committed, the influence of evil upon himself and his family (especially the future generation),

the moral issue of supporting other churches who still are maintaining the principles of Scripture and the Reformation. This takes much grace; but in our age we must reach out to each other to encourage in this important work of Reformation. In the spirit of humility let him who will be chief among you be your servant. May the Head of the church grant a living church, upheld by the support of strong church government that enables the church to function, to be gathered, defended, and preserved until He comes again. □

NOT SEEN, BUT LOVED

*My Saviour, whom absent I love,
Whom, having seen, I adore,
Whose name is exalted above
All glory, dominion, and power,
Dissolve thou these bands that
detain*

*My soul from her portion in thee;
Ah, strike off this adamant chain,
And make me eternally free!*

*When that happy era begins,
When arrayed in thy glories I
shine,*

*Nor grieve any more, by my sins,
The bosom on which I recline,
Oh, then shall the vail be removed,
And round me thy brightness be
poured!*

*I shall meet Him, whom absent I
loved,*

I shall see, whom unseen I adored!

*And then, nevermore shall the
fears,*

*The trials, temptations, and woes,
Which darken this valley of tears,
Intrude on my blissful repose:*

*To Jesus, the crown of my hope,
My soul is in haste to be gone;
Oh, bear me, ye cherubim, up,
And waft me away to his throne!*

All Around Us
Rev. Gise VanBaren

"Strong Language in Defense of Faith"

In the continuing unrest in the Christian Reformed Church, some harsh words have been spoken. One man, Rev. Steve Schlissel of Messiah Christian Reformed Church in Brooklyn, New York, has been particularly outspoken. His background is Jewish and he himself is a convert from Judaism. He and his small congregation were received into the Christian Reformed Church a few years ago. This man indicates his strong love for the Reformed faith and shows a desire to maintain that faith as historically confessed. He strongly opposes the inroads of liberalism which he sees in the C.R.C. In his paper, "Messiah's Mandate," Summer, 1988, he reports on the reaction to a speech he gave in South Holland, Illinois:

A recent article in The Banner reported on a speech I had given at a conference in South Holland, Illinois. In the one hour and twenty minute speech I had, at one point, during a parable, used the following phrases: "whores at the seminary, stinking heretics at the college, doubletalkers at the boards and agencies." It is most interesting to see what The Banner considered important to report, even more so when one sees how the words, like victims of Assyrian domination, were violently wrenched from their true context and resettled in another . . .

Rev. VanBaren is pastor of the Protestant Reformed Church of Hudsonville, Michigan.

. . . Can strong language, such as I used about my own denomination in South Holland, ever be justified, apart from "regional" considerations . . . ?

To help answer that question, let me ask you a couple of others. How would you react to the knowledge that your milk was being watered down by your grocer, or that your money was dwindling while in the "care" of your local banker? I can hear some of your choice words in my imagination.

The theft we are facing in the CRC goes beyond the question of milk and money. At stake is the milk and honey of our confessional heritage, our doctrine of the Word of Almighty God. Is strong language inappropriate when the truthfulness of Jehovah and His Christ is called into doubt? Is strong language in our predicament "divisive"? Is it wrong to cry "Rape!"?

According to the Bible, the use of strong language may not simply be appropriate, but obligatory . . .

The writer continues by pointing out some of the strong language the prophets of the Old Testament used when Israel and Judah departed from the faith. He considers it no less imperative today that strong language be used to gain attention to the seriousness of the situation which exists within his denomination.

Though Schlissel refused to apologize for the strong language he had used in his speech at South Holland, he did present one word of apology to our own churches:

. . . At one point during my speech I was out of line. But it wasn't the "whore" section . . .

What I'm sorry I said was in regard to the Protestant Reformed Church's doctrine of "common grace." I referred to it as "dead wrong." Upon reflection, I'd like to change that to plain "wrong." I have much respect for our PR brethren and their argument. Nevertheless, I believe the charge of "rationalism" that has been attached to their view of this subject is valid.

I assume that Schlissel wrote a bit carelessly when he speaks of our (P.R.) doctrine of "common grace." He knows, of course, that the doctrine of "common grace" is that of the Christian Reformed Church. We have no such doctrine — for our opposition to that doctrine resulted in our being put out of the C.R.C. in 1924-5. There is reason for encouragement, though, that Schlissel recognizes that "dead wrong" is too strong a language to describe our opposition to "common grace." He would merely call it "wrong." Coming from Schlissel, that is very mild language indeed. Perhaps after further consideration he will come to recognize that our position is not so "wrong" even. As for the charge of "rationalism" with respect to our opposition to "common grace," possibly he could explain this further. Where is the "rationalism" in maintaining without compromise the sovereign grace of our great God? Is it not his

own concern to maintain God's holy Name and His infallible Word which leads him to his present struggle? And does he not recognize that some of the present-day positions within the C.R. churches are logical developments from positions taken in 1924-5? Is the hierarchy, this "rule from top down," against which the "conservatives"

strongly and rightly complain today, so strange in view of the fact that in 1925 the *classes* of the C.R.C. suspended and deposed officebearers of the local churches? Is it so strange when the worldly "women's lib" movement finds great sympathy within the church — given the conclusion that God's (common) grace is the origin of this imagined "good

work" within the world?

Incidentally, those who would desire a free subscription to *Messiah's Mandate*, can write: Messiah's Mandate [code SB], 2662 East 24th St., Brooklyn, NY 11235. This small church, of course, would appreciate donations covering the cost of printing and mailing. □

News From Our Churches

Mr. Benjamin Wigger

December 1, 1988

MINISTERIAL CALLS

Rev. Kenneth Koole declined the call he received to serve as our churches' missionary to the island of Jamaica.

Rev. Jason Kortering also declined the calls he had received from our congregations of the Faith P.R.C. in Jenison, Michigan, and the South Holland P.R.C. in South Holland, Illinois.

The Hope P.R.C. in Isabel, South Dakota has formed a new trio from which they will shortly call a pastor. This trio consists of the Revs. Cammenga, Koole, and T. Miersma.

And Rev. Wilbur Bruinsma has accepted the call to serve as

pastor in the First P.R.C. in Holland, Michigan. He informed the congregation in Holland, however, that he will not be able to begin his labors there until June of 1989, the Lord willing. There are many labors in Jamaica that have to be completed first.

MISSION ACTIVITIES

While you have Jamaica on your mind, I could mention that three men left for Jamaica on October 24 to help in the rebuilding of the churches and homes of the members of the churches there. They returned about ten days later with much work accomplished.

Initially more men were going to be sent, but Missionary Bruinsma and the leaders of the Jamaican churches requested that more of the offerings collected be used for building-materials, food, and other necessary items.

Also being shipped to the island were five 100-lb. bags of flour, 1500 lbs. of corrugated steel roofing materials and nails,

and 400 lbs. of clothing that had been collected in our Faith Church, in Jenison, Michigan some time ago.

The Church Extension Committee of our Loveland P.R.C. in Loveland, Colorado, in conjunction with the denominational Domestic Mission Committee, sponsored two Reformation Day lectures. Both speeches were presented by Rev. Wayne Bekkering. On October 26 he spoke on "The Reformation: A Return to Preaching," at the Westminster Reformed Presbyterian Church in Denver, Colorado, and on October 28 he spoke at our Loveland church on "Our Reformational Responsibility."

While in Loveland, Rev. Bekkering also preached twice on the following Sunday. This worked out rather well for Loveland since their pastor, Rev. Cammenga, had traveled to Norristown, Pennsylvania in order to deliver a Reformation message there. While he was there, he also conducted the Sunday worship services.

Mr. Wigger is an elder in the Protestant Reformed Church of Hudsonville, Michigan.

CONGREGATIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

Many of our congregations held their annual Reformation Day Lectures at the end of October. Some were included last time, and I have some more now.

The congregation in Lacombe, Alberta had their pastor, Rev. Dale Kuiper, speak on "The Reformation: A Contending for the Faith."

Rev. Richard Moore was the speaker at a lecture in our church in Hull, Iowa, sponsored by the Reformed Witness Committee. He spoke on "Creation - The Only Scriptural View."

Rev. Haak, pastor of the congregation of Lynden, Washington, spoke at the Lynden Christian High School Chapel on the subject of "Church Unity and the Reformation."

The Consistory of our Lynden Church has also approved the idea of having a pictorial church directory for this coming year.

We also want to extend our congratulations to Rev. and Mrs. Thomas Miersma on the birth of their second son, Jonathan Simon.

On November 11, Mr. Jim Swart, a member of our First Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan, presented a beautiful travelogue on the Netherlands, at First Church. It was followed by an ice cream social in the basement. Proceeds were for the 1989 Young People's Convention.

CHURCH ACTIVITIES

A new Protestant Reformed congregation was organized on

November 11 in Lansing, Illinois. The organization took place in South Holland Church. Their name will be the Peace Protestant Reformed Church.

SCHOOL ACTIVITIES

On October 27 & 28 about 70 teachers from most of our Christian schools met in the South Holland P.R. Christian School for a teacher's convention. Rev. R. Van Overloop gave the keynote address entitled, "Teachers Seeking the Kingdom of Heaven."

Other activities included a trip to the Museum of Science and Industry. The highlight of the second day was a speech given by Prof. R. Decker entitled, "Developing Proper Self-Esteem."

On November 11, 101 band students from our four Christian schools in the West Michigan area attended the National High School Marching Band Championships at the Pontiac Silverdome in Pontiac, Michigan (near Detroit). They left Grand Rapids about 1:00 P.M. and returned around 1:00 A.M. □

NOTICE!!!

COURSE OF STUDY FOR

ELDERS — Four consecutive Monday evening sessions will take place beginning January 9th, 1989, at 7:30 P.M. Sessions will be held at the Protestant Reformed Seminary. Prof. Robert Decker will be the instructor. The course includes: The idea, the qualifications and the duties of the office. Also, family visitation, visiting the sick and comforting the bereaved. Urged to attend are

Elders and Deacons — present and past, plus other men who have an interest in a study of this nature.

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Ladies Society of the Protestant Reformed Church of South Holland, Illinois, wish to express their Christian sympathy to our members Thressa Haak, Dona Haak, Henrietta Haak and Jeanette Van Baren in the passing of their brother and brother-in-law MR. HENRY HAAK on November 9, 1988.

"I, even I, am he that comforteth you." (Isaiah 51:12)

Rev. George Lanting, President
Mrs. Arthur DeJong, Secretary

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Junior Bible Society of The Covenant Protestant Reformed Church, (Wyckoff, NJ) expresses its sincere sympathy to its members, Mr. and Mrs. August Hollema, in the death of Margaret's father, MR. GILBERT J. DECKER, October 27, 1988.

"I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." (John 11:25)

Rev. R. Flikkema, President

NOTICE!

"For correspondence with The Peace Protestant Reformed Church of Lynwood, Illinois, use the following address:"

PEACE PROTESTANT
REFORMED CHURCH
c/o Garret Flikkema, Clerk
18304 Chicago Ave.
Lansing, IL 60438
Phone: 1 (312) 474-5772