

THE **STANDARD BEARER**

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Southeast PRC, Grand Rapids, MI

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In This Issue...

Synods figure prominently in this issue. The Meditation is a condensed version of the pre-Synodical sermon, "Keeping the Unity of the Spirit," which set the tone for this year's Synod of the PRC. In one of two editorials, Prof. Engelsma reflects on the major decisions of that Synod. Further, we've transcribed two addresses to Synod, out of the five which were made to Synod 1990 by foreign observers. In his rubric, Prof. Decker calls attention to some of the important decisions made this year by the major assemblies of Reformed and Presbyterian denominations "all around us."

And finally there's a "Special Article" by Rev. Jaikishin Mahtani. Actually, it's the major part of a speech given at the International Reformed Conference. We draw special attention to it here because in it Pastor Mahtani addressed an issue which had also to be faced by Synod 1990, namely, how to respond to the request of the ERCS that the PRC assist them in starting a Reformed Theological School in Singapore.

A pipe dream, that would seem to be, on the surface. But, who would have thought it possible, twenty years ago, that there would be in 1990, in Singapore, two flourishing congregations, sister-churches to the PRC in America? A great work has been wrought by the Lord in the Orient. Today two Singaporeans, trained for the ministry in the P.R. Seminary, are barely able to keep up with the work in their own congregations — let alone give serious consideration to work in India or Malaysia. One cannot help but think of the words of Jesus, as He stood by Jacob's well in the land of the Samaritans, "Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields...."

Is there, perhaps, "a great door and effectual" opening wide in Singapore? Pastor Mahtani insists that, in speaking of a truly Reformed seminary in Singapore, he is not at all thinking of theological training for the sake of intellectual attainment, but to meet an urgent, compelling need for laborers. He speaks of "vision," of "hope"... and of all things being possible with God. After reading his "Special Article," think again on his introductory paragraph, in which he expresses his hope that God will use our relationship with the ERCS to make us "even more mission-minded in the days to come unto the glory of God."

— D.D.

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Meditation

Rev. James Slopsema

Keeping the Unity of the Spirit

I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called,

With all lowliness, and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love;

Endeavoring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace.
Ephesians 4:1-3

The theme of Paul's epistle to the Ephesians is the unity of the church as the body of Christ. This truth is first developed by the great apostle in the first three chapters, then applied practically in the last three chapters. This practical section is introduced by the verses we have under consideration, which also set forth the main thought of this section: keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace.

This is also the mandate that God has for the Synod. The Lord has given the Synod important work to do. It must deal with the mission work of the churches, the Theological Seminary, contact with other churches, as well as various

appeals. This work is vital to the welfare of our churches. In all its work the Synod must give diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

* * * * *

The unity of the Spirit is the essential unity that exists in the church among believers as a result of the inner working of the Spirit.

From a natural point of view there is great diversity in the church. God gathers His church from every tribe, tongue, and nation. Consequently, the church is composed of male and female, rich and poor, bond and free from every race. From this point of view, of course, there is nothing to unite the church together into one.

There is, however, something that all the true members of the church have in common, that unites them into one. That is the Spirit.

The Spirit referred to here is the Holy Spirit of God. This Spirit is the One Who works irresistibly in the heart of every elect child of God to bring him to faith and salvation in Jesus Christ. And this explains the unity of the church. The Spirit works the same faith in the heart of every elect person. By that one faith the Spirit, in turn, draws every child of God to the same Savior in Whom they all find the same salvation. One Spirit, one faith, one salvation — this is the unity of the church.

This unity is, first of all, a unity of doctrine. Faith is a certain knowledge whereby we hold for truth all that God has revealed in His Word. Hence, those who possess a true faith in Jesus Christ and live in that faith all believe and con-

fess the same thing — the truth of God's holy Word. Without this unity of confession and doctrine there is no true unity. Any unity that lacks this doctrinal oneness is a sham unity.

The unity of the Spirit is also a unity of life. What we believe and hold for truth determines how we live. Consequently, those who are united by faith in the truth of God's Word also live one life together. This life is the new life of Jesus Christ, a life of loving devotion to and service of the living God.

This unity expresses itself in the bond of peace.

When the Word of God speaks here of the bond of peace, it speaks of love. Elsewhere the Scriptures speak of love as the bond of perfectness (Col. 3:14). Here love is viewed as an attraction which two or more have for each other so that they are drawn and knit together in an inseparable bond. Love is called a bond of *perfectness* because what draws them to each other is the perfections of Jesus Christ which God's people see in each other.

Now we read of the bond of peace. This is the same love, but identified as the bond of peace. Love is called a bond of peace here because when two or more are bonded together in love there is peace.

And this is what characterizes the unity of the Spirit. Without the working of the Spirit in the members of the church there would be hatred, envy, strife, and conflict, even as there is among the ungodly. The fruit of the Spirit is that the members of the church are united together in the bond of peace.

This unity is an object of faith.

Rev. Slopsema is pastor of Hope Protestant Reformed Church in Walker, Michigan.



Rev. Slopsema at work in Synod

We say this because this unity is not always so evident in the church today. In the church world generally there is not unity but division. One church believes this; another, something contrary. This church heads in one direction; that church, in the opposite direction. Strife, conflict, and discord characterize the church world.

This is due to especially two factors. First, not all who belong to the church institute are true members of the church, in whose lives the Spirit works. Secondly, the work of the Spirit is not yet complete in the lives of the true members of the church.

Nevertheless, this unity of the Spirit does exist among true believers, even though it does not always manifest itself.

Thankfully, this unity is to be found in the Protestant Reformed Churches. As churches we are united together in the truth of God's Word as this truth is summarized in our Three Forms of Unity. On the basis of the truth we also, as churches, labor together in unity and peace for the cause of God's kingdom and covenant. Certainly this unity we enjoy is not perfect. Yet by the grace of God it exists and flourishes.

Perhaps what is more remarkable is that we enjoy this same unity with other churches and groups in faraway lands, whose culture is far different from ours.

* * * * *

We are called to endeavor to keep this unity of the Spirit.

The word "to keep" means, first of all, to guard, suggesting that there are those who would take from us what we have, so that we must be on guard. Then this word

means to keep in the sense of holding firm to what we have.

This is what we must do as churches with the unity we enjoy in the Spirit. We must guard this unity. The powers of darkness would destroy the unity we enjoy as churches. They would do this by leading us away from the Word of God, on which our unity is based. What better way to destroy the unity of our churches than by leading the Synod to take binding decisions that are contrary to the Word of God! Synod must be on guard as it does its work.

And, being on guard, the Synod must keep the unity our churches enjoy by making decisions that are in harmony with God's Word. It is true that sometimes decisions that are true to the Word of God divide the church. This has happened also in our own history. And therefore there is often the temptation to compromise the truth for the sake of keeping the church together. However, any unity that results from compromising the truth is a sham unity and not the unity of the Spirit. The unity that the Synod must endeavor to keep is the true unity of the Spirit. This is accomplished by standing on the Word of God alone.

* * * * *

The church, like our Synod, keeps the unity of the Spirit by walking with all lowliness, and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love.

Lowliness is often translated humility. It means to have a low opinion of self, an opinion that is consistent with what we really are. It is true that in Jesus Christ we are new creatures, wonderfully gifted and of great value to the kingdom. This is true of the least of God's saints. However, of ourselves we are nothing and can do nothing. Besides that, we have all sorts of limitations and shortcomings, even in Jesus Christ. Hence, if our opinion of ourselves will be in harmony with reality, we will not be proud and boasting but lowly.

Meekness is the gift of God's grace that leads the child of God to put the welfare of others ahead of his own desires and convenience.

One who is meek is slow to insist on what may be rightfully his, especially if asserting his rights will hurt his neighbor. The meek would rather suffer wrong than inflict it. The meek do not quickly enter into strife with the brother but turn the other cheek, walk the second mile. This meekness finds its source in lowliness.

Closely related to this is longsuffering. Found in this sequence of virtues, longsuffering is a slowness to avenge wrong. Longsuffering does not return evil for evil nor railing for railing but on the contrary good. One who is longsuffering loves his enemies, blesses them that curse him, does good to them that hate him and prays for those who persecute and despitely use him.

Finally, there is forbearing one another in love. Forbearance is the ability to bear with the weaknesses of each other. Stated bluntly, it is the ability to put up with each other so that we are not aggravated by the sins and weaknesses we find in each other. This is possible only when we love each other in the bond of perfectness. Hence, we read of forbearing one another in love.

It does not take a great deal of insight to understand how the unity of the Spirit will be promoted and preserved when these virtues characterize the walk of the saints together.

This is also true at the Synodical level. When brethren labor together in the context of these virtues, there is a promoting of the cause of the truth and of the church rather than of self. When these virtues are present, brethren are inclined to listen to each other, even to those with whom they disagree, rather than each one assuming that his position is the only one which can possibly be correct. Only when these virtues characterize the work of Synod can the Synod truly deliberate and arrive at decisions that are better than any one man alone could make.

May God lead the Synod to labor in all lowliness, meekness, longsuffering, and forbearance.

* * * * *

The ground for this exhortation to unity is the vocation or calling wherewith we are called. This calling is the saving call of God through the gospel which God uses to bring all the elect to a saving faith in Jesus Christ. We are charged to walk worthy of this calling, that is, in a manner that is consistent with or in harmony with this calling.

According to this passage we walk worthy of our calling when we walk with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

Brethren of Synod, walk worthy of your calling.

You have been wonderfully called out of the darkness of sin and unbelief into the marvelous

light of God's salvation. In addition to this you have been called to the office of minister and elder. You have also been called to labor at this Synod. Walk worthy of your calling!

Walk with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. □

Editorials

■ PRC Synod: Missions and Contact ■ Slaughtering Baptists?

■ PRC Synod: Missions and Contact

The Protestant Reformed Synod 1990 kept the promise of its agenda. Its decisions showed a readiness to witness to the Reformed faith at home (the United States and Canada) and to the ends of the earth (Jamaica; Singapore; Australia; New Zealand; and Northern Ireland). Missions and contact with other churches dominated. Accentuating the emphasis on looking outward were addresses to Synod by representatives from several churches and fellowships in foreign countries. Two of these addresses appear in this issue of *The Standard Bearer*.

Synod made the areas of Venice, Florida and of Larne/Ballymena, Northern Ireland denominational mission fields. Information about these fields was given in the June 1 issue of *The SB*. The Kalamazoo, Michigan PRC will be the calling church for Venice. The Hudsonville, Michigan PRC is the calling church for Northern Ireland. A missionary in Northern Ireland will also pursue other contacts in

the British Isles. Recently, several men have formed an association called the British Reformed Fellowship. Their purpose is a sound, creedal Reformed church in England. The Fellowship is sponsoring a conference in northern Wales late this summer, August 31-September 2, at which the undersigned will speak and preach. The hope of the group is that the conference will bring together many in the British Isles who have some heart for Calvinism.

Several, significant decisions were taken concerning the Jamaica mission. Synod adopted the overture of the Mission Committee that Synod declare the decision of Synod 1983, that the co-worker in Jamaica be another minister, to be in error. This allows the churches to work in Jamaica by means of a minister and a capable layman. First Church, Grand Rapids, the calling church for Jamaica, was instructed to proceed to call a minister as missionary and to secure a co-worker. Until a missionary is obtained, the PRC will work in Jamaica by sending two men to teach the leaders in the churches there in

two four-week sessions a year for the next four years. The overture of South Holland, Illinois PRC, that the Jamaica field be closed, was rejected.

Synod urged the Foreign Mission Committee (FMC) "to more aggressive investigation of possible fields of labor." It specifically mentioned a joint mission effort with the Evangelical Reformed Churches of Singapore (ERCS). The ERCS had a request at Synod that the PRC send them "a senior minister or professor to help us start some kind of a Reformed theological training programme in Singapore." The man would also help the Singapore churches in their mission work. The Contact Committee of the PRC will study this request and bring recommendations to Synod 1991. A two-man delegation from the PRC, one from the Contact Committee and one from the FMC, will visit the Singapore churches in the coming year, to discuss the request with them and to do some preliminary work with regard to it.

Pastors Lau and Mahtani were seated at Synod with advisory vote

as delegates from the ERCS, sister churches of the PRC.

The overture of the FMC to Synod 1989, that the constitutions of the FMC and of the (domestic) Mission Committee be changed so that the mission labors of the churches would be divided along geographical lines, was rejected. The main reason for rejecting the overture was the fear that the calling of the churches to go to the heathen would suffer. In the discussion of this matter, Synod virtually ignored the report of the study committee appointed by Synod 1989. This well-argued and well-written report recommended approval of the overture of the FMC. Neither was there much reference to the overture itself of the FMC. The discussion was controlled by the advice of the committee of pre-advice. In the future, Synod should honor its special study committees by considering their recommendations directly. The only role that a committee of pre-advice should have is that it brings the report of the study committee to the floor.

Synod adopted rules drawn up by the Committee for Contact with Other Churches (CC) for assisting the Protestant Reformed Church of New Zealand (PRCNZ) in matters of discipline. The church in New Zealand asked that she be permitted to submit cases of discipline to the Synod of the PRC for judgment. Thus, the New Zealand church wisely seeks to avoid one of the great dangers of independency and desires a valuable expression of the sister church relationship. Delegates at Synod from the PRCNZ were Rev. Rodney Miersma and Deacon Kevin Inskeep.

The CC will continue working to help the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Australia (EPC) by supplying the pulpit of their Burnie, Tasmania congregation. Rev. Bernard Woudenberg, pastor of the Kalamazoo, Michigan PRC, will spend three or four months in Burnie later this year. The EPC is conferring with the Theological School Committee of the PRC about the possibility of having their aspirants for the ministry taught in the PRC Seminary. Papers explor-

ing the differences between the two denominations over worship will be published in the "Acts of Synod 1990" of the PRC.

The CC was authorized to attend the 1990 meeting of the North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council (NAPARC) as observers, if the PRC are again invited. The Presbyterian Church in America will host this meeting on November 7 and 8 in Atlanta, Georgia.

Decisions concerning the Theological School of the PRC included adoption of an internship program for third or fourth year seminarians in order to give the students practical experience in all aspects of the work of the ministry; adoption of the proposal of the Theological School Committee that the pre-seminary program no longer be considered a separate department of the Seminary; and rejection of the proposal to establish an endowment fund for the Seminary. A majority of the delegates thought that an endowment fund might distance the Seminary from the members of the PRC, to the hurt of the Seminary. Information on these proposals was given in the June 1, 1990 issue of *The SB*.

A full day of Synod was taken up with treating two appeals that contended that a cross on the chancel wall of a church building violates the Second Commandment, conflicting with the "regulative principle" of worship. Synod rejected the appeals with regard to their basic contention on three grounds. First, "a plain cross in or on a church building, of whatever size, does not violate the creedal position of the PRC that we not worship God in any other way than He has commanded in His Word," Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 35 (regulative principle)." In this connection, Synod distinguished between an image and a mere symbol. Second, "the placement of a symbol on a church wall does not make that symbol an element of the congregation's worship." Synod asserted that there is freedom in the PRC's application of the regulative principle in those incidental details connected with the



Officers of Synod: Rev. VanOverloop – Vice-President; Rev. VanBaren – President; Rev. Gritters – First Clerk

church's worship. Third, "this is not out of step with the Reformed tradition and the writings of the Reformed fathers." The decision in its entirety will be printed in the forthcoming "Acts of Synod 1990."

Among other decisions, Synod returned the overture of Southeast, Grand Rapids concerning the restructuring of the denomination in three classes to the study committee for further study. The committee is to report in 1991. The study committee had recommended the rejection of Southeast's overture on the ground that the majority of our churches did not favor it. A special committee was appointed to investigate the insurance and nursing care needs of the ministers and emeriti ministers. Synod heard two appeals in closed session because of the nature of the appeals.

The synodical budget remains the same as last year: \$450 per family per year.

Hope, Walker, Michigan will host Synod in June, 1991, the Lord willing.

In the midst of its deliberations, Synod was saddened by news of the death of the wife of seminarian Mitchell Dick, Ellen, after a lingering illness. Synod conveyed its expression of sympathy and comfort to Mr. Dick. Many of the delegates attended a funeral service on Monday evening, June 11.

The officers of Synod were Rev. Gise VanBaren, president; Rev. Ron Van Overloop, vice-president; Rev. Barrett Gritters, first clerk; and Rev. Dale Kuiper, second clerk.

Interrupted in its meeting for three days by the International Reformed Conference sponsored by the PRC at the time of Synod,

Synod adjourned on Friday, June 15, at about 8PM. The debate is ended. The decisions are final, subject to appeal by the members of the churches and the judgment by the King of the Church. In answer to the many prayers raised for His blessing, may Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church, establish the work of the Synod of the PRC 1990.

— DJE

■ Slaughtering Baptists? (2)

If the historical aspect of the Baptist pastor, William Oosterman's, objection to my explanation of the Reformed doctrine of the covenant is mistaken, the theological aspect is surprising. (See the "Letters" column of the July 1, 1990 issue of *The Standard Bearer*. The first installment of my response to this Baptist objection also appeared in the July 1 issue of *The SB*.) Oosterman takes issue with my statement that Baptists deny church membership to the children of believers, with the result that there are no children in a Baptist church. This analysis of Baptist ecclesiology is "wrong," according to Oosterman, a setting up of a "false position," a "misrepresentation." As my spiritual ancestors are alleged to have slaughtered Baptists literally, I am charged with slaughtering them theologically.

On the contrary, this analysis of the Baptist doctrine and practice of the church is a sober statement of fact. It cannot even be challenged. By definition, a Baptist church, whether friend or foe of the doctrines of grace, denies membership in the church to the children of believers, much more to the children of unbelievers. Being a child of believing parents does not qualify one for church membership in a Baptist church. Only a confession of faith by one old enough and mature enough to make such a confession qualifies one for membership in a Baptist church. This is the issue, as everyone understands perfectly well. The issue is not whether a Baptist church permits a

very young human being to make a confession of faith and thus become member of the church. But the issue is whether a Baptist church recognizes that Jesus Christ, the King of the church, requires that not only believers be admitted into the church, but also the children of believers, and that by virtue of their being children of believers, altogether apart from a prior confession of faith. "Allow the infants to come to Me by being brought to the baptismal font by their parents, and forbid them not: for the church — the kingdom of God in the present age — is made up of such infants" (Luke 18:16). This, every Baptist church refuses to recognize. If a Baptist church would recognize this, it would, by virtue of this fact, cease to be Baptist. It is, therefore, fundamental Baptist doctrine that children are excluded from church membership.

And is it really common for Baptist churches to allow five-year olds to make confession of faith and thus to come to the Lord's Table? If so, I have another objection against Baptist church practices. To permit five-year olds to confess their faith and to come to the Lord's Supper is ecclesiastically irresponsible and a threat to the holiness of the Supper.

A comparison of the Presbyterian creed, the Westminster Confession, with the Baptist Confession of 1689 makes clear that the Baptists deny membership in the church to the children of believers. In Chapter 25.2, Westminster describes the visible church as consisting "of all those, throughout the world, that profess the true religion, and of their children" (my emphasis — DJE). The Baptist Confession of 1689, an adaptation of the Westminster Confession to Baptist purposes, limits membership in the congregations to persons who profess the faith of the gospel (26.2). Deliberately, it excludes the children of believers from church membership, excising the covenantal phrase from Westminster. In keeping with its banishment of believers' children from the Body of Christ, the Confession of 1689 also keeps from the children the sign of church membership, namely baptism (cf. 29.2).

Westminster, on the other hand, maintains that "not only those that do actually profess faith in and obedience unto Christ, but also the infants of one or both believing parents are to be baptized" (28.4).

Pastor Oosterman has no reason to question the perfect accuracy of my statement that "every Baptist church denies membership to all children. Only sheep belong to the Baptist fold, no lambs."

But it is exceedingly hard for a Baptist to face up to the implications of Baptist doctrine, as indeed it should be. Would God that the implications force some of them to reconsider their rejection of the children of believers.

I persist in holding every Baptist to the implications of his doctrine. If our children are outside the church, they are outside the sphere of salvation. They do not differ from lost heathens. For the church "is an assembly of those who are saved, and...out of it there is no salvation" (Belgic Confession, Art. 28).

Baptists have no ground for any hope of the salvation of their children who die in infancy or childhood, i.e., before their personal confession of faith and baptism. I know very well that Baptists *claim* hope for the salvation of such children. Nor is it the case that I deny the salvation of the children of Baptists. But on his own, peculiarly Baptist doctrines, the Baptist himself has no ground for hope in such cases. If he appeals to the natural innocence of the children, he is contradicted by the biblical doctrine of original sin. If he appeals to the theory that all children who die in infancy are saved, the children of unbelievers as well as the children of believers, as does Pastor Oosterman, he is refuted by the fact that this theory is not biblically revealed truth. It is sheer human invention. God nowhere has promised to be the God of the children of the ungodly. On the contrary, sacred history, e.g., that of the Flood, of Sodom, and of Israel's destruction of the Canaanites, as well as biblical doctrine, e.g., the Second Commandment, warn unbelievers that they take their children to hell with themselves.

There is one ground for the hope of godly parents that their children who die in infancy are elect and saved. This is the solidly biblical truth that the children of believers are comprehended in the covenant of grace, as the Reformed creed, the Canons of Dordt, teaches in I/17. But this is exactly the truth that every Baptist repudiates. In doing so, every Baptist destroys all hope for the salvation of his children who die before confession of faith and baptism. Were I a Baptist, I would live in mortal terror at the possibility of the early death of one of my children — outside the covenant, outside the church, and outside the sphere of salvation of God in the blood and Spirit of Jesus.

Oosterman's confusion of the Reformed view of the salvation of covenant children with the Roman Catholic doctrine of baptismal regeneration ("The child died a pagan for lack of a few drops of water," etc.) is inexcusable and deserves no refutation.

In rejecting the doctrine of the one covenant of grace, basic to which is the inclusion of the children of believers in the covenant and their baptism as infants, all Baptists part company with the Reformed faith. Pastor Oosterman finds this judgment objectionable, inasmuch as some Baptists today *call themselves* Reformed. They suppose that they have a right to this glorious name, because they confess, more or less soundly, the "Five Points of Calvinism."

But is it lawful for Baptists to claim the name Reformed when they reject a doctrine and corresponding practice that both the Reformed tradition and the Reformed creeds designate as essential to the Reformed faith? May a church then also deny, let us say, the doctrine of sovereign, eternal predestination and yet claim to be Reformed on the ground that it does maintain other doctrines that are taught in the Reformed tradition and confessed in the Reformed creeds? May I similarly reject the teaching so precious to Baptists, namely "believer's baptism," but still present myself to the world as a Baptist?

Here we come to the practical necessity of the Reformed faith's sharply distinguishing itself today from the Baptist faith in whatever form. This practical necessity is the calling of the Reformed church to maintain the truth of the covenant of grace in its full, rich reality; to warn Reformed believers against abandoning this truth; and to exhort others to embrace the truth of the covenant and practice its requirements.

Leading preachers in the "Calvinist Baptist" movement subject the Reformed doctrine of infant baptism, and thereby the Reformed doctrine of the covenant, to scathing denunciation. They castigate it as false doctrine. Nevertheless, these men are publicly welcomed by prominent Reformed and Presbyterian associations, conferences, and theologians as genuinely Reformed preachers. They are given positions of honor in promoting and defending "the Reformed faith." Rare is the spirited defense of infant baptism against these "Calvinist Baptists" by the Reformed and Presbyterians who receive them as genuinely Reformed. Rarer still is the blunt condemnation of their Baptist rejection of infant baptism and their Baptist rebaptism of Reformed church mem-

bers who defect to the Baptist church in the language of the Reformed creed: "we detest the error of the Anabaptists" (Belgic Confession, Article 34).

The effect of this uncritical acceptance of the "Calvinistic Baptists" as Reformed is the jeopardizing of the Reformed doctrine of the covenant. At best, its importance is minimized — it is not essential to the Reformed faith. At worst, the adherence of Reformed people to the covenant is weakened — Reformed men and women forsake the Reformed churches for the "Calvinistic Baptist" churches, or even for free will Baptist churches.

There must be a clear, uncompromising testimony to the essential importance of the covenant of God in Christ with believers and their children. There must be a sharp, unmistakable warning that rejection of this covenant-doctrine constitutes departure from, or opposition to, historic, creedal Reformed Christianity.

We give this testimony and warning.

It is not that we desire to slaughter Baptists.

But we desire their conversion to the Reformed faith. □ — DJE

Christian Comforts

How sweet the promises of God
To a believer's ear;
He giveth grace for every trial,
He casteth out all fear,
He comforts every aching heart
Bowed down with grief and pain;
We cast our burdens on the Lord
And He doth e'er sustain.

'Tis sweet to feel His presence when
Our trials are multiplied;
'Tis sweet to have a friend just then
In whom one can confide.
We tell Him all our cares and woes,
He guides us to the light
Of His blest Word which shows to
us
The wonders of His might.

He giveth peace within our hearts
Which no one else can give,
His Spirit working mightily
He giveth grace to live,
To trust Him for our every need,
Though dark may seem the day,
He sends His light within our hearts
And drives all doubts away.

Oh, trust Him then, believe His
Word,
Wherever you may be;
Remember that He's always near
On land or on the sea.
He always hears the pleading cry
Rise to the throne above
And sends His answers graciously
As tokens of His love.

— SB, September 1, 1931

Letters

A True Christian Asceticism?

I would like to present some ideas in response to Prof. H. Hanko's article, "Anthony and the Ascetics" (*The Standard Bearer*, June 1, 1990). Why in our age which is so obviously carnal is it not time to advocate that we seek a more ascetic, "other-worldly" life-style in order to keep ourselves "unspotted from the world" (James 1:27)? We should listen to I Timothy 6:8-11: "And having food and raiment let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But thou, O man of God, flee these things...."

I understand that obedience to these words is not to be achieved simply by selling our properties and businesses, giving everything to the poor, and living meagerly and frugally the rest of our days (although I could conceive that for some this might be the only way to rid themselves of the snare of riches). Certainly, we should not try to live like "cavemen" or "flagpole-sitters." But how many of us are truly living according to this Word of God in I Timothy? Just because Anthony and others have gone to extremes in "fleeing these things," should we condemn the whole idea of asceticism?

My dictionary defines an ascetic as "a person who leads a life of contemplation and rigorous self-denial for religious purposes." The root meaning seems to be that of exercise. For me, therefore, true Christian asceticism is an earnest

striving for godliness, i.e., crucifying our flesh (Gal. 5:24) and being crucified to the world (Gal. 6:14).

These things are accomplished in us by God by a continual, painful process of conscious struggle. This constant, often painful exercise of struggle is absolutely essential in our salvation. Without it we are on the broad way to destruction. To be constantly fleeing from that broad way, in order to find the narrow way of life, is to be constantly engaging in a spiritual form of "world-flight."

Should we not reevaluate our attitude toward "asceticism"?

I would like to have one of our ministers or professors present a detailed discourse on the scriptural teaching concerning fasting and its spiritual benefits.

John Hilton
Edgerton, MN

Response

Rev. G.M. Ophoff, in the syllabus we used in Seminary on Ancient Church History, writes concerning asceticism as follows:

Asceticism is from the Greek askēō, to exercise, to strengthen through exercise. By the heathen the term was used for gymnastic exercises but by the fathers of the early church, of moral self-discipline. Yet it would be a serious mistake to define asceticism simply as moral self-discipline. For moral self-discipline — the mortification of members which are upon the earth, the crucifixion of the works of the flesh — is a Christian duty enjoined by the Scriptures. It forms a part of the true conversion of man, the other part of which is the quickening of the new man, the sincere joy of heart in God through Christ, and a living according to the will of God in all good works with love and delight. Every true Christian, certainly, engages in moral self-discipline. He must, for the life of Christ that was planted in his soul, will assert itself. But the normal Christian is not an ascetic....

If asceticism (as it was practiced in the early church) is to be known as to its true character, its roots must be laid bare. The

roots of asceticism are its motives, purpose and aims, and strivings, its dualism and its view of life in this world. These can be known from an examination of the thoroughly pagan type of asceticism as practiced by the Gnostic and Manichaean sects....

Asceticism, it is plain, is a pagan invention. It is based on pagan views of God, man, and the world....

Brother Hilton speaks of a Biblical "asceticism," but fails to recognize that the asceticism as practiced by some in the early church, and which led to monasticism, is contrary to Scripture. — Prof. H. Hanko

Appreciation

Your editorials in recent issues of *The Standard Bearer* dealing with "The Covenant of God and the Children of Believers" afford your readers a fresh insight into the Scriptural and Reformed (distinctively Reformed, that is) view of the Covenant of Grace.

I look forward yet to another installment in this series on the Covenant of Grace. An article that will address itself to the "other side" of this "jeweled coin" which will give expression to what is stated in the Form for Infant Baptism, "...whereas in all covenants there are contained two parts...."

I may also believe from your writings that you gave your readers the "official doctrinal position" of denominations with whom you state disagreement.

Thank you for giving your readers of *The SB* excellent Scriptural and Reformed materials for our edification and knowledge of the truth handed down to us from our forefathers.

The Lord's blessings to all writers of articles and readers of *The SB*.

Henry Doorn
Kentwood, MI

A 10-Year Old Reader

I am ten years old and I really enjoy Rev. A. denHartog's articles in *The Standard Bearer*.

I especially enjoyed "Little Children Keep Yourselves from Idols" and "Fear God and Not Man" because they are so easy for young readers to understand.

Lindsey Baldwin
Charlotte, NC

A Voice from Tasmania

I write with regard to the article in your February 15, 1990 issue titled, "Committee for Contact with Other Churches," in which it is stated, concerning the Burnie Congregation of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Australia, that "The saints there grew in spiritual understanding and knowledge of the Reformed faith under Prof. Hoeksema's ministry, for they had long been without a pastor of their own...." From all accounts it is true that the people of the Burnie congregation greatly appreciated the ministry of Prof. Hoeksema while he was in Burnie. I wonder, though, if you are aware that Rev. A.I. Morgan, while he was a minister of the E.P.C. of A., faithfully ministered in the truths of the Reformed faith in the Burnie Congregation from May 1982 until February 1987. (Prof. Hoeksema was in Burnie from August 1988 until April 1989.) For a substantial part of that period Rev. Morgan traveled from his home in Launceston to Burnie, every weekend, to conduct morning and afternoon Lord's day services as well as other meetings on occasions. This work was undertaken by Rev. Morgan while he was interim Moderator to the Burnie Church Session. While Rev. Morgan was never called by this congregation to be their pastor in the full sense of the word, I believe his labours there ought not to be ignored.

Please note that I do not wish, in any way, to diminish the understanding that the Burnie congregation is in need of a pastor. I should also note that Rev. R.A. Fisk was pastor of the Burnie congregation

from 1978 until Rev. Morgan's appointment as interim Moderator in 1982.

Peter W. Morgan
Lilydale, Tasmania Australia

From a Former Baptist

I would like to thank Professor Engelsma and *The Standard Bearer* for the thoughtful and edifying series of articles on "The Covenant of God and the Children of Believers." I was especially pleased with the clear differentiation that was made between the Reformed and the Baptist understandings of baptism. The topic of this series is especially close to my heart as I was raised and even baptized in a Baptist church. Yet as I gradually learned and embraced the Reformed truth in discussions with Rev. J. Kortering and Rev. H. Veldman I realized the serious error of the Baptist position. I am thankful to say that these discussions amongst many others led to my confession of faith in Grandville Protestant Reformed Church.

The crucial difference between the Baptist and the Reformed conception of Baptism can be seen in how they view the impetus and efficacy of baptism. The impetus for baptism amongst Baptists is always the work of the one being baptized. Whether this be in "Arminian Baptist" circles where one must have "accepted Christ into his heart" or in the "Calvinistic Baptist" churches where in the words of Rev. W. Oosterman (*Standard Bearer*, July 1, 1990) that if one "understand, believes, and repents he/she is baptized and becomes a member."

The efficacy of baptism is also dependent on the work of the one being baptized in most Baptist churches. This is why the Anabaptists of the sixteenth century baptized people again. They believed that baptism must follow regeneration to be efficacious. The practice of baptizing people more than once still occurs in some Baptist churches today. I know this because my mother was baptized twice. She was baptized once when she was twelve years old, and because she felt she had not "accepted Christ" at the time of her

baptism, the Baptist church that we attended thought she needed to be baptized again. This time at the age of forty-four.

In stark contrast to the Baptist view of baptism, the impetus and efficacy of Baptism in the Reformed tradition lies solely in the Covenant that God has established with His people and His sovereign eternal decree of election. As Professor Engelsma has clearly illustrated in his articles, the impetus for baptism in Reformed Churches is the Covenant that God has established between His people and their seed. Thus in the new covenant baptism occupies the same position that circumcision did in the old covenant.

I will never forget the words of Rev. H. Veldman when we discussed these issues. He said, "The doctrine of infant baptism is one that I hold most dear. Why you might ask? I will tell you why. The doctrine of infant baptism perhaps more than any other doctrine teaches God's sovereign election in salvation. You see, grace is not bestowed upon every child that is baptized, but only the children that are elect. What possibly could this child have done to deserve this grace? It clearly is God's sovereign counsel that determines where grace is bestowed." Infant baptism is a compelling enactment of our place in God's covenant. We are not capable of doing anything to merit God's favor. Yet through God's eternal mercy He sees us through the shed blood of Christ. Because the efficacy of baptism lies in God's eternal decree of election, I need not be baptized again even though I was baptized in another church under a different method of baptism.

I would like once again to thank Professor Engelsma for his excellent series of articles that clearly distinguishes a grace that is in some way earned from the Grace that is given by God in His Covenant. □

Steven J. Spencer
Ann Arbor, MI

Committee Work at Synod



2 o'clock



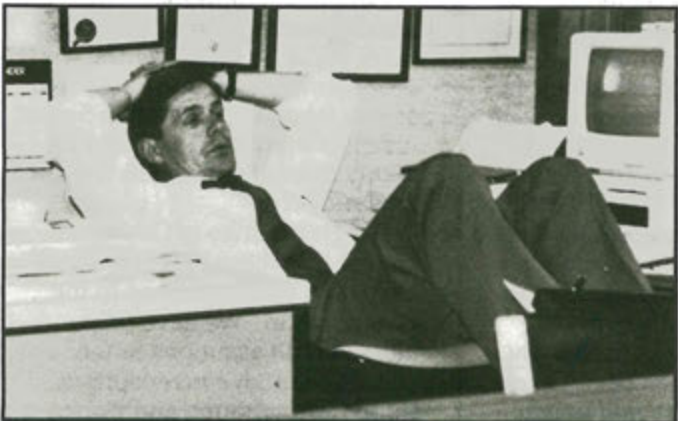
4 o'clock



6 o'clock



8 o'clock



10 o'clock



12 o'clock

Addresses to Synod

■ Greetings from Measbro Dyke Evangelical Church, Barnsley, England

■ Greetings from Synod of E.P.C. of Australia

■ Greetings from Measbro Dyke Evangelical Church, Barnsley, England

— Rev. Philip Rawson

Mr. President and delegates to the Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches,

I count it a privilege and a joy to bring you greetings in the Name of Christ Jesus our Lord.

These greetings I bring from the office bearers and members of the Measbro Dyke Evangelical Church in Barnsley, South Yorkshire, England.

I little thought, when I first came into contact with the Protestant Reformed Churches, that I would, as at this time, be standing upon the floor of Synod to bring you these fraternal greetings.

It was in 1976 that in the sovereign providence of the Lord I obtained the book *Whosoever Will*, written by the late Rev. H. Hoeksema. That book, brethren, was

sweet to my taste. As a young minister of the gospel, just coming to a knowledge and understanding of the Reformed faith, I knew my heart and soul to be edified and fed.

I immediately wrote the publishers of that book, the RFP. Through that first contact I began to correspond with my good friend, Prof. Hanko.

Shortly after my first visit to the U.S. in 1985, the church of which I am Pastor in Barnsley went through a period of trouble and unrest. I would have you understand, brethren, that both the Measbro Dyke congregation and I come from a Wesleyan Arminian background. When I began, therefore, to preach and teach the doctrine of grace and the truth of the absolute sovereignty of God in all things, I encountered a good deal of resistance. My denial of the errors of "Common Grace" and "the Free Offer of the Gospel" brought the charge of hyper-Calvinism, and of harshness, against my preaching. Sadly, 25% of the congregation departed over a difficult period of two years. Not only I but also my dear wife and children began to experience the difficulty and loneliness of the way the Lord had appointed for us to walk.

Over the years a goodly number of members and ministers of the

Protestant Reformed Churches visited our congregation in Barnsley. We were encouraged and enriched by this communion of the saints.

Some of your ministers who visited us to preach perceived the difficulties which we as a small congregation were experiencing even in financial matters. I take this opportunity from the floor of Synod to thank you for the financial assistance given by your churches to our congregation in Barnsley. When I met with my deacons the evening before our departure for Grand Rapids, they asked that, with my greetings, I especially mention this kindness we have received from you.

I might also add that, under the hand of our God in providence, there was a time, but for the encouragement and counsel of some of you who are gathered in Synod here this morning, I would humanly speaking have left the Christian ministry.

We give thanks to God as a church that these past two years have seen peace restored to the congregation. We have been blessed with additions to the church through conversions of those from without, and public confession of some from within. I pray, beloved brethren, that the Lord Jesus Christ, the great Head of the church, will bless your delibera-

Rev. Rawson is pastor of Measbro Dyke Evangelical Church.

tions in the coming days to the furtherance of Christ's kingdom and the glory of our God. I would leave with you the word of God found in Ephesians 1:16-23: "Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers; that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him...." □



Pastors Rawson and Coleborn confer at Synod

■ Greetings from the Synod of E.P.C. of Australia

— Rev. Chris Coleborn

Brethren of the P.R.C. Synod,

Thank you for the privilege of inviting me to address you. I bring Christian greetings from the E.P.C. Synod, and the prayer that the Lord would keep you in His truth, and use you in His service in these days in which we live.

Pastor Burley and I have come from a far land to observe your

Synod and to address you. This is most unusual for us, and I think unusual for you too. Why is it unusual that we would visit one another's churches, and address one another's Synods? It is not because we are so far removed that we do not have others to visit and address us. It is not a geographical or social reason. It is unusual because we do not often find churches who are fully committed to the absolute sovereignty of God and His particular grace. We do not often find churches who are unashamedly historic Reformed/Presbyterian Confessional churches. We are thus glad to be here because of this commonness, and to encourage one another in these things.

We are also here to give expression to our belief in the great biblical truth of the catholicity of the church. We believe in "the holy catholic church." It is difficult in these days of a perverted ecumenical spirit to give a proper expression of our belief in the essential unity and universality of the church of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is easier in fact for us to stay at home, and for you to stay at home: you in your small corner and we in our own. But this calling to recognize the doctrine of the catholicity of the church is from the Lord Himself, and we cannot fail to heed His call. For this reason also we desire contact.

There are differences between us. We are in the process of discussing them with your Contact Committee. Only time will tell where and to what extent these differences will affect our relationship. These differences are in areas important to both our denominations, and therefore we must seek in the grace of the Holy Spirit to respect one another as we discuss them, and to walk with understanding and patience. We trust these differences will not be stones of stumbling to us, but stepping stones to a greater understanding and appreciation of one another, and a stimulus to a greater study of the Word of God. May it be as iron sharpens iron to make us better instruments in His service.

We have things in common not only in the crucial area of the doctrine of God's absolute sovereignty, but also in our respective histories, and the various experiences the Lord has led our churches through. We also have much in common in seeking to apply the doctrines of God's Covenant to our daily life, such as in Christian education.

The Lord in His providence has brought our paths to cross. It is not chance. I trust and pray we will be able to have a relationship such as our Reformed fathers of Scotland and Holland had, where they assisted and helped one another in the good fight of faith in their generation. May our generation do likewise. In this day and age, the glory of God and the welfare of the church demand it.

Because of our differences, your churches' definition of a "sister church" makes it impossible for us to be "sister churches." We therefore plead that your Synod would spell out in practical terms what a "less than sister church" relationship means.

May the Lord Jesus Who walks in the midst of His churches by His Spirit be in your midst, to guide you in all your deliberations, and to bless you in all your labors in His cause. □

The Weaver

My life is but a weaving
Between my Lord and me.
I cannot choose the colors
He worketh steadily.
Oft times He weaveth sorrow
And I in foolish pride
Forget He sees the upper
And I, the underside.

Not till the loom is silent
And the shuttles cease to fly
Shall God unroll the canvas
And explain the reason why.
The dark threads are as needful
In the Weaver's skilful hand
As the threads of gold and silver
In the pattern He has planned.

— SB, April 15, 1931

Rev. Coleborn is pastor of the Brisbane Congregation of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Australia.

Special Article
Rev. Jaikishin Mahtani

A Reformed Theological School in the Pacific Area



Rev. Mahtani gives slide presentation on India

Besides giving greetings this afternoon on behalf of the ERCS, may I express our thanks particularly to the Contact Committee of the Protestant Reformed Churches which has labored hard over the years to make this Conference possible. May God bless your labors as you continue to seek the unity of the Spirit through the spread of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ and through further contact with the Lord's people all over the world. Do not be discouraged when in the busyness of laboring to uphold the Reformed faith you are falsely accused of having no desire to evangelize and to seek unity with other brethren of like precious faith. This Conference is clear proof to the contrary. Our prayer is that, through our sister-church relationship, perhaps God will encourage you to be even more mission-minded in the days to come unto the glory of God.

With that I would like to enter immediately into my speech. I am to speak to you on the subject, A Reformed Theological Seminary in the Pacific Area.

I will divide my speech into five main parts.

I. THE DEVELOPMENTS IN THE ERCS WHICH POINT TO THE NEED TO TRAIN MEN

I believe that the mention of our development in Singapore is directly relevant to my speech this afternoon. In fact it is due to this positive development, clearly the evidence of the working of God's

Holy Spirit, that there now is an urgent need to train more men.

The Lord, the Mighty God Who is on His throne, He Who has done whatsoever He hath pleased, has graciously blessed us and our churches in the island of Singapore, and under His faithful blessings and with the wonderful guidance of His Holy Spirit, the churches continue to grow numerically as well as spiritually. As you can well remember, our church in Singapore began with a core group of some very young people, whose average age was between 14 and 20, with only a few married couples. We are still young in Singapore, compared to the people of God in your churches, but the scene in Singapore is fast changing. Eight years after the institution of our church, half of the membership of our churches is now families — either young married couples or young families with young children. We still do have many young people and many unmarried single adults, but you can imagine what a change that is in our church life with so many new and young families.

This change is not just a physical one, so that we now have more than 50 children, but also very much a spiritual development. Let me explain. When we came to know the Reformed faith some years ago, we came to grips by God's grace and Holy Spirit with the doctrine of grace, and those truths filled our hearts with joy and blessedness. Those truths pertaining to particular grace, as beautifully explained and defended by

Rev. Mahtani is pastor of Covenant Evangelical Reformed Church of Singapore.

our Reformed Confessions, continue to be the hallmark of the churches in Singapore. God is on His throne, and He has done whatsoever He hath pleased, over against the idol gods of man's hands. That is the gospel which continues to be preached and loved in Singapore. However, a wonderful development is taking place. The infant church is suddenly seeing her own infants — more than 50 of them — gifts of God's gracious covenant, the precious heritage of the Lord. This has meant that now our people are becoming more and more conscious of the truth of God's unconditional covenant — when we have to deal with questions of infant baptism, the calling of covenant parents, the responsibilities of Christian education for our children, and many other related questions. You can understand that it is with these experiences that the people are now beginning to grapple more and more with the beautiful idea of the covenant, as clearly taught throughout the Bible, and which you in the Protestant Reformed Churches love and steadfastly defend. This development is reason for great joy and thanksgiving, but it also points our young churches to greater responsibilities and awesome tasks. It all points us to the need of good Christian schools, and to the need to catechize our beloved children. But more importantly it points to the fact that God is pleased now to establish those churches in Singapore, and that we will need more ministers to serve in the churches as they grow both physically and spiritually. We must have the vision, the foresight, and the hope that this exactly will happen, according to God's good pleasure.

Another major development in Singapore has been the opportunity which Covenant ERC has faced in doing mission work in India. We are small and our resources are limited; but, true to our name — Evangelical Reformed Churches of Singapore — we are seeking to spread the Reformed faith far and wide. Thus when the

opportunity came to go to India to investigate the field and labor with the contacts we have there, Covenant sent her pastor and his family there for two months. It is premature to decide anything about this field, but the Lord is giving us exciting work to do. If the Session of Covenant decides that this is a field, she will bring it to our Classis to see if we could make it our denominational mission field. Let us remember that the harvest is ripe, but the laborers are few, and let us pray that the Lord of the harvest will send laborers into His harvest. You can see how the churches in Singapore will have to think seriously of training more men for the ministry.

These developments are more or less directly related to our speech this afternoon on the matter of ERCS seeking to have some kind of theological instruction in Singapore. What I am about to speak on is by no means the immediate goal or pursuit of the ERCS. We are far from being ready to start a Theological School in Singapore. But the idea is there, the vision is there, the hope is there. And I believe that this is indeed the Lord's will for us, that we should start at least to talk about and do preliminary work towards this great and blessed project of setting up a Reformed Theological School in Singapore. Therefore I appreciate the topic which has been given to me, because I can speak to you from my heart.

II. THE PRESENT THEOLOGICAL SCHOOLS AVAILABLE IN SINGAPORE

This may sound a little surprising to you, since you may have in your mind that Singapore is a heathen country, and therefore to find any Theological School would probably be in your mind out of the question. Well, as a matter of fact, although Singapore is basically made up of people who are Buddhists, Taoists, Hindus, Muslims, and adherents of various other religions, Singapore has become the center of learning and of communications, and many churches and denominations have taken advantage of that and used

Singapore as a base to train and send these men out to many parts of the world.

This afternoon we do not have to spend a whole lot of time looking carefully into all the theological schools we have. You have to trust me. You have to believe me when I tell you that the schools available are not distinctly Reformed. As far as we know, before God and out of love for God's glorious kingdom, and in particular with the conviction that we need a distinctively Reformed Theological School, we can say that we have done enough investigation to convince us at least, that there is not a good school in the Far East, nor perhaps in the Pacific, where we could send our students to be properly trained for the gospel ministry.

We feel that perhaps for "neutral" subjects, like languages, we could send our students to at least some of the schools. However, in certain cases, due to the liberal and pentecostal tendencies of these schools, there is reason for concern about the very atmosphere into which we put our students. There are dangers of course when we send our students to all kinds of different colleges. Many churches have done such a thing, only to find that, in due time, the church is split with divisions and schisms, because the ministers all preach something different. But what if these students only learn, so to speak, "neutral" subjects? For example, our study committee for theological training has suggested that subjects like Greek, Hebrew, English and Philosophy/Logic can be taken in these various institutions if we cannot do it ourselves. Whatever our answer to this particular question, it is still clear to us that there is a need to give some solid systematic instruction of the Reformed faith to students aspiring for the ministry. It is now my purpose to try and persuade you of that need.

III. THE NEED FOR A SOLIDLY REFORMED SEMINARY IN THE PACIFIC AREA

All that we have said already does point us to the direction that

there is indeed a great need for starting a Reformed Theological Seminary in that part of the world. But I would like to offer some spiritual and biblical grounds for this, and ask you to consider these carefully.

First of all, we need a Reformed Theological Seminary in that part of the world because the Reformed faith is the truth of God which we believe is founded upon the Holy Word of God and which is therefore the truth which we must continue to seek to establish. Whatever it takes us, if this is indeed our conviction and our heart's sincere belief, that the doctrines which are taught and defended in our Creeds are the faithful teachings of God's Word itself, then we must seek to have a school which will uphold and disseminate these truths, and prepare men to preach them faithfully. A Reformed theological school in that part of the world, I am convinced, will be the means of establishing, and solidly grounding, the Reformed truths in the young church that God in His providence has been pleased to raise. There is simply a great need systematically and carefully to instruct the people of God in the Reformed faith. Especially men who are seeking the ministry of the Word, but also elders, teachers, fathers — there is a need to teach these men what the Reformed faith is in all of its different aspects.

Now it is true that all this has to be done by and through the faithful preaching of the Word from the pulpit. But is there not a need for men who are going to have to lead the people of God to be even more grounded themselves? This in fact is a biblical injunction, given to us clearly in II Timothy 2:2. We are to instruct faithful men so that they in turn will teach others the truths of God's Holy Word. This is a very important calling which the church of Jesus Christ must not neglect. She is to spread the gospel. She is to care for the church in all her pastoral needs. She is to deal with all the different problems and trials which face her in this world. But she must realize that intrinsic in her very calling as the church of Jesus

Christ is the calling to train men for the ministry. The church through her pastor is called to do this work, as is evident in II Timothy 2:2.

However, because it is quite impossible for a man who has a flock to do this task alone, it is only proper that the churches in common seek to set up a school where the ministers of the denomination could be trained to serve the Lord in His church in days to come.

Secondly, I believe this is the very obligation of the Reformed church in particular. The Reformed church is one which does not hold simply to an individualistic philosophy which emphasizes only personal salvation and leaves every believer to fend for himself and to serve the Lord in whatever way he chooses. The Reformed truth is covenantal — it recognizes that God is the God of His people, of His church. The Reformed church therefore is concerned, not in an anxious way, but with an understanding of the God-given responsibility to teach the children, as well as the generation to come, the statutes of Jehovah God, to ensure that the men who are going to teach are themselves well-trained in the truths of the Scriptures.

Thirdly, we are called as the people of God, to raise a standard (Isa. 62:6-10). There may be many other schools around, but we are called to raise a standard; to hold up the banner of God's truth high and as clear in view as possible for all around us to see. This we must do first of all for the glory of God, and secondly for the welfare of Zion, blest city of God.

There are also practical reasons why we need a Reformed Theological School in that part of the world. It is quite obvious that there is a request for such an institution. This request is becoming more and more urgent. When people come to hear of the Reformed faith for the first time in the Far East, they are asking if there can be a way wherein they could be further instructed systematically so that they could in turn bring these glorious truths to their homes and churches.

This brings us of course to the very mission strategy which we be-

lieve is the biblical and wise one to take. The theological instruction of students is very much related to mission work. The churches in Singapore are not looking at this as an abstract matter, a mere theological training for the sake of intellectual attainment. They are looking at this need in the light of further mission work that could be done in that part of the world.

At this point it would be proper for us to point out the legitimate concern that is raised by our elders that our men not go abroad for too long a time. It is not that coming to the USA would be in itself detrimental, although bringing a poor man from India, for example, may indeed not be a very good idea; but the point is more this, that the training given to men who enter the ministry could best be in the atmosphere of their own country and needs. At least most of the training should be right where the candidate will fellowship and serve, so that the people know his ministry and he also knows the people to whom he will be ministering later. The concern raised therefore is legitimate. However, I do feel that there is much to say also for training which is abroad, at least for a shorter period. There needs to be a time where there can be objective, disciplined study and training without the actual work and distraction which must come while in the field. Therefore the view we are taking is that while the student may need to go abroad for seminary, in order to shorten that time period he should be trained as much as possible in a local context.

IV. THE REASON WHY SINGAPORE WOULD SERVE AS AN IDEAL LOCATION

Simply from the viewpoint of her strategic geographical location, Singapore, standing at the crossroads of the East and West, would be an ideal location for such training. More and more, Singapore has become the center in all of Southeast Asia for communications and learning. Not only countries in Asia, but also Western countries have come to know Singapore as a kind of center in Southeast Asia. If

Singapore would have a Reformed seminary where instruction would be given on a regular and systematic fashion, we have reason to believe that students from Burma, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Indonesia, India, Korea, Japan, etc. would come to be trained. Not only that, but other Western countries in the Pacific Area, like New Zealand and Australia, would probably be interested.

It would of course be financially a lesser burden for anyone from Southeast Asia or the Pacific Area to come to Singapore than to come to the USA.

Consider, too, that although Singapore is a modern city, it remains a non-Christian society, and therefore is not only a field for instruction, but also for missions. The point is this, that Singapore would be ideal for theological instruction because there is a constant need there now for further missionary work to bring the Reformed faith to that part of the world. But we need men to be trained first, and from here sent to the different parts of the world as the Lord opens the doors.

V. CONCLUDING REMARKS — THE PLANS WHICH THE ERCS ARE DELIBERATING UPON

The churches in Singapore are in no way ready to begin any kind of a theological school. Their resources are limited, their present immediate needs outweigh what we have tried to show in this paper to be important. In no way must I relay to you the idea that we are all ready to start a seminary.

However, we are in a situation now where the need is very real, and various decisions have to be made. There are a couple of students, one from each congregation, who have indicated deep interest in studying for the ministry. Although the pastors are going to have to try to teach them in this coming year, in the long run it would be doing injustice to their work. I know that preparation and instruction in theological training takes a lot of time and energy, because I have tried doing this. However, we pastors in Singapore simply have to acknowl-

edge, and the saints there realize, that we are unable to give such instruction. We are not trained, and we have limited time in our busy congregations. Even if we tried our best, our training could never be comparable to a systematic and formal instruction.

Therefore we have come to the Synod of the PRC this year with the request that they send us a man to help us start this training. Singapore is thinking of having a one-year trial period in which this visiting professor or minister could help also with the other work, like missionary work, when he is present with us. Having heard from the Contact Committee as well as the Mission Committee of the PRC's interest in doing this kind of work with the ERCS, we have come to your Synod this year with a specific request to send a man to help us look into both theological training as well as missions.

One must understand that starting a Seminary or Theological School is not something we can do overnight, or even in just a few years. Singapore understands that full well, and therefore suggests a feasibility study first.

However, although your Synod has decided that it is not time yet to plunge into something like this, we fully understand the PRC's concern and in fact appreciate their caution and wise advice.

Still, allow me actually to tell you the plan which Singapore has. It is to give instruction to students interested in the ministry until they are ready to go to the Seminary. The instruction will therefore be more pre-seminary level. Also students who may not be seeking the ministry may attend — elders, teachers, parents. Such pre-sem training will for now be on a more informal basis. But this nevertheless means that the pastors in this

coming year will be expected to teach. Hopefully, by our being very busy with work, the PR churches will be encouraged to send us a man as soon as possible.

However, as the Synod has decided to send delegates for this coming year at least for a shorter period of time, I believe that such a visit will help us as sister-churches together to decide what truly is best for our churches, and what truly will be according to His Holy Word.

I would like to close with the reminder that what seems impossible with man is possible with God. Before I end my speech, I have just one more remark to make — and that is this — the king's heart is in the hands of the Lord, as rivers of water, He turneth it whithersoever He will. The Lord has overruled the position of the Government in Singapore on Family Planning, and the people in Singapore are now being encouraged to have more and more children. The Family Planning Board is now changed to the nursing foundation. We can rejoice at that, but let us also believe that this is God coming to Singapore and saying — my people, whom I have called by my Name, they are going to continue to see my blessings, and I am going to raise up a generation. The Lord has so worked in the authorities that we can now have covenant families, and we can have more children, as the Lord is pleased to give.

Perhaps the things I have said sound impossible; but let us remember this confession — our God is in the heavens, and He hath done whatsoever He hath pleased. Consider with me whether or not what I have shared with you is truly the will of God. And may God by His Holy Spirit guide us to do that which is well pleasing unto Him. □

The Lord takes up none but the forsaken,
Makes none healthy but the sick,
Gives sight to none but the blind,
Makes none alive but the dead,
Sanctifies none but sinners,
Gives wisdom to none but the foolish.

— SB, April 15, 1931

All Around Us
Prof. Robert Decker

Synods and General Assemblies

June is the month when most of the synods and general assemblies of various denominations in the Reformed and Presbyterian traditions meet. In what follows we have gleaned some of the more important, interesting, and significant decisions of some of these meetings.

THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA

The CRC Synod of 1990 will long be remembered for its decision to open the offices of elder and minister to women. By a narrow margin (99-84) the synod voted to "permit churches to use their discretion in utilizing the gifts of women members in all the offices of the church." This decision came after nearly eight hours of debate centering on the "headship principle." This principle states that men are to be "heads" over women in marriage. Whether and how the principle applies to the roles of men and women in the church has been a subject of debate for the past twenty years in the CRC. Throughout the years, synods have appointed six committees to study the issues related to women serving in church office. In 1984 the CRC opened the office of deacon to women. This year's decision opens all church offices to women. The most recent study committee was appointed in 1987 and reported to this year's synod. The synod, by adopting the above decision, judged that the committee's report did not provide clear biblical and confessional grounds for extending

the "headship principle" from marriage to the church. Because this decision involves a change in the CRC Church Order (the word "male" must be deleted in reference to officebearers), the synod of 1992 must ratify the changes made to the Church Order before women may officially be ordained as elders or ministers. The synod asked, therefore, that churches refrain from ordaining women as elders or pastors until the ratification takes place in 1992.

It grieves us to see our "mother church" take this step. These decisions are in clear violation of the teaching of Holy Scripture (I Cor. 11:2-16; 14:34, 35; I Tim. 2:9-15) which forbids women to serve in church office. These decisions too indicate in which direction the CRC is going. What now will brothers and sisters in the CRC do who are grieved by these decisions? Perhaps it was these decisions which prompted two of the fraternal delegates to admonish the CRC. The Rev. Glenn Jerell, representing the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, informed the synod that his denomination has withdrawn from the Reformed Ecumenical Council because of the continuing membership in that council of churches "moving in a liberal direction." Jerell added that he fears the CRC is walking only "a few blocks behind" the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (GKN) and pleaded with the synod "to dispel that as a wrong perception." The Rev. Philip Pockras of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in North America expressed concern that the CRC is on "the downgrade" and admonished the dele-

gates to stay true to the Word.

The synod also approved of separate incorporations of Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary which will mean separate boards of trustees for each institution. We wonder if this is a first step in removing the college from the control of the denomination.

Synod approved the addition of a doctor-of-philosophy (Ph.D) program at Calvin Theological Seminary, effective September 1991. The degree will be offered in the disciplines of Systematic Theology (Dogmatics) and Historical Theology.

The Rev. Howard Vanderwell, pastor of the Hillcrest CRC in Hudsonville, Michigan, served as synod's president.

(Synod 1990 News, *The Banner*)
The Reformed Church in America

The issue of homosexuality provoked no little disagreement, even controversy among delegates to the RCA's General Synod which met on the campus of Northwestern College in Orange City, Iowa. The Synod adopted a policy statement which reads: "To adopt as the position of the RCA that the practicing homosexual lifestyle is contrary to Scripture, while at the same time encouraging love and sensitivity toward such persons as fellow human beings." The synod also instructed its Commission on Theology to study the issue of homosexuality for two years.

In the light of Romans 1:8ff. we wonder what there is to study about this issue. In this passage, and others for that matter, Holy Scripture teaches that homosexuality is the worst possible manifestation of the "reprobate mind."

Prof. Decker is professor of Practical Theology in the Protestant Reformed Seminary.

By changing some of the terminology referring to kinds of members in the RCA, the synod "eliminated one of the major arguments against the practice of allowing baptized children to take Communion." The synod rejected all five overtures seeking to prevent children from taking Communion before making "formal, public confession of faith." Individual congregations who wish to do so may now admit children to the table of the Lord.

The synod also sent back to the Commission on Theology its textual revision of *The Belgic Confession*. Objections to the revision centered on some changes made in the 1561 document which sought to incorporate more current Reformed views on the relationship between the church and the state, on understandings of other religions, and on gender inclusivity.

Acting on a recommendation of its Christian Unity Commission, the synod voted to continue studying the implications of becoming a full participant in the Consultation on Church Union (COCU). In 1992 the synod will be asked to consider full membership.

(The Church Herald)

The Presbyterian Church in America

The General Assembly of the PCA met in Atlanta, Georgia. Much of the time of the delegates was spent arriving at decisions on the composition and scope of the Assembly's Administrative Com-

mittee. Fears were expressed by some of the delegates that the PCA was concentrating too much power in its denominational committees. Reports of the General Assembly indicate that an overriding spirit of Christian unity prevailed even when potentially divisive issues were being debated.

(Christian Observer)

The Orthodox Presbyterian Church

Two issues relating to the role of women in the church came before the Assembly in the form of appeals. The Assembly determined not to allow women to lead a Bible study when men are present and when that study is under the auspices of the session (equivalent to our consistory). The Assembly determined that when a session appoints a person to teach, the person bears authority from the session. Appointment of a woman in this official capacity would violate I Timothy 2:11. In the second appeal, the Assembly judged that a woman should not speak in worship services. Specifically, women should not "give testimonies." This decision the Assembly based on I Corinthians 14:33-35 where Scripture teaches that women should not speak in the churches, as the law teaches.

We hope and pray that the OPC will continue to hold fast the truth of Scripture on this point.

Much of the OPC Assembly's time was also spent on organizational matters. The Assembly re-

jected a proposal for a major reorganization of the denominational outreach committees, i.e., the Home Mission Committee, the Foreign Mission Committee, and the Committee on Christian Education. This was seen by observers as a rejection of a perceived trend in the denomination toward hierarchy. The Assembly also rejected a proposal to dissolve the Committee on Foreign Missions and move management of foreign missions to presbyteries (equivalent to our Classis).

This year's Assembly passed the largest budget in the history of the denomination.

The Assembly met on the campus of Point Loma Nazarene College in Point Loma, California.

It will be of interest to our Protestant Reformed readers that the OPC has recently addressed our Committee for Contact with Other Churches seeking correspondence with our churches and closer contact with us. The OPC has recently withdrawn its membership in the Reformed Ecumenical Council because of liberal trends in churches who are members of that Council. The OPC was particularly concerned with developments in the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (GKN) and the REC's failure to exclude the GKN from membership in the REC. □

(Christian Observer)

Ask Ye What Great Thing I Know

Ask ye what great thing I know
That delights and stirs me so?
What the high reward I win?
Whose the Name I glory in?
Jesus Christ, the Crucified.

What is faith's foundation strong?
What awakes my lips to song?
He who bore my sinful load
Purchased for me peace with God,
Jesus Christ, the Crucified.

Who is He that makes me wise
To discern where duty lies?
Who is He that makes me true,
Duty, when discerned, to do?
Jesus Christ, the Crucified.

Who defeats my fiercest foes?
Who consoles my saddest woes?
Who revives my fainting heart,
Healing all its hidden smart?
Jesus Christ, the Crucified.

Who is life in life to me?
Who the death of death will be?
Who will place me on His right,
With the countless hosts of light?
Jesus Christ, the Crucified.

This is that great thing I know;
This delights and stirs me so;
Faith in Him who died to save,
Him who triumphed o'er the grave,
Jesus Christ, the Crucified.

— Benjamin Hall Kennedy

Search The Scriptures

Rev. Gise VanBaren

"A Word of Encouragement"

Philippians 1:27-30 presents a word of encouragement to the church at Philippi. Without doubt, the church was in need of that encouragement — and, in fact, every church needs this same Word. With that encouragement comes also instruction concerning a godly walk. The Word is applicable to us especially today.

In verse 27, the apostle speaks of our "conversation." This word is generally understood to mean not one's speech, but rather his entire life and walk. Literally, the word speaks of "citizenship." We have a place, a citizenship, here on the earth. As such, we are actually good citizens in the nation where God has placed us. In being good citizens of the kingdom of heaven, we will at the same time obey those in authority within our nation (cf. Romans 13). Our "conversation" must be in harmony with the gospel of Christ.

The standard for a godly walk, then, is the gospel that presents Christ. It can not be earthly, human standards. The gospel was the

great concern of the apostle Paul. He had written to the church of Corinth, "I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified" (I Cor. 2:2). The gospel is the good news of salvation through Jesus Christ. That gospel was presented already in the protevangel of Genesis 3:15. The gospel was portrayed in the Old Testament through type and shadow — especially seen in the temple with its sacrifices. The reality and wonder of the gospel are presented in the four New Testament accounts. The significance and glory of the gospel are seen in the epistles of the New Testament. That good news of Christ crucified is the norm by which the Christian walks in his pilgrimage on this earth.

Paul expects that this fruit will be present in the church of Philippi whether Paul is present or absent. Those of the church do not obey simply because they are observed by Christ's officebearers. They rather obey from a willing heart — an obedience before God even when Paul would be absent.

The obedience of the church in Philippi is seen in the oneness of that church. They are to stand fast in "one" spirit, with "one" mind, striving together in the (one) faith of the gospel. This is not an artificial oneness in which all join together despite great differences. On the contrary, it is a oneness of "spirit," that is, a oneness which comes forth from the Spirit of all truth.

Oneness is often not seen properly within the church. Sin disrupts the oneness which must be seen. That was true in Philippi and

is still true today. No wonder we need the reminder again that in oneness we strive together for the faith of the gospel. There must be a common struggle. There must not be evil speaking and devouring of one another in the church. Christ's church must fight against the enemy: the devil, the world, and one's own flesh. It is a great struggle which requires the full effort of the members of Christ's church together.

In striving together, there is certainly going to be opposition. Paul reminds them of that too: they will have adversaries. Adversaries can be frightening! Scripture reminds the church that one need not be terrified of them. Why not? Even suffering for Jesus' sake is God's gift to His people. God sends only that which will be of spiritual benefit to His own.

The fearlessness of the saints shows two things. First, it is a clear sign (token) of perdition to the wicked. Their greatest endeavors come to nothing. They discover that the "blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church." Whatever is done against the church is in harmony with the counsel of God Who works together all these things for their good. The wicked are as those who hit their heads against a brick wall. It becomes clear that though the wicked would destroy Christ's church, yet the church endures. The wicked are forced to recognize their own defeat — and final punishment in hell.

At the same time, the steadfastness of the saints is a clear sign to them of their salvation — that it is of God. No man can work such confidence, such fearlessness, in the

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

saints. God has begun His good work and He will finish it. In standing confidently before the adversary, the Christian knows that God is preserving him in the salvation which Christ has obtained for him. So, why be terrified of the adversary?

In fact, so verse 29 points out, suffering is also God's gift to His people. He does give to them the blessing of faith: these believe on Him. That is obviously His gift. The church has ever recognized it to be so. But, suffering at the hands of the wicked? That too is God's gift to His people.

Believing is itself the wonderful gift of God (Eph. 2:8). This is worked within God's elect by the Spirit Who regenerates. That life of Christ planted into the heart is called forth to conscious expression under the preaching of the gospel. The confession, therefore, of the saved ones is the fruit of the free and glorious grace of God.

But suffering for His sake is likewise His gift. The apostles testified of this early in their ministry in Acts 5:41. After their interrogation by the rulers of the Jews, they were beaten and released. We read, "And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name." Likewise the church of Philippi, and the church of today, can rejoice in suffering for

Christ's sake. It is truly a token both to the believer as well as to the unbeliever.

Nor were those of Philippi the only saints who suffer. They can be encouraged in the knowledge that it is the same kind of suffering that Paul himself had to face repeatedly. They had heard of that conflict with which the apostle had to deal. He had been beaten many times. He was stoned and left for dead. He had suffered shipwreck. And now, he was imprisoned in Rome for the Lord's sake. They had seen even some of Paul's sufferings while he himself labored in Philippi. It was in this very city that he was sent to prison after healing the demon-possessed girl.

So the suffering that some experienced in Philippi was neither unique nor unexpected. Let the church be encouraged when its members join the myriads who have suffered for the sake of their Lord. May they believe it is God's gift.

QUESTIONS

1. What are our responsibilities as citizens in this earth?
2. Can one say that citizens of the kingdom of heaven are at the same time good citizens of the kingdoms of this earth? Give reasons for your answer.
3. Does the "oneness" of verse 27 mean that we are to join with other denominations? Does it

mean that we seek to promote a oneness with those of many beliefs?

4. Does "oneness" mean that we all say and believe exactly alike? What passage in the book of I Corinthians shows the proper idea of oneness?

5. What is "gospel"? Where is the gospel found in Scripture?

6. How can we "strive together for the faith of the gospel"?

7. Who are those adversaries of verse 28? Do we have any adversaries today?

8. Why should one's lack of "terror" be a token of perdition to some?

9. Why should one's lack of "terror" be a token of salvation to us?

10. Does this lack of terror mean that the Christian is never concerned with nor fearful of his adversaries? How would you react to imprisonment for Jesus' sake?

11. Why does God even determine the existence and need for adversaries for the church?

12. In what sense is "believing" given to the Christian? Is not believing the activity of man?

13. What is the meaning of the statement: "It is given in behalf of Christ...to suffer for His sake"?

14. Why does Paul call attention to his own conflict in verse 30? □

Book Review

WILLIAM III AND THE REVOLUTION OF 1688 & GUSTAVUS ADOLPHUS II ELECTED KING OF SWEDEN OF THE GOTHES AND VANDALS, two essays by Marjorie Bowen; Inheritance Publications, Box 154 Neerlandia, Alberta, Canada, 1988; 144pp., paper. (Reviewed by Prof. H. Hanko.)

1988, the year this book was published, was the 300th anniversary

of the Glorious Revolution, the year in which the Stuart dynasty was ended in the British Isles and King William the III took the throne of Britain in the bloodless revolution. It contains an essay on William III as well as an additional essay on that great fighter of religious freedom in Germany, Gustavus Adolphus II.

The first essay discusses how William III, stadhouder in the Netherlands and of the House of Orange, became the king of England. The essay is particularly interesting because it does not only record the historical events which led to William's accession to the throne, but it describes too the situation in England (the overbearing and tyrannical rule of the Stuart

kings and their bitter opposition to Presbyterianism in the British Isles). It records how James II attempted to restore popery to England and how William was brought to the throne to avoid this disaster. William's claim to the throne was through his wife, Mary, who belonged to the Stuart line, but who remained loyal to her husband throughout his career and reign in England. The essay speaks also of the political and ecclesiastical situation in the Netherlands, and dwells at length on the character of William himself. The essay strikes me as being balanced; it does not regard William as deeply committed to Calvinism, although his reign brought about a rescue of Calvinism in England from the hands of the popish Stuarts.

The point of the essay is important: the reign of William in England effected radical changes in England's social, political, and ecclesiastical institutions, changes which remain until the present day.

In the view of the author, therefore, the Glorious Revolution, while entirely without bloodshed (James II fled England when William landed on English shores), was one of those great events in history which changed the direction of a nation.

While the author does not treat this part of the history, this William is the William who landed with his forces at Carrickfergus (a city near to Larne), Northern Ireland in 1690 and defeated the Roman Catholic forces at the great battle of the Boyne, thus saving Ulster from Roman Catholicism. This battle is still celebrated in Ulster every year by the Ulster Protestants.

Thus Dutch and English history were for a period of time interwoven.

The second essay deals with Gustavus Adolphus II, king of Sweden. His fame is due to the fact that he crossed the Baltic from Sweden to enter the struggle between Protestant forces and Roman Catholic forces in Germany. It was

through his intervention that Protestantism was saved in Germany from Roman Catholic domination. The battles are known in history as the Thirty Years War. The account of them in this book is stirring. Although Gustavus Adolphus succeeded in defeating the armies of the emperor who was closely allied with Roman Catholics, he himself was slain in the last battle. The nobility of his character, his courage and commitment to the Reformation, and his use of new strategies in battle are amply portrayed in this essay.

The book gives us two stirring chapters in the battle for freedom in the wars following the Reformation. It is an interesting book and well worth reading by all those who are thankful for our own heritage.

The book can be obtained from the publisher or from the Reformed Book Outlet in Hudsonville, Michigan. □

Mr. Benjamin Wigger

News From Our Churches

Mr. Wigger is a member of the Protestant Reformed Church of Hudsonville, Michigan.

The congregation of the Byron Center PRC in Byron Center, MI, sponsored a special Sunday evening church service recently. On the evening of June 24, Byron held a special service which dealt with the proper observance of the fourth command — the command to rest. Through press ads and by personal witness, Byron made a special point of inviting the public to attend this service.

Our congregation in Byron wanted to address a serious problem, one that faces each one of us. In the 20th century, and especially in these last decades, it seems that Christians are forgetting that day,

rather than remembering it. It seems that the day is no longer the Lord's, or that only part of it belongs to Him.

When one considers the pressures put on Christians to open their businesses on Sunday, to patronize businesses open on Sunday, to use the day for sports, recreation, or travel, to skip at least one of the worship services on Sunday, then it becomes obvious that the Word of God should be consulted.

Is this a special day? What is proper Christian behavior on that day? What did Jesus teach about that day?

Interested in finding out the answers to these and other questions about this subject? Just drop a note to Byron Center PRC at 1945 84th St., P.O. Box 71, Byron Center, MI 49315 and ask for a cassette tape of the sermon that Sunday night.

And also from Byron Center. At their annual congregational meeting held in mid-June, the membership of Byron gave approval to a proposal to investigate the possibility of building a new parsonage on their church property. You may remember that Byron bought a home in the area long before property on which to build a church was purchased.

Most of our churches schedule Sunday School classes for the summer months. Our congregation in the First PRC in Pella, Iowa is one of those that does. However, along with the classes for the children, there was an attempt made to begin a class for adults as well. Interested adults were requested to fill out a form and return it to a consistory member. No word yet on the

success of this newly added class.

Since this year's Synod and the International Reformed Conference were scheduled to be held in Grand Rapids, MI right after each other, many ministers from our churches out West or up in Canada were away from their pulpits for an extended time. This meant that there were a lot of reading services out West and a lot of guest ministers in the Grand Rapids area churches.

Interestingly, Rev. Dale Kuiper, pastor in our Immanuel PRC in Lacombe, Canada, conducted the evening service on June 10 at the Hudsonville PRC in Hudsonville, MI. What made this special was that on that evening Rev. Kuiper's son, Brad, who is a member of Hudsonville, made public confession of faith along with two other young men. Rev. Kuiper chose for his theme, "A Life of Liberty," based on Psalm 119:45.

DENOMINATIONAL ACTIVITIES

Thursday, June 21, Prof. David Engelsma spoke at the annual

meeting of the Sunday School Association on the subject of "The Genealogy of Jesus, or Jesus, the Son of Nathan."

Kyle Flikkema, son of Rev. Richard and Marcia Flikkema, of our Covenant PRC in Wyckoff, NJ, submitted to open heart surgery in mid-May. Part of that surgery included the insertion of a permanent pacemaker. After about two weeks Kyle was able to return home where, according to God's will, he continues to recover.

MINISTERIAL CALLS

The congregation of our Randolph PRC in Randolph, WI called Rev. C. Haak to serve as their pastor from a trio which also included Pastors T. Miersma, and R. Moore.

And the consistory of our Hope PRC in Isabel, SD presented to their congregation a trio consisting of the Revs. R. Hanko, C. Haak, and T. Miersma, from which to call a pastor. □

Ever patient, gentle, meek,
Holy Saviour, was Thy mind;
Vainly in myself I seek
Likeness to my Lord to find;
Yet that mind which was in Thee,
May be, must be formed in me.

Days of toil 'mid throngs of men,
Vexed not, ruffled not thy soul;
Still collected, calm, serene,
Thou each feeling couldst control:
Lord, that mind which was in Thee,
May be, must be formed in me.

Though such griefs were Thine to bear,
For each sufferer Thou couldst feel;
Every mourner's burden share,
Every wounded spirit heal;
Saviour, let thy grace in me
Form that mind which was in Thee!

— SB, June 15, 1931

NOTICE!!!

Classis West of the Protestant Reformed Churches will meet in South Holland, Illinois, on Wednesday, September 5, 1990, at 8:30 AM, the Lord willing. All delegates in need of lodging or transportation from the airport should notify the Clerk of South Holland's Consistory.

Rev. R. Hanko, Stated Clerk

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

The Lord willing, our parents, MR. and MRS. FRED HANKO, will celebrate their 35th wedding anniversary on August 11, 1990. Many and great are the sacrifices which they have made over the years on our behalf. Our thanks is to our heavenly Father Who, through them, has provided us with instruction in a godly home, an example of faithfulness, and a continuous source of guidance and encouragement. We pray that God will richly bless them with His strength and presence in the years to come.

"But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him, and His righteousness unto children's children; to such as keep His covenant, and to those that remember His commandments to do them" (Ps. 103:17, 18).

Pete and Jan Westra

Peter, Kevin, Jason, Brian
Mitch and the late Ellen Dick
Fred and Cathy Hanko

Amanda
Brian and Carrie Dykstra
Lynnae, Carleen
Dave Hanko
Dan Hanko
Mary Hanko

Faith Church, Jenison, Michiganx

NOTICE!!

Classis East will meet in regular session on Wednesday, September 12, 1990 at the Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church. Material to be treated in this session must be in the hands of the Stated Clerk by August 13, 1990.

Jon J. Huiskens
Stated Clerk

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On August 17, 1990, our beloved parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents REV. and MRS. GEORGE LUBBERS will remember their 60th Wedding Anniversary. In days when there is so much unfaithfulness to the marriage vows, it is good to celebrate the preserving grace of God Who has kept our parents through the many years of their married life. As they approach the end of their earthly sojourn, we confess with them the faithfulness of our Covenant keeping God. We look in hope with them for the day when we will all perfectly say: "Lo, this is our God: we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the Lord; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation" Isaiah 25:9.

Agatha Lubbers
Thomas and Garretta Newhof
Case and Frances Lubbers
Lamm and MaryBeth Lubbers
19 grandchildren
7 great-grandchildren
Grand Rapids, Michigan

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The consistory and congregation of Bethel Protestant Reformed Church express their sorrow at the death of the oldest member of their congregation, MR. ABEL BOS. Our sympathy is extended to his daughters, Mrs. Alice Stob and Mrs. Margaret Folkerts, to their husbands, and to the grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

May the Word of God expounded at the funeral be a constant source of comfort — "Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of His saints" (Psalm 116:15).

Rev. Ronald VanOverloop, President
Elder Richard Reyenga,
Vice-President

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The faculty and staff of the Protestant Reformed Seminary extends sincere sympathy to seminarian Mitchell Dick in the loss of his dear wife, Ellen, whose confession was: "For me to live is Christ, to die is gain" (Phil. 1:21).

Prof. Robert D. Decker, Rector

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

With joy and thanksgiving we celebrate the 40th Wedding Anniversary of our parents EVERETT and AUDREY VAN VOORTHUYSEN on August 4, 1990. We thank our gracious Lord for blessing us with faithful, God-fearing parents bound in His love. We pray that our heavenly Father may grant many more years together, for them, and for us, their children and grandchildren.

"The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear Him, in those that hope in His mercy. Praise the Lord, O Jerusalem; praise thy God, O Zion" (Ps. 147:11, 12).

Cory and Karen Koot
Michael, JamieLyn, Kristen
Ken and Gail Kamps
Jesse, Justin, Jean
Ron and Laura VanVoorthuysen
Lorianne, Ronda, Mark
Ron and Barb Schut
Bradley, Shauna, Leah
Redlands, California

NOTICE!

On September 20, 1990 at 8 PM the RFPFA will hold its annual meeting. Our readers in the Grand Rapids area (and beyond) are urged to attend — not first of all for the *business* aspect of this gathering, but for the *address*. It is true that short reports will be read and new board members will be elected from a prepared nomination; but the purpose of this meeting is not primarily organizational or economic, but spiritual. Our speaker, Prof. Herman Hanko will direct our attention

to the Word of God as we find it in Psalm 60:4 — "Thou hast given a banner to them that fear thee, that it may be displayed because of the truth." A rich heritage of the truth is ours. An effective means of witness has been given us in *The Standard Bearer* — for defense of the faith, preservation of the truth, and inspiration to faithfulness. Great is our calling, in the battle of faith, to hold aloft the banner.

Are you — men, women, young people — really serious about that? Yes, you're *all* invited. Members only will take part in the short business meeting; but, for the rest, we hope for a full house in Southwest Church on September 20. The truth is God's; the cause is Christ's; the battle intensifies...can we be indifferent?

Board of the RFPFA
Peter Koole, Secretary

LYNDEN P.R. CHURCH

The Lynden Protestant Reformed Church of Lynden, Washington is offering up to \$330,000 in notes to finance the construction of our sanctuary. (5-years: 8%; 10-years: 8.5%)

These notes will be issued in multiples of \$1,000, payable on demand with interest paid semi-annually.

For further information, please call or write:

Albert deBoer
1633 Matz Road
Ferndale, WA 98248
(206) 384-4148.

We ask that you give this your prayerful consideration.